

WHAT IS HOUSEHOLD CROWDING? AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT CHILDREN'S ENROLMENT RATES IN THE EARLY YEAR'S EDUCATION (EYE): THE CASE OF KENYA IN THE COVID ERA

Catherine Gakii Murungi

Department of Early Childhood and Special Needs Education (EC & SNE)

Kenyatta University, Kenya

E-mail: catherine_gakii@yahoo.com

Abstract: Overcrowding is defined to be the total number of persons in a unit, regardless of unit size; the ratio of persons to floor space in square feet; and the person-to-size ratio adjusted for household composition, structure type, location, or lot size. It is believed that failure to adequately meet the housing need might have led to the children's low participation in the early year's education and subsequently affecting other levels of education in Meru County and the country at large. It is for this reason, that this study was designed. It will document the extent to which, children's housing need, and in particular, the crowding aspect, is addressed in Meru County. This is because large number children, 52% of them in the early year's education age levels did not participate in the early year's education. The main objective of this study was to establish the relationship between household size and participation in early year's education. The independent variable was household size. The dependent variable was children's participation in early year's education. The target population for this study comprised 78, 201 school age going children of early years education level from whom an actual sample size of 390 children was selected and their parents participated in the study. Children's households were systematically sampled whereas Meru County was sampled purposively. The researcher administered the questionnaire to parents of children at the age of early year's education. Those who participated in the early year's education and those who did not participate in the early year's education were considered for the study. The t-test (two tailed) for testing equality of means for independent samples was used to test H₀₁ a t-test (two tailed) for independent samples found no relationship between household size and participation in early years education. This study concludes that housing need is important and unless it is met we will continue to have large numbers of children at the age for early year's education not participating in this education continuing to multiply.

Keywords: Early year's education, household size, household overcrowding, education, participation in learning, family type, covid era.

1. INTRODUCTION

Research done on household size reveals that, living in particularly crowded households has a negative impact on children education (Rice, 2006 and Harker, 2006, Murungi, 2012, Murungi, 2020 & WHO 2018). In addition a 2007, US report on house crowding reports that overcrowding after considering all measures used refers to the number of people living in one room, more than one regardless of the size unless for couples is crowded. Children who live in crowded households

reported to be ill more often and missed out on education (Rice, 2006 & WHO 2018 Murungi 2012). Such children are also reported to have behavioral problems and tend to perform poor in schools (Harker, 2006). Children in overcrowded conditions do not have the space they need to play and do homework as well as sleep properly (CLG, 2008 & Murungi, 2020). Without room to grow, many children become sick, have problems at school and drop out of school (CLG, 2008 & Murungi, 2009). Children need to live in households that are not crowded (WHO, 2018). Parents must provide for this need by ensuring that the physical structures in which early years education level children live in is clean, neat, spacious, have the right temperature and light. The emphasis here is that children's housing need is important and if it is not met it may impact on early year's education.

Despite an increased interest by various researchers (APHRC, 2004; Forsythe *et al.*, 1996) to find out the extent to which household size need was related to early years education in the Western countries, few studies are available in our Kenyan perspective by Murungi, 2009 and Murungi 2012. Parents who struggle to keep a roof over the family's head, and food on the table, simply may not be able to enroll their children in pre-school. In addition, an increased number of people living in one household were directly related to high rate of wasting in children Forsythe, Rau, Cold, & Alrutz (1996 & Murungi 2020). There was therefore a need to establish household size in Meru County, while establishing its relationship to participation in the early year's education levels.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were to establish; the household size for the early year's education level children, the relationship between household size and participation in the early year's education among the age level children, and the family type of the early year's education children.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The study specifically answered the following basic question, what is the relationship between household size and participation in the early year's education? It also specifically tested the following hypothesis: H_{01} . There is no relationship between the household size and children's participation in the early year's education.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study was a correlation study employing a survey method. The survey method was found suitable for the present study since it does not require manipulation of variables.

Variables

The independent variable was; household size and the dependent variable was children's participation in the early year's education.

Description and Characterization of Variables

Independent Variable

The variable household size was measured by stating the number of people living in the same household structure. The household size was compared for children in the early year's education levels among children participating in early year's education and children not participating in the early years education and then the results were correlated to establish the relationship between household size and children's participation in early years education.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable school participation was measured by collecting views from parents on their children's participation in the early year's education. This information was used to establish what parents can do to ensure that their early year's education age children participate in early years education in Meru county and in turn flatten the curve on the large percentage of children not attending early years education.

Location of Study

The study was conducted in Meru County

Target Population and sample size

The target population for the study was 78,201 early years education aged children of between 5-8 years. A sample of 390 early years' education children that were participating in early year's education and children not participating in the early education were selected.

Research Instruments

The study utilized the questionnaire for parents in data collection. The questionnaire was administered to parents with children participating in the early year's education and parents with children not participating in early year's education at the time of study.

Data Analysis

A t-test (two tailed) was used to test H_0 , The t-test (two tailed) was found suitable to test the relationship between variables in H_0 since looking at the difference between variables is also the same thing as looking at how variables relate to each other. In using t-test (two tailed) to test the relationship between variables it means that, if two variables are significantly different then, they are related (Obure, 2002).

3. RESULTS

Results of descriptive and inferential analysis are presented in the following sub-sections:

Information on Household Size and Family Type

To establish the household size, parents were asked to state the number of children in the household? Their responses are explained below.

Households with children below eight years were 387 which is 99%. The remaining 1% of the households had 9 and 11 children respectively. In finding out why households had more children of the early year's education that is from nursery level to lower primary ages. Parents attributed this to the fact that responsibility was transferred to them by adolescents who left their young ones under their care since they were not able to take care of them.

Over 41% (160) households had more than 6 persons living in the same household. Only 230 (59%) households had 5 persons and below. The researcher noted that, 245 (63%) households had in excess of 6 persons living in the same home even though they shared different housing structures within the same compound and were members of the same family. Through probing, it was found that many homes with 6 person's and above had a total of 160 children not participating in the early years education. This translates to mean that 82% of early year's education aged children that were not participating in the early years education came from families with at least 6 persons living in the same family compound even though the household structures were different.

These findings are closely related to other findings done on household size which indicate that; an increase in household size led to an increase in the number of children who were stunted (Mwema, 2006, Chege 2006, Murungi 2020); children have a lower weight for height as the number of children in a household increases (Chege, 2006, & Murungi 2009); the more the number of members in a household, the less amount of kilocalories a child is likely to consume and the poorer the nutritional status (Chege 2006). This is in agreement with the findings by UNICEF (1998) that the allocation of food per household member is likely to decrease with the increased number of family members.

To establish the family type, respondents were asked to state whether the household was headed by a child, single parent paternal, single parent maternal or double parents. The researcher found that households were of different types depending on the family head. The researcher found that 34 % of children (67) who did not attend the early year's education came from households headed by children, single maternal and single paternal parents. Two of these households were headed by children. In all the houses visited during data collection period, 85 households were headed by single maternal parents. Among the single maternal headed households, 50(26%) had children that did not participate in the early years education with only 35(41%) children participating in the early years education. Among the sampled households 21, were headed by single paternal parents and a large percentage (71%) of children in these households did not attend the early years learning. Many households (282) were headed by both parents and 154 (55%) of children in these households participated in the early years education with the remaining percentage not participation early years education

Household Size and Participation the Early Years Education (EYE)

The objective to be achieved was to establish the relationship between household size and participation in the early year's education. The null hypothesis stated was:

H_{01} . There is no significant relationship between household size and participation in the early year's education. This hypothesis was tested using t-test (two tailed) and the results are presented table 1.

Table 1: Household Size and Participation in the Early Years Education (EYE)

	Children's participation in the early years education	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Household size	Participating in the early years education	4.17	1.391	0.100
	Not participating in the early years education	4.39	1.644	0.118

Table 1 shows the overall mean score for children participating in the early years education as 4.17 and for children not participating in the early year's education was 4.39.

Table 2: Independent Samples Test for Equality of Means by Household Size and Participation in the Early Years Education (EYE)

	A t-test (two tailed) for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Household size	-1.463	388	0.144	-0.226

Table 2 shows that the mean difference was -0.226 and the level of significance was 0.144 (two tailed).

The t-test (two-tailed) was used to test the relationship between the independent variable household size and dependent variable participation in the early years education. The results in the table 2 shows the mean difference in the household size for children participation early years education and children not participation the early years education was -226 with, 0.144 level of significance (two- tailed). The results were not significant at 0.05. The null hypothesis that; there is no significant relationship between household size and participation in early year's education was therefore accepted. The results indicate that statistically, there was no relationship between household size and children's participation in early years education ($p = 0.144 > 0.05$).

4. DISCUSSION

The lack of relationship between household size and participation in the early year's education could be due to evidence in this study that many houses in the division were not overcrowded, the mean household size for children participation in early year's education was 2.38 and the mean household size for children not participating in early year's education was 2.73. Households in Meru County were not overcrowded; the reason being that some household members who were considered to be mature lived in separate housing facilities from the other family members, especially the young men who were circumcised and girls who were over 18 years. This means that although the results indicated that statistically, there was no significant relationship between the household size and participation in early year's education. We cannot ignore household size and participation in early year's education. This is due to several reasons; first, because the more people there are in a family, the higher the likelihood of early years education age going children living in these homes not participating in the early years learning, especially now that many people share a home but live in separate housing structures as per the Meru tradition. Second, the household size for one household structure cannot be taken to represent the whole family's household structures. The mean size for the households with children participating in the early years education was 2.38 and children not participating in the early years education was 2.73 when the divisions households mean size was compared with the Kenyan household mean size which is (4.4 persons) approximately 5 persons, the Kenyan mean size was lower compared to the mean size of a single family's household structures mean size which is 6 person's per home. Third, due to the fact that 82% of the early years education age going children not participating in early years learning in schools were from families with more than 6 persons even though they shared different housing structures.

This finding is consistent with the study done in Britain on household size by APHRC (2004) which revealed that children lived in poor housing conditions. The fact that children in Meru county do not live in overcrowded houses there are other characteristics of a poor housing condition that cannot be ignored; these are lack of social amenities like water and proper disposal facilities. Even though the research did not focus on these aspects, it was evident and could not escape the researcher's eye that in some homes and particularly homes where children were not participating in the early year's education learning, there was no piped water and the water sources available were the nearby rivers. It was also observed that households and the compound were kept clean by sweeping but garbage was not properly disposed, before burning, it was left unattended mostly near a fence or in an open field. When garbage is not properly disposed, illnesses like diarrhea may thrive. The findings disagree with Mwema, (2006) who found that sanitation issues like proper disposal of garbage and cleanliness of the household environment was observed by respondents in her study which was done in Nyeri County.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that housing need is important and unless it is met we will continue to have large numbers of early years education aged children not participating in the early year's education and learning continuing to multiply

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author wishes to thank the parents of early years education aged children in Meru County for their time and co-operation during the study in providing the necessary information.

REFERENCES

- [1] APHRC (2004). Addressing Health and Livelihood Needs of the Urban Poor. Retrieved on Sunday 30th September 2007. <http://www.Aphrc.org./documents/aphrcnews/ang04.pdf>
- [2] Central Bureau of Statistics (Kenya), Ministry of Health (MOH) (Kenya) and ORC Macro (2004). Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2003. Calverton, Maryland: CBS, MOH, and ORC Macro.
- [3] Chege, P. M. (2006). Dietary Practices, Health and Nutritional status of HIV/AIDS Infected Early years education Children in Kibera Slum, Nairobi. Unpublished MSc. Thesis: Kenyatta University
- [4] Forsythe, S., Rau, B., Gold E., Hayman, J. and Alrutz, N. (1996). Aids : SocioEconomic Impact and Policy Implications in Kenya. AIDSCAP Project. Family health International. Retrieved February 11, 2007,
- [5] Maslow, A. (1954). Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper.
- [6] Murungi, C.G. (2012), Children health needs and its influence on pre-school enrolment. International researcher's vol. 1 (Issue no.1).Pages 7 – 15
- [7] Murungi, C, G., (2009) Children's basic needs and enrolment in early childhood education in Imenti north district. Unpublished PhD thesis. Kenyatta University
- [8] Murungi, C.G. (2020), Covid-19 and home learning; Does involving children, in child work/child employment and or child labour deny them a chance to engage in online learning activities. The case of Meru County, Kenya. International Journal of Research in Social Science and Humanities (IJRSS) Vol.1 Issue 3 (2020): July-2020 E-ISSN: 2582-6220
- [9] Mwema, J. M. (2006). Household Food Security and Nutritional status of under fives in Kieni West Division , Nyeri District. Nairobi:Unpublished MSc Thesis, Kenyatta University
- [10] Republic of Kenya, Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) (1999). Ministry of Planning and National Development: The Population and Housing Census. Nairobi: overnment Printer.
- [11] UNICEF, (1998). The State of the World's Children: Summary New York: UNICEF
- [12] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research (2007), Measuring Overcrowding in Housing. September 2007 [Online].; [cited 2020 August 12th. https://www.huduser.gov/publications/pdf/measuring_overcrowding_in_hsg.pdf
- [13] World Health Organization (2018), WHO Housing and Health Guidelines: Household Crowding; 2018. [Online].; [cited 2020 August 12th. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK535289/>