



Students' Absenteeism and Its Influence on the Education of Pastoralist Communities in Public Secondary Schools in Longido District, Tanzania

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Abstract: *The study purposed to investigate the students' absenteeism and its influence on education of pastoralists' communities in public secondary schools in Longido District. The objectives of the study were to; determine the cultural factors for students' absenteeism among the pastoralist communities in public secondary schools, and find out the influence of students' absenteeism on the education of pastoralist communities in Longido District. The study employed ex-post facto research design and mixed methods approach. Data was collected from nine Heads of schools, 45 form four students, 45 parents and 27 teachers using Questionnaire, interview guide and focus group discussion. In total, 126 respondents were selected using simple random, stratified and purposive sampling techniques. The reliability test ($r = 0.7$) of the questionnaires was determined, after a pilot study. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the SPSS version 20 and results were presented in tables of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically alongside research questions. The findings revealed that cultural ceremonial events, movement with animals, early marriage, and night traditional dances are the major cultural factors for students' absenteeism. Also revealed were absenteeism negatively affects achievement of students' educational goal, score in examination impairs educational growth of school, and leads to the increase in community illiteracy, unskilled students and failure to finish school on time. The study recommends that parents and students should attend special seminars and workshops which outline the importance of discarding outdated cultural practices like female genital mutilation and early marriages.*

Keywords: Education, Students, Absenteeism, Pastoralist, Communities

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1. Introduction

For many years, students' absenteeism has been a global problem that significantly affects public secondary schools in many countries and their entire education

system especially in schools among pastoralist communities. For example, Eswarn and Singh (2008, p.23) found out that in Iran out of 1140 primary school students sampled in the four states, 38 percent of students were absent in their schools. Out of these only 11.2 percent

were absent in their school due to family background reasons.

In Africa, Imad (2019, p.22) conducted a study on the influence of students' absenteeism on class attendance. The study was conducted to determine the influence of absenteeism behavior on academic achievement of secondary school students in Ukum, Nigeria. The study used a survey design where a questionnaire was used to collect data. Selection of samples involved the use of simple probability random sampling as chi-square was used to test the hypotheses. The study found that truant behavior has negative influences on a student's academic achievement due to its tendency to cause failures in terminal examinations and increase rate of dropouts.

In Ethiopia, the problem of students' absenteeism exists in a varying proportion. For example, one study in Ethiopia has shown that, only six percent of schools were reported with very little challenge of students' absenteeism. Moreover, students' absenteeism appeared to be frequent in about 45 percent of schools in that country. In addition, this rate was found to be associated with the teachers' absenteeism which was also high (Krishnaratne and Carpenter, 2013, p.87).

Abdi (2010, p.47) conducted a study on the factors for students' absenteeism in Kwanza Sub-county County, Kenya and the result of the study was that, there was inclusion of nomadic children in primary and secondary education to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which could be increased by using other alternatives. For example, this may involve Non-formal Education and Distance Learning (DL). Such types of educational provision have shown better nomads' enrolment if the physical limitations of school-based services are mitigated. In this manner it will facilitate to achieve school proper attendance with no difference between girls and boys and a strong interest among adults in Kenya.

Tanzania as one of the world societies that have pastoralist communities in some districts, has no exception to this widespread global educational challenge. This is because students' absenteeism is said to be rampant in the country where there are pastoralist communities, especially at Longido District (Brundage, Castillo & Batche, 2017, p.22). The tendency of many students to be absent in schools in Longido District contributes significantly to the deterioration of students' performance in their internal and external examination which affects the local economy and the country as a whole. Report on the students' failure to attend classes in many of the pastoralist community schools especially in the public schools in Longido District indicates that approximately 630 out of about 2300 students were permanently absentees based on 2019 figures (Longido Council Data, 2019). Similarly, the report shows that in a school, the daily students' absenteeism due to cultural practices and child labour like looking after cattle is 256 out of 600 students. In

pastoralist communities, students' absenteeism has also been observed to be a basis for many students to engage in early marriage and eventually erasing their future dreams at an early age (Maynard, Wright & Vaugughn, 2015, p.66). From the foregoing, the current study sought to investigate Students' Absenteeism and its Influence on the Education of Pastoralist Communities in Public Secondary Schools in Longido District.

2. Literature Review

The theoretical and empirical literature was reviewed with reference to research objectives. The study was guided by the theory of planned behavior.

2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The study applied a psychological theory known as Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) which states that, the best predictor of behavior is one's intention to perform that behavior (Neal, Wood, Labrecque, & Lally, 2012, p.101). In turn, intentions are determined by attitudes (evaluation of the behavior), subjective norms (social pressure to perform the behavior), and perceived control (one's belief that he or she has the ability to perform the behavior). Specifically, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a psychological theory that includes the role of attitudes, holds promise in predicting students' absenteeism. According to Brandy et al (2017), the theory put forward the argument that intentions are the best predictor of behavior and that intentions are predicted by attitudes, meaning a person's evaluation of his or her own behavior or of others' behaviors; Subjective norms, which refer to the social pressure one feels to perform the behavior; and Perceived control, meaning a person's perception of his or her own capability to perform the behavior. Only a few studies have used this theory to predict school students' absenteeism, and they did so with great success especially in the developed economies.

The study was guided by the following questions;

- (i) What are the cultural factors for students' absenteeism among the pastoralist communities in public secondary schools in Longido District?
- (ii) To what extent does absenteeism influence students' education among the pastoralist communities in public secondary schools in Longido District

2.2 Cultural Factors for Students' Absenteeism

Brandy, Michael and Kristen (2017, p.67) conducted a research on the truancy in the United States by examining chronological trends for cultural factors for students' absenteeism and correlates by race, age and gender using correction research design. A total of 209 adolescents were randomly sampled from whom data was collected

using questionnaires. Out of 209 questionnaires administered to respondents, 190 were returned complete. The research conducted established that truancy was significantly correlated with some cultural values like the trend of parents to overload children with domestic chores, which in turn lower children academic engagement and school grades.

Also, Demir and Karabeyoglu (2015, p.52) conducted a research on factors associated with absenteeism in high schools. Using descriptive correlation design, the study sought to find out factors associated with absenteeism among the students in high schools in Turkey. The aim was to investigate the effect of individual, family and school variables on absenteeism among high school students. The study revealed that absenteeism was caused by poor students' commitment to school and parental control.

Furthermore, Senyamator, Gyimah and Minadzi (2018, p.45), conducted a related study of students' absenteeism. The study was aimed at establishing the factors affecting pupils' absenteeism at Felicormfort Junior high school in Cape Coast, Ghana. Specifically, the research had aimed, among other objectives, at determining the cultural related factors of pupils' absenteeism at Felicormfort Junior high schools in Cape Coast, Ghana. Employing likert scale type of questionnaires for pupils and structured interview for parents, the research unveiled the fact that cultural factors can negatively affect student's education.

Moreover, Kisoboet al. (2019, p.11) conducted a study among the students in secondary schools in Kwanza division in Kenya to establish the effects of social cultural factors on secondary school students' academic performance. Adopting cross sectional design on 891 respondents, a sample of 275 participants was chosen. The result of the research showed that influence of variable such as parents' culture and parents' motivation affected academic performances of the students. Hyera (2007) investigated the influence of socio-cultural values on dropout rates of secondary school female students in Tunduru district and discovered that the socio-cultural values influence secondary school dropout among girls. It was found that many parents preferred to educate boys rather than girls because it is perceived as the wastage of money to educate girls because they will get married or get pregnant then expelled from school.

2.3 The Influence of Students' Absenteeism on the Education of Pastoralist Communities

Glasure (2015), conducted a research in order to find out whether class attendance influenced non-traditional students academic performance of the university students in the United State of America. Using correlation research design, 72 respondents believed to be reliable for the study were chosen using stratified random sampling for proper

representation within the sample. The finding of the study revealed a statistically significant and quantitative large relationship between days of absence and academic performance. The research employed stratified sampling technique to sample participants from the two categories of students' gender which comprised 27 boys and 27 girls together with 9 class teachers and 9 counselors.

Ibekwe, Ojinnaka, Oguonu and Nduagubam (2018, p.39) equally conducted a research on the influence of school absence on academic performance of school children with asthma in Enugu, Nigeria. Using the experimental design method and questionnaires, the data was collected from 97 respondents. The findings reveals that although the children with asthma miss more school days than their non asthmatic class mates, this does not significantly affect their academic performance.

Kelly (2018, p.18) conducted a research on trends in school absenteeism in Malawi. The study aimed at finding out the influence of students' absenteeism in the Karonga District for students' future educational trajectories. The research adopted quantitative and qualitative approach including a longitudinal survey research design and cluster random sampling in order to sample the clusters to be selected from the population of Karonga District. The research identified that students value attending school every day but attendance is constrained by a complex interplay of individual and community level factors which influence the education of students at Karonga District in Malawi.

Kiumi (2012, p. 61) conducted a study to explore the effects of students' absenteeism on the students' academic and school performance in Uganda. The study also assessed the effectiveness of class attendance monitoring tool, the challenges faced by the school administration in dealing with absentee students and established the relationship between students' absenteeism and academic performance of the students. The study adopted descriptive cross-sectional survey design. A combination of cluster random sampling and convenience sampling technique was applied to accommodate the variety of respondents from Serere, Soroti, Kumi and Ngora Districts in Teso sub-region; North Eastern Uganda.

The study also used questionnaires and interview schedule to collect primary data from 349 respondents who participated in the study out of expected 384 obtained from a target population of 100,000. The finding shows that the monitoring tools used for students' attendance are effective and there is a positive relationship between students' attendance and academic performance. To the students, absenteeism leads to poor academic performance and students' dropout. Similarly, it results in graduating half backed students, poor curriculum coverage and loss of interest in learning while at school. It affect the school image, lower the students enrollment, transfer of students by parents, wastage of teachers' and administrator's time

and affects the university tertiary enrollment. The researcher also found that school attendance affects both the students and the school performance.

3. Research Methodology

The study employed ex-post facto research design and mixed methods approach. Data was collected from nine Heads of schools, 45 form four students, 45 parents and 27 teachers using questionnaire, interview guide and focus group discussion. In total, 126 respondents were selected using simple random, stratified and purposive sampling techniques. The reliability test of the questionnaires was determined, where Cronbach coefficient alpha was found to correlate at $r = 0.7$. According to Hynes et al.,(2020), the instrument was reliable for data collection. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the SPSS version 20 and results were presented in tables of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically alongside research questions namely:

1. What are the cultural factors for students' absenteeism among the pastoralist communities in public secondary schools in Longido District?

2. To what extent does absenteeism influence students' education among the pastoralist communities in public secondary schools in Longido District?

4. Results and Discussion

The findings were discussed with regard to research objectives.

4.1 Cultural Factors for Students' Absenteeism among the Pastoralist Communities in Public Secondary Schools in Longido District

The first objective of this study was to determine the cultural factors for students' absenteeism among the pastoralist communities in public secondary schools in Longido District. Table 1.1 summarizes the findings.

Table 1: Findings on Cultural Factors for Students' Absenteeism among the Pastoralist Communities in Public Secondary Schools in Longido District (n=72)

| Statements | Students n=45 | f (%) | Teachers n=27 | f (%) | Total n=72 | f (%) |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Cultural ceremonial events | 43(96) | | 26(96) | | 69(96) | |
| Traditions of travelling with animals | 44(98) | | 26(96) | | 70(97) | |
| Early marriage | 45(100) | | 27(100) | | 72(100) | |
| Cattle rustling | 35(78) | | 20(74) | | 55(76) | |
| Rites of passage | 34(76) | | 21(78) | | 55(76) | |
| Circumcision practice | 43(96) | | 25(93) | | 68(94) | |
| Gender Ideology | 43(96) | | 25(93) | | 68(94) | |
| Night traditional dances | 43(96) | | 25(93) | | 68(94) | |

f=frequency, % = percentages, values in brackets are percentage of students and teachers who agreed with the statement. Hence, those with contrary opinions to the statement are implied.

Source: Field Data (2021)

The findings in Table 1 show that 43(96%) students agreed that cultural ceremonial events are a major factor of students' absenteeism among public secondary school students in Longido District. The item was also supported by 26(96%) teachers. This indicates that a total of 69(96%) respondents; both students and teachers were in support of the item because if students grace ceremonial practices, it would be difficult for them to attend school regularly. However, only 3(4%) of the respondents were of the contrary opinion. According to Hyera (2007), the cultural ceremonial events such as initiation ceremonies, contribute highly to girls' dropout at the secondary school level due to these ceremonial events, school girls are taught or trained on how to handle their future husbands and families as a whole. This entails respect for elders from the region, taking care of their health during

menstruation, general hygiene and different sexual styles. The elders sometimes influence girls to practice these sexual styles with their boyfriends and this often leads to early or unwanted pregnancies, thus most girls drop from school. Equally, these initiation ceremonial events contribute to students' absenteeism in the sense that the training offered by elders in most cases takes about two to three months, which affects their studies since they have to be out of school during this period. This finding was to a great extent supported by Kelly (2018) who investigated the influence of cultural values on dropout rates of secondary school female students in Karonga District, Northern Malawi, and revealed that majority of parents from the region favored educating boys rather than girls because educating girls is viewed as wastage of time as

they will end up getting pregnant and consequently expelled from school.

On the other hand, 44(98%) students agreed that the tradition of relocating with animals in pursuit of pasture is a cultural factor for students' absenteeism among the pastoralist communities in public secondary schools in Longido District. This was also supported by 26(96%) teachers. This indicates that 70(97%) respondents; both students and teachers were in support of the sub-item and 2(3%) respondents disagreed. The custom of Moran students who are tasked with the responsibility of moving from one place to another with cattle looking for good pastures make them to miss some days and lessons at school. This affects their school attendance. This is consistent with the findings in the study by Senyamoto, Gyimah and Minadzi (2018) which discovered that cultural factors like grazing of animals can negatively affect students' education.

Also, on the sub-item early marriage, majority 45(100%) of the students agreed that this is a major cultural factor which affects students' absenteeism in public secondary schools. Similarly, all the 27(100%) teachers had the view that early marriage drive girl students out of public secondary school. This implies that 72(100%) of respondents, both teachers and students were in support of the factor. Therefore, it shows that early marriage, initiation and poor parents' education are among the leading reasons for students' absenteeism in most of the public secondary schools in Longido District. Some parents in Longido District seemed to know very little about the consequences of child marriages. This is because of low level of education.

Some people do not value education as it does not repay the investment instantly. It is a long-term investment that is considered more risky in the case of girls, as they can get pregnant and be expelled from school at any time. Families among the pastoralist communities in Longido District are known to be famous in traditional practices, and this makes them take girls as family assets which can be exchanged with some materials like dowry price. Minadzi (2019, p.88) reported that, if a girl or a boy reaches puberty, even if she/he is a student, they must get married immediately before being corrupted by the rotten world which influences majority of students to have a prolonged absenteeism during the process of settling down these disputes. These results correspond with the previous study by Kisobo et al. (2019, p. 34) who researched on the effects of social cultural factors on secondary school students' academic performance in Kwanza division in Kenya and unveiled the fact that variables like parents' motivation and parents' culture which include forcing of early marriage affects academic performance of the students.

Equally, majority 35(78%) of the students agreed that cattle rustling is a major cultural factor for students'

absenteeism. The item was also supported by 20(74%) teachers who explained the same views that cattle rustling are a major cultural factor that contributes to students' absenteeism in the school. This shows that 55(76%) respondents; both teachers and students were in agreement with the point and 17(24%) disagreed. This implies that Moran's who practice cattle rustling among the pastoralist communities in Longido District have no opportunity for accessing education due to their cultural tendency of stealing cattle, which affects their regular school attendance. One of the factors associated with cattle rustling thus resulting in students' absenteeism include migration of parents from one place to another to protect their animal from cattle rustling. In most cases this affects students' school attendance.

Moreover, 34(76%) of the students agreed that rites of passage is the cultural factor for students absenteeism in secondary schools, a factor which was supported by 21(78%) of teachers. This finding implies that 55(76%) of respondents agreed that rite of passage was noted to be one among the major factors contributing to students' absenteeism in Longido District and 17(24%) disagreed on the factor. Absenteeism cases in public secondary schools among the pastoralist community in Longido District were due to rites of passage. It is evident that rites of passage had great influence towards students' absenteeism. Evidences to verify that rites of passage existed in the society and their influence towards students' absence from school resulted from the most common cultural practices (rites of passage) which were circumcision and age set system noted to be highly valued compared to education which is considered a subsidiary issue. The researchers found that, during circumcision, some students drop out from school regardless of examinations ahead. They do so in order to attend the circumcision ceremonies or to be circumcised because the operation is one of the most important cultural practices in which every society member has to pass through.

Likewise, age set system was also another rite of passage practice which influenced students' absenteeism. Most of youths after initiation perceive themselves or are perceived as adults and are attracted to the lifestyle of their age mates who have never gone to school. This age group when at school demands special treatment and high respect from their fellow students. Also they hate the tendency of being punished especially by female teachers after the practice which becomes difficult for them to abide by school rules and regulations and thus the situation leads to truancy.

In addition, 43(96%) of students reported that circumcision practice is the cultural reason as to why students turn out to be absent at public secondary schools in Longido District, a factor which was supported by 25 (93%) of teachers. For this reason, the findings indicate that 68(94%) respondents both teachers and students were in agreement with the item because the students involved

in circumcision practice find it difficult to attend school timely and only 4(6%) respondents disagreed. The reason for their support to the item is due to the evidence that most of the young girls and young boys who are participating in this practice are taught matters concerning with marriage which lead them to feel like they are old enough to behave like mature people and separate themselves with other young girls and boys who are not circumcised hence drop out from school.

The ritual of circumcision practiced by various ethnic groups found in Longido District may certainly have something to contribute towards education and absenteeism as well. On this matter, one respondent, observed that;

Circumcision being a cultural practice may have a great contribution towards knowledge, attitudes and behavior of members of a society. It is a variant of initiation ceremony and is a ritual practiced by different groups in many of pastoralist communities found in Longido District. Once circumcised, the boys and girls feel they are adults, equal to their teachers; hence they cannot cooperate well with those uncircumcised students in the class and in the school at large(Personal interview, 26th, May, 2021).

Majority 43(96%) of the students agreed that gender ideology is a cultural factor for students' absenteeism in public secondary schools in Longido District. This was supported by majority 25(93%) of teachers too. This implies that 68(94%) of respondents were in support of the factor that bad cultural practices like gender stereotyping influence student absenteeism from school and 4(6%) of respondents were of contrary opinion on the item. In this study, children especially girls are seen as source of family income in terms of dowry from the expected husbands, and allowing them to be house girl in the rich families in the District and outside the District as well is a noble idea. This attitude affects students' opportunities to access and complete education as explained by one respondent through open ended questionnaire that some of the parents use their children as a source of earning income, they entertain involving their children in child labor while girls are directed to work as house girl.

On the other hand, instead of allowing their children to go to school every day, other parents task them with the responsibility of caring for cattle during class hours. However, during focus group discussion, students indicated that some of the families have negative attitudes towards education, especially for girls. Those families would like to see their children support them by working as house girls to complement family income. They further indicated that gender segregation by parents was a problems leading to school absenteeism because parents are the ones who support the children in buying school

uniform, exercise books, pens, pencils and other school contributions. Therefore, gender ideology shown by parents result into difficulties for those students to proceed with studies unless relatives fill in the gap and support them financially and morally.

These findings are in agreement with the results established by Brandy, Michael and Kristen (2017) who pointed out that most cases correlates with race, age and gender. Moreover, traditionally, there are roles for women and there are roles for men. In Maasai community, this tradition is very common since they have socially constructed gender roles among men. Therefore, gender imbalances and discrimination constitute some of the Maasai customs which prevent girls from going to school on equal grounds as boys. Data obtained through questionnaire, interview and focused group discussions revealed that Maasai girls were denied their right to education because of the gender roles they have to accomplish. In Maasai communities, girls are the ones who are responsible for taking care of their families; they fetch water, cook for the families, collect fire wood, and milk the cattle and other gender related roles. Nevertheless, Maasai men on the other hand are only responsible for making sure food is available and they are also the ones who sometimes get easy access to school. Because of the roles Maasai girls have, they have no equal right to attend school timely because they have to do most of the home chores.

Furthermore, 43(96%) students cited the trend of night traditional dances as the causal cultural factor for students' absenteeism in the pastoralist public secondary schools in Longido District, a reason which was supported by 25(93%) of teachers who agreed that night traditional dances hinder students school attendance and eventually lead to dropout. According to the respondents, night traditional dances famously known as 'esoto' are done at night where the school girls meet with grown up boys over night. The results of this special event to young girls traditionally known among them as 'ndito' and among young boys as 'sporio' involves sexual encounter hence oftenlead to unwanted pregnancies and this interferes with girls attendance to school. It was clear during the study that, while male elders wanted night traditional dances to continue; female elders explained that it was no longer important since it just increased pains to mothers.

Male elders were of the view that the Moran group which does not go through night traditional dances is regarded as incomplete and hopeless. On the contrary, mothers were of the view that night traditional dances were spoiling their daughters. Some fathers, however, admitted that 'esoto' dance had serious impact on girls' health and their access, attendance and participation in educational activities. Apart from causing physical damage to girls, it also made Maasai girls reluctant to go to school leading to frequent absenteeism and eventually dropout from school.

One school girl pointed out that some father's despised mothers who could not allow the girls to attend night traditional dances. School girls and boys further showed that while some school girls refused to get involved in such practices, some of them could go to 'esoto' during school days hence could completely fail to study in the following day because they apparently looked tired and sleepy. These findings imply that girls' aspirations and participation in education are matter of concern. Unfortunately, it was also noted that even when some girls who had some levels of awareness refused to attend 'esoto' instead of being encouraged, they were mocked and rejected by their peers. Bad enough, those that were expected to protect them from participating in 'esoto' that is, their parents and close relatives, were the ones who pushed them into such practices leading to their failure to attend school timely due to their prolonged sleepiness. This is supported by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) which stated that intentions are the best predictor of

behavior and that intentions are predicted by attitudes, meaning a person's evaluation of his or her own behavior or that of others' subjective norms, which refers to the social pressure one feels to perform the behavior and perceived control (Neal, Wood, Labrecque, & Lally, 2012).

4.2. The Influence of Students' Absenteeism on the Education of Pastoralist Communities in Public Secondary Schools in Longido District

The other objective of this study was to find out the influence of Students' absenteeism on the education of Pastoralist communities in Public Secondary schools in Longido District. Table 2 summarizes the findings.

Table 2: Findings on the Extent to which Absenteeism Influence Students' Education of Pastoralist Communities in Public Secondary Schools in Longido District (n=72)

| Statement | Students n=45 f (%) | Teachers n = 27 f (%) | Total n= 72 f (%) |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Absenteeism negatively affects achievement of students' educational goals | 45(100) | 23(85) | 68(94) |
| Absenteeism causes poor score in examination | 45(100) | 24(89) | 69(96) |
| Absenteeism negatively affects the provision of quality education | 45(100) | 22(81) | 67(93) |
| Absenteeism impairs educational growth of school | 43(96) | 25(93) | 68(94) |
| Leads to increase in community illiteracy | 45(100) | 25(93) | 70(97) |
| Absenteeism leads to unskilled students | 42(93) | 25(93) | 67(93) |
| Failure to gain new knowledge and skills taught in class | 44(98) | 24(89) | 68(94) |
| Failure to finish school on time | 44(98) | 24(89) | 68(94) |

f =frequency, % = percentages, values in brackets are percentage of students and teachers who agreed with the statement. Hence, contrary opinions to the statement are implied.

Source: Field data (2021)

From table 2, all 45(100%) students agreed that absenteeism negatively affects achievement of student's educational goal in public secondary school in Longido district. The factor was also supported by 23(85%) teachers who expressed similar concern that absenteeism negatively affects achievement of student's educational goal in public secondary school in Longido district. Therefore, this indicated that a total of 68(94%) respondents agreed that absenteeism negatively affects achievement of student's educational goals while 4(6%) respondents were in disagreement. From the findings, absenteeism hurts both academic and educational plans with variation of individual and subgroup as well as in the cumulative effect of different degrees of absence. Students generally suffer more from absenteeism in classroom and experience larger negative potential effects on academic outcomes in form four examination result. With regard to personal future goals, absenteeism is likely to have maximum negative impact on social awareness, self efficiency and the likely impact noticeable in the school.

The findings from one respondent show that 38 students, failed to complete their secondary education at the school in the year 2019 due to absenteeism. One of the respondents stated that;

We were enrolled 106 students in 2016, but only 68 completed form four. Out of these, 19 were boys while 49 were girls. On the other hand 18 students failed to graduate due to truancy, pregnancies, early marriages and transfers (Personal interview, 27th May, 2021).

Therefore, in triangulating this finding with the empirical literature review the study was supported by Kelly (2018) who conducted a research in Malawi on trends in school absenteeism, influences and impact of cleaner burning cook stoves with the aim of finding out the influence of students' absenteeism in the Karonga District. The researchers unearthed the fact that students' absenteeism

negatively influences education of students. The study also revealed that 45(100%) students asserted that absenteeism causes poor scores in examination. This view was also supported by 24(89%) teachers. This means that majority of the respondents agreed that absenteeism causes poor performance in examinations. Teachers indicated the presence of a student in the class had great benefit on student during lectures and positively reflects in his or her performance in tests and examinations. The results proved that, the absence of the students during lectures and their lack of interaction with the teaching process in the classroom contributes greatly to the students' poor performance in their examinations. This finding concurs with the study conducted by Khan, Lodhi, Batti and Ali (2019) whose aim was to find out how absenteeism affected academic performance of undergraduate medical students in Pakistan.

The study unveiled the fact that medical undergraduate students' better performance in professional assessment examinations had a positive correlation with absenteeism. The study also revealed that majority, 43(96%) of students, agreed that absenteeism impaired educational growth of the school. This fact was also supported by 25(93%) teachers. This means that the participants agreed that absenteeism impairs educational growth of school by lowering school grades. However, one teacher opined that failure to attend school regularly is a vital factor contributing to poor performance among students, and the school as a whole. Excessive school absenteeism was often linked to poor school academic achievement. Therefore, school attendance by students plays an integral role in the success and educational advancement in any academic institution, including in the pastoralist communities in Longido District. This view is in accordance with the finding by Glasure (2015) who conducted a research in order to find out whether class attendance influenced non-traditional students academic performance and unearthed the fact that there is a significant relationship between the absence of students from school and educational growth, including performance of the school.

On the sub item absenteeism leads to the increase of community illiteracy, 45 (100%) students and majority 25(93%) of the teachers gave approval that this was a great challenge to both students and the community at large. This implies that majority 70(97%) of the respondents agreed that absenteeism leads to increase in community illiteracy. The finding from the study indicates that absenteeism consequences are extensive, resulting in negative implications for multiple levels of community. In summary, respondent's views indicated that there was a short term effect of absenteeism as they stated that, absenteeism can lead to poor academic performance.

Further, the respondents expounded that absenteeism in the long term is a predictor of poor community outcomes among the pastoralist community in Longido District,

including the increase of community level of illiteracy. Moreover, absenteeism negatively affects the community because of its correlation with misbehavior, crime, and other negative adult outcomes. Student absenteeism from school was the most obvious result of a number of cultural and socio-economic reasons found in this pastoralist community in Longido District. According to responses from teachers, the problem of absenteeism was more accentuated and worse among the poor and low income families and this in turn leads to street children. This echoed the finding by Mathias, Asi, and Mlowosa (2014) whose study revealed that absenteeism leads to poor students' academic performance and this affects the community level of education.

Moreover, 67(93%) respondents were in agreement that absenteeism leads to unskilled students in most of pastoralist communities found in Longido District. However, 42(93%) students and 25(93%) teachers were convinced that poor family background with poor cultural practice may discourage students from achieving their educational dreams since most of them do not acquire the intended knowledge due to poor family backgrounds. One teacher stated that absenteeism affects student's level of education which in turn impairs their ability to apply such knowledge in their day to day affairs in life. Equally, the respondents cited truancy as a major factor that led students to miss important skills that could help them in their daily needs in the community in the region they live. A study by Ibekwe, Ojinnaka, Oguonu and Nduagubam (2018) in Nigeria yielded the same results; that students' absenteeism affects student's academic performance and hinder most of them to get the intended skills.

In addition, the finding as indicated in table 2 pointed out that majority of the respondents 68(94%) agreed that students absenteeism leads failure to gain new knowledge and skills taught in class while only 4(6%) respondents were of the contrary opinion. The possible explanation of these findings is that when a student is absent from the classroom, their learning is disrupted. When that student is repeatedly absent, their performance can be significantly impacted in a negative way. The more days a student is out of the classroom, the lower they tend to score on standardized tests and lack good knowledge.

Additionally, the respondents indicated that when students are attending lectures, they miss valuable knowledge and skills and therefore do not clarify their concepts which result in inadequate learning and poor content coverage. Various respondents, especially teachers who have participated in the study indicated that poor class attendance by the students, lead to poor performance and lack of good skills which could help them in their daily life. These results concur with the previous study by Kelly (2018) who conducted a study on school absenteeism in Malawi and identified that student's value attending school every day; but attendance is constrained by a complex interplay of individual and community level

factors which affect the education and general students' knowledge.

Furthermore, 44(98%) students and 24(89%) teachers agreed that students' absenteeism lead to most of the students failing to finish school on time. This was due to the reasons that sometimes those who are not attending class lessons properly repeat the same class due to failure in internal and external examination. This indicated that 68(94%) respondents both teachers and students were in support of the item and only 4(6%) students were of the contrary opinion.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings on research objective; to determine cultural factors for students' absenteeism among the pastoral communities in public secondary schools in Longido District, the study concluded that cultural ceremonial events, traditional of travelling with animals, early marriage, cattle rustling, rites of passage, circumcision practice, gender ideology and night traditional dances were the major cultural factors for students' absenteeism. The second research objective sought to find out the influence of students' absenteeism on education of pastoral communities in public secondary schools in Longido District. From the findings, the study concludes that absenteeism negatively affects the provision of quality education, absenteeism impairs educational growth of school, leads to increase in community illiteracy, absenteeism leads to unskilled students, cause the students failure to gain new knowledge and skills taught in class and leads to the students failure to finish school on time. The study additionally exposed

that absenteeism lowers student's performance in examination since they lack some class content which has an effect on student's ability of comfortably responding to examination questions.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the, research findings, the following recommendations were made.

- (i) The educational stakeholders including parents, students and communities should attend special seminars and workshops which outline the importance of discarding outdated cultural practices like female genital mutilation practices and early marriages so that they can give students ample time to attend school.
- (ii) Moreover, stakeholders including parents, guardians, government, and students should cultivate what is called a community of learners whereby they encourage one another, learn one another, discuss one another, debate one another and indeed they all should strive to improve both home income sources and family living condition in order to motivate and attract students to stay at school without participating in economic matters.
- (iii) The school management, parents and school committees should ensure that students are provided with basic needs while teachers and parents should maintain good relationship with students so as to reduce unnecessary absenteeism associated with poor cultural and economic cases.

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