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## **The Nexus between School-Related Factors and Boy-Child Participation and Retention in Public Secondary Schools: Lessons from Baringo County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

In many developing countries, the participation of the boy-child in education is characterized by low retention and poor performance and Baringo County, Kenya, is no exception. The problem of increased secondary school dropouts among the boys is a concern to educationists and the general public in Baringo County. The boy child in Baringo County is endangered due to low retention and participation in secondary education. To find ways of mitigating against the vagaries of such an unfortunate scenario, a study was carried out with an aim of establishing the relationship between school-related factors and boy-child participation and retention in public secondary schools education in Baringo County. The discussions in this paper are anchored on the findings of the study. Guided by selected tenets of the education production function theory, the study adopted a pragmatic world view and had a sample size of 573 participants comprising form three boys' students, teachers and Quality Assurance and Standards Officers from Baringo County. The researcher adopted stratification, simple random sampling and purposive strategies for setting up samples. Questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis were used for data collection and data analyzed using SPSS (ver 20). From the findings, it was established that insensitive school environment, long distance from home to school, school policy, poor teaching and learning methods, and lack of guidance and counselling affect boys' participation and retention. Concerning school policy, it was revealed that the teachers agreed that affects boys' participation and retention. Further, the study revealed that affect boys' participation and retention in public secondary schools.

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The study concluded that participation and retention of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Baringo County is hindered by the absence of an environment that is more boy-child-centred. To address this malady, the paper advocates for the need to ensure that stakeholders in the education sector create a child-friendly environment that will facilitate the participation and retention of the boy-child in school.

**Keywords:** School-Related Factors; Boy-Child; Retention; Participation; Secondary School; Baringo County.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Overview**

Education is a powerful tool by which economically and socially marginalized people can lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully in nation building [1]. Consequently, it is for Governments to provide quality education for all, and monitor effectively the education strategies. The UN decade for advancement of women motion, increased awareness of women on education [2] and this resulted in the creation of the National Policy on Gender and Development in Kenya in 2010. The Constitution of Kenya [3], Children's Act, Education Act and Republic of Kenya [2] and other legal documents, prescribe free and compulsory basic education to all Kenyan children. Education should, therefore, be equitable and accessible to all children. The ongoing reforms in the education sector in Kenya have resulted to a dramatic expansion of secondary education, an increase of 58.0% in the year 2010 [4, 5, 6]. The mandate of the education sector is to respond to the Constitution of Kenya [3] and Kenya Vision 2030 by making education in Kenya inclusive, relevant and competitive regionally and internationally.

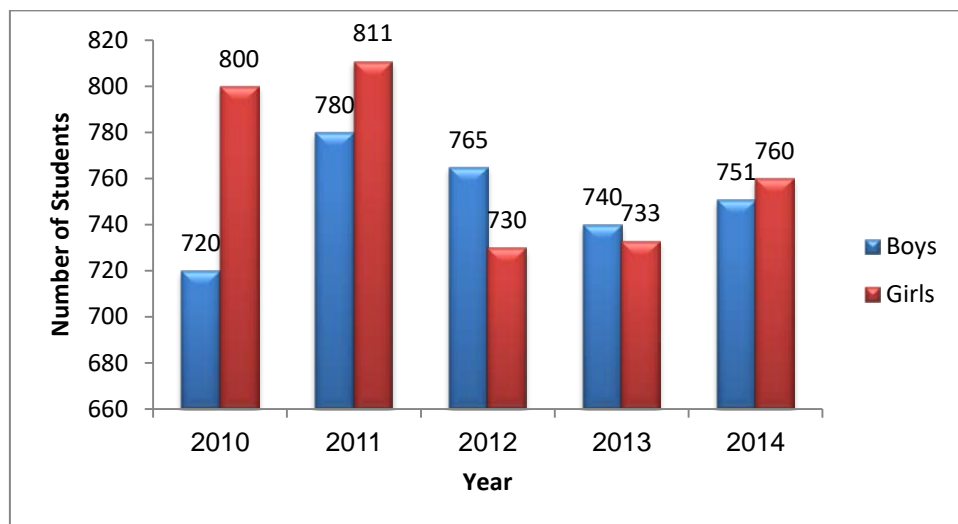
During the last few years, major reforms and innovation have included the implementation of free primary and free day secondary education [7]. This has enabled the country to make significant progress towards attaining Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goal (MDGs). To date, the main focus has been on improving levels of access, retention, equality and overall efficiency of the education sector. Both population growth and dynamics of the labour market impact significantly on the demand of schooling, whilst improved access to quality schooling which is fundamental to economic development and a means of eliminating poverty [8, 9, 10].

Engin-Demir [11] states that education is not a charity but rather a fundamental human right for all people irrespective of their sex, race, or economic status. Education is the key to sustainable development, peace and stability among countries. In any society, the provision of education is a fundamental and basic right for human resource development. Education represents a major form of human resources development. Human resource development is determined by the availability and quality of education. Human resource development constitutes an underlying basis upon material development. It is a cornerstone for a nation's fast socio-economic development. King and Hill [12] argue that educating boys yields far-reaching benefits for boys and girls themselves, their families' and the societies in which they live. The benefits of investing in human capital are especially pertinent for boys in developing countries where gender equity in education is often lagging behind. Without educating boys, national endeavours can be less effective. Equal opportunity of education for both

sexes is equally important.

In many developing countries, the participation of the boy-child in education is characterized by low retention and poor performance [12, 13]. The significant contribution of boy education is expressed in terms of economic, cultural and political aspects of a country. Obanya [14] states that an educated boy is likely to become: a more competent and knowledgeable father, a more productive and better paid worker, an informed citizen, a self confident individual and a skilled decision maker. The potential benefits of education are always present but boys' education often has stronger and more significant impact than girls' education [15]. This does not mean education is unnecessary for females.

Despite government efforts to improve participation and retention rates, 30% of Kenyan youth are out of school, before completing form 4. There is erosion of educational aspirations among some boys [16]. Statistics from the DEO's office, Baringo County, as shown in Figure 1, indicate that enrolment of girls is now higher than that of boys and that the boy dropout is on the rise, from 5.7% in 2011, to 8.5% in 2014 (See Figure 1). The remoteness of some parts of Baringo County has posed a challenge since a large number of boys drop due to challenges related to schooling. Transition rates (from primary to secondary) are as low as 8% for boys in Baringo County. A UNESCO [17] report established that the number of boys in schools in this region who complete secondary education is still very low (27%) because many enrol but drop out as years go by. If this trend continues, it means the government will not be able to achieve expected national goals of education and MDGs will remain elusive. Furthermore, this trend will have adverse effects on the future of the county. This was the basis for the study, to determine the school-related factors that inhibit boy child's participation in education in Baringo County.



**Figure 1:** KCSE Registered Candidates 2010-2014

The problem of increased secondary school dropouts, especially among the boys is a concern to educationists and the general public in Baringo County. The problem of wastage through boy drop out will affect the future of the county. The boy child in Baringo County is endangered due to low retention and participation in secondary education. This triggered an interest to have a study carried out. Many studies done in Baringo County have

addressed on factors contributing to girl drop out and no specific study has investigated factors attributed to boy child participation and retention. The study sought to investigate school-related factors that inhibit boy child's participation in public secondary schools education in Baringo County.

Some boys have dropped out of school because of bad relationship with some teachers, who discriminate against them while giving preferential treatment to others [8, 10]. Unsuitable teaching methods that make learner get bored of education can also be a factor. Schools who repeat students who do not perform well have witnessed an 'exodus' of students coming out of their system. One cause of high rate of drop out in public secondary schools is the achievement gap [9]. This is where students struggle in academic performance to catch up with others and on failure, easily give up [10]. Lack of school fees has also made many students be in and out of school and this absenteeism has contributed to their pulling out [5, 6].

Many others drop after being beaten or canned by teachers. While students' canning has been banned, many students have run away from schools for fear of being physically or emotionally abused. Some schools such as those in the ASAL areas have no classrooms, no desks and other essentials for learning, making a group of students' lose the interest of learning, and so drop out to do other things. The Government should equip all schools with teachers and learning facilities, so as to keep all children in school. Teachers should also be professional when handling the students in their schools. Some students have to walk long distances to get to the nearest school, whereas others have to cross over Lake Baringo or dangerous rivers and this challenge has made many boys to drop out [18, 19, 20].

### ***1.2. School-Related Factors and Boys' Participation in Education – Literature Review***

According to a study carried out by Mulongo [21], an estimated 400,000 secondary school student's drop as a result of school-related factors. It is widely acknowledged that infrastructural facilities, school environment and teachers' attitude exert powerful influences on student's interest or disinterest in studies including dropout rates. In this context, De and Dreze [22] describe discrimination against socially disadvantaged groups as terrible and exclusionary. They reveal that children from the upper classes are joining private schools and the poor are basically attending government schools. Consequently, the attitude of the teachers, disinterest in teaching to these disadvantaged children and poor infrastructural facilities like unavailability of functional toilets, improper seating arrangements among other factors are some of the significant reasons for pushing out children from school [23]. School quality and learning outcomes can play a role in both supply and demand for education. If parents in poor rural households perceive the quality of their children's schooling to be poor (for example unsafe buildings), they may be reluctant to send their children to school [24]. In some cases, day school students walk long distances from home to school, and with time they get tired and quit from school.

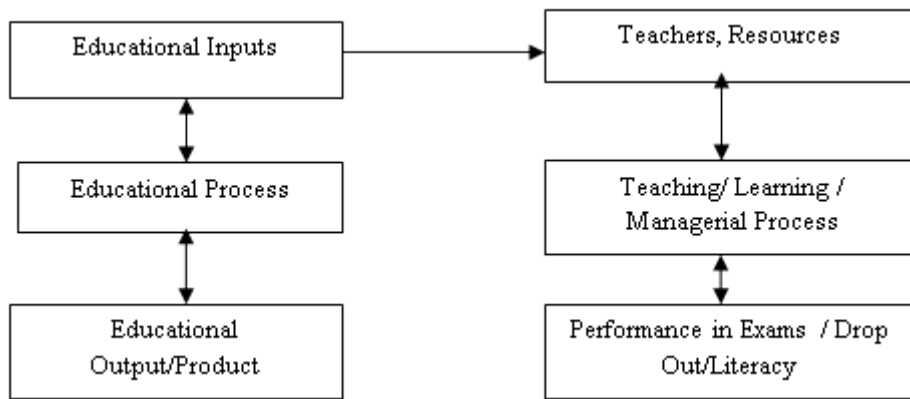
Several school-related factors have been cited as being responsible for high drop-outs, and hence low completion rates among primary school pupils in most African countries. The cost of school-based instruction itself is a major factor. While the government offsets the tuition fee for students in public secondary schools, the parents are left to shoulder other costs. This may include the cost for purchase of school uniforms, games' kits, field trips, among others. Since the cost of these items is high, children whose parents cannot afford to provide

all or most of these requirements are always under pressure from the schools' administrators. The frustrations these pupils go through affect their academic performance: they lose interest in education and, eventually, drop out of school. The overloaded 8-4-4 curriculum is one of the factors which affect pupils' participation in school negatively [25]. However, the numbers of courses that are currently being examined in primary schools have been reduced to five.

Few classroom observations in Kenya indicate that there are cases where teachers' negative attitudes "push" pupils, especially boys, out of school. These pupils are sometimes neglected, abused, mishandled, and sent out of class during teaching/learning periods. This atmosphere is not conducive to learning and makes some children hate school. An obvious result of all this are absenteeism, poor performance, and non-completion of the education cycle [26]. Such a hostile environment has two negative effects: (i) it discourages parents from sending their sons to or pulling them out of school; and (ii) students lose interest in education and pull out of the school system altogether. According to MoE [27], in an education newsletter, the Ministry of Education has Child Friendly Schools (CFS) aimed at creating a favourable climate for learners, to learn without hindrance. This initiative aims to address challenges of quality, relevance, efficiency, equity and access. According to this report, the kind of learning environment that a teacher creates can either aid or kill a student's inclination to learn. A teacher has a great role to improve learner's ability to learn. Mulwa [28] attributes school dropout to chronic absenteeism as a result of bad relationships between boy-child students and their teachers. The unfriendly school environment sends students out of the school. Watkins [29] attributes boy dropout to overcrowded learning environment, unmotivated teachers, inadequate facilities and gender bias.

### ***1.3. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks***

The study was based on the education production function theory. The education production function was found relevant because it suggests that inefficiency in provision of schooling can lead to poor outcomes, hence low participation and retention levels [30, 31]. Education production function theory is based on the general production function that is used to explain the relationship between inputs and outputs of a firm. The study abstract from this function is to investigate how schooling outcomes is a function of a variety of inputs injected into the education process. The origin of estimating input-output relationship in school is usually traced to the acclaimed USA study on equity of opportunity commonly known as the Coleman Report [32]. The report postulated that the education process is the achievement of individual student directly related to series of inputs. The education output is a function of a series of inputs such as time and quality of the resources. These factors determine the educational outputs such as a measure of internal efficiency in an education system, which may be achieved in assessing student's retention and participation in the education system as a function of socio-economic factors. The study assumed that the outputs of education could be a measure in terms of students who are retained in a school. These students are retained in order to achieve internal efficiency. The study assumed that these factors work interdependently and independently to influence retention and participation of students in a school system. The effect of school-related factors may influence the level of participation and retention of students, differently based on gender. Figure 2 gives a summary of educational inputs and outputs versus their outcomes.

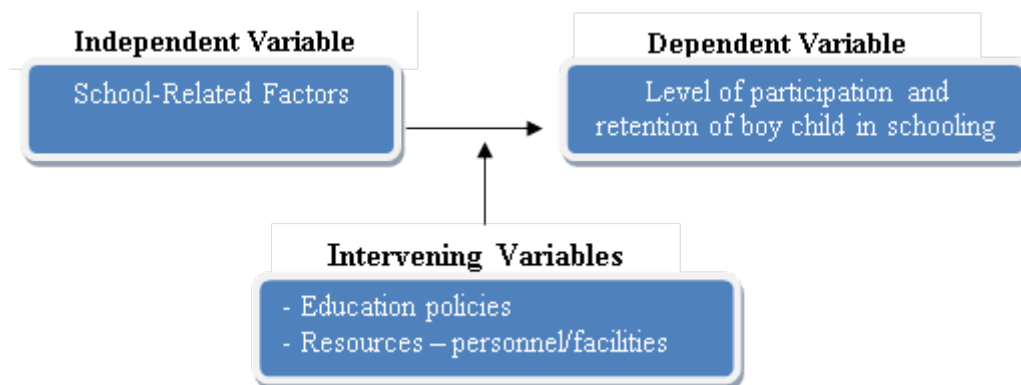


**Figure 2:** Holistic Operation Model of Efficiency

Source: Adapted from Abagi and Odipo [26]

#### 1.4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 3 shows how school-related factors affect retention and participation in public secondary schools. In the framework, school-related factors are the independent variables, whereas the level of participation is the dependent variable. The figure manifests low retention and participation levels in schooling as a product of school-related factors that pose challenges to the boy child. It is expected that the boy child facing these challenges is less likely to complete his education.



**Figure 3:** Conceptual Framework

#### 1.5. Study Limitations

The study considered factors such as socio-economic factors influencing the boy-child's participation in schooling. Therefore, the significance was partial in magnitude, thus limiting generalization because of cultural differences and insecurity in parts of Baringo County. Lack of records and statistics kept due to effects of the devolution process was another limitation. Another limitation was occasioned by poor infrastructure in some

parts of the County. In addition, some respondents did not know how to read and write. However, this was delimited through triangulation.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The study was carried out in Baringo County, Kenya. This area was chosen for the study because of difficult conditions that seem to affect the school attendance of boys. The methodological design for the study was based on the how and why approach; the logic and underlying philosophy [33, 34, 35]. The study adopted a pragmatic world view hence a mixed method research which calls for a multitude of design, variations, pragmatic combinations and sources, for qualitative and quantitative data. Both inductive and deductive reasoning were used [36, 37]. The study targeted form 3 students in public secondary schools in Baringo County and teachers from sampled schools. The target population were teachers, form 3 boy students and Quality Assurance and Standard Officers (QASOs) from Baringo County. Data from the County Director of Education indicates that there are 70 public secondary schools with a total population of 2780 form three boys and 789 teachers. The researcher used stratified sampling technique to sample different categories of school while simple random sampling was used to select teachers and students who participated in the study. The QASO officers were purposively selected - one from each sub-county- to participate in the study. The sample size was determined using the coefficient of variation formula [38] as follows:

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

Where n = Sample Size

N = Total Population

C = Coefficient of Variation

e = Tolerance level

The study applied a coefficient of variation of 11.5%. This is because a coefficient of variation of less than 30% is considered more appropriate (ibid) and that coefficient of variation is a more sure measure of variation. A population of 4190 with 1% tolerance level gave a sample size of 335 respondents as shown below:

$$n = \frac{2780*(0.115)^2}{(0.115)^2 + \{(2780-1)*(0.01)^2\}}$$

$$n = 335 \text{ students}$$

However, during data cleaning, it was realized that 15 questionnaires were incomplete. This implies that 320 form three boys participated in this study. Form three boys was selected because at that level they have the

information required and most of them are 18 years old and will not require consent from parents. Applying the above formula to determine the sample size of teachers from a population of 780 teachers, we get:

$$n = \frac{780*(0.115)^2}{(0.115)^2 + \{(780-1)*(0.01)^2\}}$$

n =256 teachers

Out of the 256 teachers, 8 did not return their questionnaires. Therefore 248 teachers out of the selected responded items in the questionnaire and students out of the selected 335 students, 320 participated, totalling to 591 respondents who responded to the items in the questionnaire. Data was also collected from 5 QASOs who were purposively selected and interviewed. The data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedule, observation and document analysis. Qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were used in the study. Qualitative data were obtained from interviews, while quantitative data were obtained from the structured questionnaire. Data collected was summarized, coded and tabulated, using descriptive statistics and inferential statistical techniques. The researcher employed measures of central tendency, measure of dispersion, while multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Level of Participation and Retention of Boys

As illustrated in Table 1, majority [127 (39.6%)] of the students felt that the retention and participation levels in their school was high while 92(28.8%) of them reported that the proportion was low. The remaining 101 (31.6%) indicated that boys’ proportion was average. This implies that there is a substantial percentage of boys who do not gain access to secondary school education in Baringo County. This is in agreement with the findings of Mwaniki [39], Kimondo [40] and Gatere [41] who have decried the growing dropout rates among boys in ASAL regions.

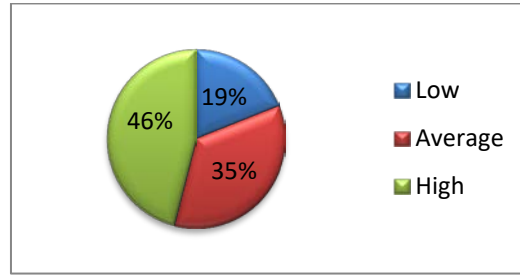
**Table 1:** Students’ Response to Rate of Participation and Retention of Boys

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	92	28.8%
Average	101	31%.6
High	127	39.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the results, and as illustrated in Figure 4, majority 114 (46%) of the teachers felt that the retention and participation levels in their school was high, while 87(35%) of them reported that the proportion was average. The remaining 47 (19%) indicated that boys’ proportion was low. This implies that there is a substantial



percentage of boys who do not gain access to secondary school education in Baringo County. This could be attributed to various factors; among them school-related factors.



**Figure 4:** Teachers' Responses on Retention and Participation Rates

**3.2. School-Related Factors Affecting Boy's Retention and Participation in Baringo County, Kenya**

As shown in Table 2, 158(63.7%) of the teachers agreed that insensitive school environment affects boys' retention and participation while 47(19%) disagreed. The remaining 43(17.3 %) were undecided. Further, it was revealed that 137(55.2 %) of the respondents agreed that absenteeism affects boys' retention and participation while 54(22%) did not agree. The remaining 57(23%) were undecided. Concerning school policy, it was revealed that 169(68.1%) of the respondents agreed that school policy on discipline and academic performance affects boys' retention and participation while 31(12.5%) did not agree. The remaining 48(19.4%) were undecided. Further, the table shows that poor teaching/learning methods affects boys' retention and participation as reported by 126(51%) of the respondents while 77 (18.1%) disagreed that the methods affect boys' retention and participation; 45(18.1%) were undecided. This is supported by the findings of a study by Brostrom [42] who suggested that a negative experience is associated with the teaching staff rather than the child.

**Table 2:** Teachers' Responses on School-Related Factors Affecting Boys' Retention and Participation

Statement	A		U		D		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Insensitive school environment (facilities)	158	63.7%	43	17.3%	47	19%	248	100.0
Absenteeism	137	55.2%	57	23%	54	22%	248	100.0
School policy on punishment and poor academic performance	169	68.1%	48	19.4%	31	12.5%	248	100.0
Poor teaching and learning methods /quality of education.	126	51%	45	18.1%	77	31%	248	100.0
Lack of guidance and counselling	182	73.3%	23	9.3%	43	17.3%	248	100.0
Peer influence	110	44.3%	72	29%	66	26.6%	248	100.0
Personal challenges	135	54.4%	44	18%	69	28%	248	100.0
Students being forced to repeat classes	174	70.1%	33	13.3%	41	16.5%	248	100.0

The table further reveals that majority [182 (73.3%)] of the respondents agreed that lack of guidance and counselling affects boys’ retention and participation while 43(17.3%) of them did not agree, 23(9.3%), were undecided. It is implied from the table that lack of guidance and counselling is a major school factor that affects boys’ retention and participation. Other factors that affect boys’ retention and participation include peer pressure as shown by 110(44.4%) respondents who agreed, 72(29%) who were undecided, and 66(26.6%) who disagreed. It also implies poor teaching/learning methods did not affect boys’ retention and participation so much. Further, the table reveals that personal challenges, such as sickness, affect boys’ schooling: 135(54%) agreed, 44 (18%) were undecided, while 69(28%) objected. Forcing students to repeat classes due to poor academic performance hinders boys schooling - 174(70.2%) agreed, 41(16.5%) disagreed, and 33(13.3%) were undecided.

When the students were asked to state the school-related factors that limit participation and retention of boys to secondary school, they gave responses as provided in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Students’ Responses on School-Related Factors Affecting Boys’ Retention and Participation

Statement	A		U		D		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
School policy	175	55%	29	9.1%	116	36.2%	320	100.0
Poor school facilities	119	37.2%	102	32%	99	31%	320	100.0
Long distance from home to school	148	46.2%	97	30.3%	75	23.4%	320	100.0
Lack of guidance and counselling	189	59%	105	33%	26	8.1%	320	100.0
Poor academic achievements	190	59.4%	96	30%	34	10.6%	320	100.0
Absenteeism	177	55.3%	92	28.7%	51	16%	320	100.0
Indiscipline/punishment	169	53%	103	32.1%	48	15%	320	100.0
Sickness	117	37%	116	36.3%	87	27.2%	320	100.0
Lack of school fees and other levies	226	71%	62	19.3%	32	10%	320	100.0
Peer influence	159	50%	77	24%	84	26.3%	320	100.0
Students being forced to repeat classes	234	73.1%	57	18%	29	9.1%	320	100.0

Table 3 shows that 175(55%) of the students were of the view that school policy limits boys’ participation and retention in secondary school while 116(36.2%) did not agree. This leaves out 29(9.1%) who were undecided. Further, it is shown that 119(37.2%) of the students felt that poor school facilities limit boys’ retention and participation while 99 (31%) did not feel poor facilities affect participation and retention. The remaining 102(32%) were undecided. Concerning distance from school, it was revealed that only 148(46.2%) of the respondents agreed that long distance from home to school limits participation and retention of boys while 75(23.4%) did not agree. The remaining 97(30.3%) were undecided.

The table further reveals that lack of guidance and counselling limits boys' participation and retention in secondary - 189 (59%) agreed, while 75(23.4%) did not agree while the remaining 105(33%) were undecided. Personal challenges facing the boy child such as sickness was attributed to low retention and participation: 111 (37%) agreed on this, 87(27.2%) objected, while 116 (36.2%) were undecided. Further forcing students to repeat classes played a role in low retention and participation: 234(73.1%) agreed, 29(9.1%) disagreed, while 57(18) were undecided. Failure to achieve good grades in school was also considered critical as 190 (59.4%) agreed, 96(30%) were undecided while 48(15%) disagreed. This implies that lack of guidance and counselling in school is the leading school limitation of boys' participation and retention in secondary schools in Baringo County. Furthermore, school policy, to an extent, limits the participation and retention of boys in secondary schools while poor facilities and distance between school and home to a small extent limit boys' participation and retention in secondary school. This implies most schools in Baringo County have inadequate facilities.

Other school-related factors as realized from interviews with the QASOs included repetition of classes and school rules and regulations which were perceived to be harsh. The QASOs stated that most teachers were not able to provide guidance and counselling services because of heavy workload and lack of skills in the area. This implies that the students were not well directed, especially on the importance of education.

From the foregoing, it suffices to point out that the findings of the study so far are supported by the Education Production Function Theory in the sense that various factors determine the educational outputs such as a measure of internal efficiency in an education system, which may be achieved in assessing student's retention and participation in the education system as a function of a variety of school inputs. From the findings presented above, it is clear that school-related factors greatly affect the participation and retention of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Baringo County.

### **3.3. Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing**

A multiple regression equation was used to evaluate the relationship between the independent variables used in this study and the dependent variable. Using SPSS (version 20), a multiple regression analysis involving the constructs of school-related factors was used to determine the actual prediction equation and show the direction, avoid multicollinearity and strength of the relationship among the variables. All the items were measured in a five-point Likert scale. To undertake multiple regression analysis, the responses in each variable were transformed into composite means using SPSS version 20 before generating the regression output. The components of the multiple linear regression analysis used in this study are the Model Summary, the ANOVA Summary and the Table of Coefficients. Table 4 presents the results.

**Table 4:** Coefficients Used in the Multiple Regression Equation

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Beta Value</b>	<b>t-statistics</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
School-Related Factors	0.096	1.301	0.016	Significant
Constant	1.826			

$R^2 = 0.742$ , F-ratio = 22.183 with degrees of freedom of 6 and 104,  $p = 0.001$ .

As shown in Table 4,  $R^2$  was 0.742.  $R^2$  is the coefficient of determination which shows the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by variation in the independent variables. Therefore 74.2% in the variation in level of participation and retention of boy-child can be explained by differences in the independent variable (school-related factors). The remaining 25.8% variation in the level of participation and retention of boy-child can be explained by other variables not covered in the study. The table also shows an F-ratio of 22.183 with degrees of freedom of 6 and 104,  $p < 0.05$ . In other words, the dependent variable can be predicted from the independent variable. This implies that there was a significant regression equation at 0.05 level of significance.

To examine the relationship between school-related factors and level of participation and retention of boy-child in secondary schooling, a null hypothesis that stated that “there is no statistically significant relationship between school-related factors and participation and retention of boy child in secondary schooling” was formulated. After running regression analysis, the results indicated a significant and positive relationship between school-related factors and participation and retention of boy child in secondary schooling as shown in Table 4 ( $p$ -value = 0.016;  $\beta$ = 0.096). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendation**

From the discussions in this paper, it has been shown that insensitive school environment, long distance from home to school, school policy, poor teaching and learning methods, lack of guidance and counseling, poor academic achievement, absenteeism, and inadequate school facilities have a negative effect on participation and retention of boy child in secondary schooling. It is, therefore, the conclusion of this paper that participation and retention of the boy-child in public secondary schools in Baringo County is hindered by the absence of an environment that is more boy-child-centred. To address this malady, the paper advocates for the need to ensure that school management, the community and other stakeholders in the education sector create a child-friendly environment that will facilitate the participation and retention of the boy-child in school.

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