SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOWER PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS’ GRADE RETENTION IN THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, KENYA

BRIAN MURITHI HUMPHREY
E55/CE/22551/010

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN (EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES) SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER, 2018
DECLARATION

I declare that this project is my original work and has not been presented in any other university/ institution for consideration of any certification. This research project has been complemented by referenced sources duly acknowledged. Where text, data (including spoken words), graphics, pictures or tables have been borrowed from other sources, including the internet, these are specifically accredited and references cited using current APA system and in accordance with anti-plagiarism regulations.

Signature…………………………… Date…………………………

Brian Murithi Humphrey:
E55/CE/22551/010
Department: Early Childhood Studies

Supervisor

I confirm that this project has been submitted for appraisal with my approval as University Supervisor.

Signature…………………………… Date…………………………

Dr. Mary Ndani
Department of Early Childhood Studies
Kenyatta University
DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my wife, daughter and close friends who have been there to encourage and challenge me over the years.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indeed grateful to the Almighty for providing me with the opportunity, for putting the enthusiasm in my heart, inspiration and encouragement in my mind as well as good health throughout this tedious undertaking of my studies. I sincerely acknowledge the dedicated, intellectual guidance, supervision and academic support I received from my supervisors, Dr. Mary Ndani throughout the entire study period. It is this guidance and support that has enabled me produce this intellectual work. Special thanks go to my wife Naomi Kawira and daughters Alina Zawadi and Adaya Waridi for their motivation, encouragement and invaluable support- moral, financial and social they gave me throughout the study period.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.......................................................................................................................... ii
DEDICATION.............................................................................................................................. iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.............................................................................................................. iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .............................................................................................................. v
LIST OF TABLES ....................................................................................................................... vii
LIST OF FIGURES ..................................................................................................................... viii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYM............................................................................................ ix
ABSTRACT................................................................................................................................. xi

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY .......... 1
  1.1 Background of the Problem .............................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Problem Statement ........................................................................................................... 6
  1.3 Purpose of the Study ........................................................................................................ 8
  1.4 Objective of the Study ..................................................................................................... 8
  1.5 Research Questions ........................................................................................................ 8
  1.6 Significance of the Study. ............................................................................................... 8
  1.7 Limitations of the Study ................................................................................................. 9
  1.8 Delimitations of the Study ............................................................................................. 9
  1.9. Assumptions of the Study. ......................................................................................... 9
  1.10 Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................... 10
  1.11 Conceptual Framework ............................................................................................... 12
  1.12. Operational Definition of Terms .............................................................................. 14

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ..................... 16
  2.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 16
  2.2 Grade Retention Concept .............................................................................................. 16
  2.3 Socio-Cultural Factors Contributing to Grade Retentions ........................................... 19
    2.3.1 Parental Decision Making ...................................................................................... 20
    2.3.2 Gender Roles ......................................................................................................... 20
    2.3.3 Cultural Beliefs ....................................................................................................... 22
  2.4 Economic factors Contributing to Grade Retentions .................................................... 23
    2.4.1 Parental Income .................................................................................................... 24
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Research Design
3.2.1 Variables of the Study
3.2.2 Research Methodology
3.3 Location of the Study
3.4 Target Population
3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size
3.6 Research Instruments
3.6.1 Questionnaire for Teachers
3.6.2 Interview Guide
3.6.3 Pilot
3.6.4 Validity
3.6.5 Reliability
3.7 Data Collection Procedure
3.8 Data Analysis
3.9 Logistic and Ethical Considerations
3.9.1 Ethical Considerations

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Questionnaire Return Rate
4.3 Rating of Grade Retention in Lower Classes According to Teachers
4.4 Socio-Cultural Factors Contributing to Grade Retention According to Teachers
4.4.1 Influence of Gender on Grade Retention
4.4.2 Assessment of Teachers on Parental Decisions and Children's Retention in Public Primary Classes
4.4.3 Rating of Grade Retention in Lower Classes According to Teachers
4.4.4 Rating of Grade Retention in Lower Classes According to Teachers
4.5 Socio-economic Factors Leading to Class Retention
4.6 Logistic and Ethical Considerations

2.4.2 Family Size

2.5 Summary
4.5.1 Parents’ Occupation and Children’s Retention in Lower Primary Classes. 43
4.5.2 Parents Socio-economic Level and Relation to Class Retention............... 44
4.5.3 Other Factors that Contribute to Grade Retention in Lower Primary Classes.
................................................................................................................. 47
4.6 Strategies to Reduce Grade Retention..................................................... 47
4.6.1 Community Based Strategies that can be Employed to Mitigate Socio-Cultural and Economic Factors Leading to Grade Retention...................... 47

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS................................................................. 49
5.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................... 49
5.2 Summary of the Main Findings................................................................. 49
  5.2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................. 49
  5.2.2 Socio-Cultural Factors Contributing to Grade Retentions...................... 49
  5.1.3 Economic Factors Leading to Class Retention ...................................... 50
  5.1.4 Strategies to Reduce Grade Retention .................................................. 51
5.2 Conclusions of the Study ............................................................................ 52
5.3 Recommendations of the Study .................................................................. 52
5.4 Recommendations for Future Research ..................................................... 53

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................ 54
APPENDICES ........................................................................................................... 58
  Appendix I: Introduction Letter to Respondents .............................................. 58
  Appendix II: Questionnaire for Lower Primary Teachers .............................. 59
  Appendix III: Interview Schedule for Head Teachers .................................... 63
  Appendix IV: Research Authorization Letter from Graduate School ............ 65
  Appendix V: Research Authorization from NACOSTI ................................... 66
  Appendix VI: Research Permit ......................................................................... 67
**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 3.1 Target population of schools in the sub county ........................................30
Table 3.2: Sampling Size .................................................................................................31
Table 4.1: Questionnaire Return Rate ...........................................................................38
Table 4.2: Gender distribution of respondents ...............................................................38
Table 4.3: Class Teachers’ Rating of the Influence of Home Related Factors ............41
Table 4.4: Head teachers’ view on the contribution of socio-cultural factors in pupils’ grade retention ........................................................................................................42
Table 4.5: Occupation of parents/guardians of lower primary school pupils ............44
Table 4.6: Relationship between Parents’ Socio-economic Level and Grade Retention ..........................................................................................................................45
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: A Conceptual Framework on Interdependence of the study Variable ..... 13
Figure 4.1: Rating of Grade Retention in Lower Classes ........................................ 39
Figure 4.2: The gender effect grade retention.......................................................... 40
**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPE</td>
<td>Free Primary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NACOSTI</td>
<td>National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCES</td>
<td>National Center for Education Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for Social Scientists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Grade retention occurs when pupils begin a new school year in the same grade as the previous year, instead of moving to a higher grade. Retention of children in upper primary school grades has been reported in various studies and associated with poverty, religion and gender. Little is however known on the situation in lower primary. The main purpose for this study was to establish the social cultural and economic factors contributing to grade retention of pupils in lower classes of the public primary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Specific objectives of the study were; to establish whether parental decision, gender role and cultural beliefs contributing to grade retention of pupils in lower classes, to investigate contribution of parental income, family size and parent’s education level towards grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools and to determine the strategies that can be employed to reduce grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County. Descriptive research design was used to collect data. Simple random sampling technique was used to get the study sample. The study targeted 52 Public primary schools in Meru South Sub County, class teachers in public lower primary classes and head teachers of the schools. Data was collected using a questionnaire for the class teachers and interview schedule to the head teachers of the sampled schools. The questionnaires incorporated both qualitative and quantitative research questions. To enhance content validity of the research questionnaires and the interview schedules, the researcher carefully set the items as per the objectives of the study. Reliability of instruments was ensured by pre-testing the instruments in a school outside the target population. A coefficient of 0.72 for head teachers and class teachers was deemed reliable. Numerical data collected using questionnaires was coded, entered and analyzed using computer Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) programme. Frequency tables, graphs and pie charts were used to present the findings. The study found out that girls were more affected by class retention. Socio-cultural practices lead to differentiated outcomes in school performance for girls than boys. Parents’ income and parental occupation also influence grade retention. Some of the strategies that mitigate social cultural and economic factors leading to grade retention included; sensitization of the community to equity provision of education, community be encouraged to practice family planning, community to come up with projects at both individual and community level to ensure economic sustainability. The study concluded that family background significantly influenced children performance in school. Parents lack knowledge on the need to assist their children in academic work and girls were more affected by grade retention than boys. Family income was a major factor of pupils’ grade retention. The study recommended that; community be educated to shun socio-cultural practices that undermine education, parents delegate less domestic chores to the girl child and schools and parents should collaborate in making early interventions aimed at helping pupils who show tendencies of being slow in learning to achieve the objectives.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background of the Problem

Grade retention is the process of a kindergarten through twelfth grade student repeating the same grade due to failing it the previous year. Students do not necessarily repeat in the same classroom, only the same grade (Migosi, 2012). The tread is mostly prompted by a pupil not reaching a certain academic standard which influence being retained in the year while the peers who have successfully attained the objectives of the year are promoted to the next grade (Ikeda, 2005). Retention of pupils in lower primary school level, present major challenges for the education system of any country because it contributes to decrease in completion rates in the education system (Naliaka, 2014).

Retention also portrays the inefficiency and wastage of human resources for society. For instance, high retention rate in lower classes hinders schools ability to accommodate new pupils and often leads to overcrowded classrooms and reduced number of educational materials per child. In addition, they impede realization of the Education for All (EFA) goals and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) number 4 which highlights the need for sustainable quality education for all. Since the learning objectives and material are not changed in the class the child is retained, it is merely retention of grade and material which does not help struggling pupils at all but reversely push them back, socially as well as academically (Migosi, 2012).

According to Ayieko (2006), class retention is very expensive for the country and families alike since total costs of schooling increase with the duration of schooling. Johnson (2011), concluded that on average grade retention rate has a great negative
effect on primary school completion rate. In addition, it has a negative effect on the child’s self-esteem, which affects learning. However, when children are retained in a class, they may consolidate the knowledge, skills and attitudes expected at that specific grade. Nonetheless, it is uncertain whether this offsets their failure to attain the skills taught in the next class (Owings, 2013).

According to the United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2012) United State Institute for Statistics (UIS) database, there were 57 million cases of school grade retention in primary school age by 2014 globally. UNESCO (2014), attributed the high rates of grade retention to social and cultural factors such as low regard for girl child, forcing boys to head cattle, circumcision rates that force learners to stay out of school for long periods, distance to school, cattle rustling, poverty and hunger, domestic violence and marriage pattern amongst many other factors. Across South and West Asian region retention percentage remained stagnated at 5%. However, these regions were still the second highest lower primary grade retention contributor globally by 2014 representing 18% (increased from 7.7 to 9.1 million). Latin American and Caribbean region with 17% of the world’s primary education are retained in lower classes have succeeded in reducing retention to 16% in the mentioned period (UNESCO, 2014).

King, Orazem, and Paterno (2009), in a study of grade retention in public primary schools in Pakistan, concluded that retention was most frequent in rural areas of the country. He associated the low achievement patterns of grade retention to poverty indicators, at both the school and the family levels. Schools in poor areas (especially remote rural areas) often feature limitations: short school years, frequent teacher absence, limited supplies of learning materials, unqualified teachers, large classes and multi-grade classes. Within any given school, learners from the poorest families are at
higher risk for retention because their home background does not adequately stimulate them to succeed. In addition, they are likely to be absent from school more often.

In Africa, over 21.2 million pupils are retained a grade in lower primary education in 2013 (UNESCO, 2014). In the previous decade between 2000-2010, enrolment in lower primary classes increased by 6% (from 654.8 to 691.3 million) while grade retention increased from 5% to 7% by 2014 (from 22.2 million to 34.7 million). The Sub-Saharan Africa stood out on top globally, with primary schools grade retentions at 35% (11.4 million) out of 21.2 million, which translated to over half of general retentions in Africa. According to Terry (2011), Lower Primary education in many Sub Saharan African was characterized by high retention rates.

In Senegal, over 45% of pupils enrolled in lower classes of public primary schools in 2009 retained a class in 2010 compared to Nigeria with 38% and Uganda 33%. Sherman (2012) attributed the high grade retention in most of Sub Saharan Africa to social factors such as poverty, religion and poor schools setting. Such cultural factors as early marriages, femininity and masculinity among the rural tribes also contributed to retention.

Another study on the effects of class retention in lower classes in public primary schools in Tanzania, Johnson (2011) established that more than 45% of pupils in lower classes retained a grade. The study identified two main contributing factors as, the pupil failed specific academic grade requirement in class and second when they are immature for the intended grade level. Further, Jimerson (2009) study on the cause of grade retention in lower primary schools in Zambia, found that teachers are the key decision makers on grade retention process and that most of them were unaware of the research results on grade retention. They had limited knowledge on the
long-term effects and based their arguments on the immediate outcomes generated from retention. Besides, they perceived retention as a successful educational policy for learning improvement. However some teachers did not support the former view point of retention as a motivating incentive but thought that by retaining children they lose self-esteem and that retention hinders pupil’s development.

Omolo (2013) on the other hand found out that social cultural and economic factors influenced grade retention of pupils in public lower primary schools in drought prone areas of Turkana Central division. The study established that poverty in the region was the main cause of retention by pupils in lower classes in public primary schools. The study further established that cultural factors such as pastoralist mode of movements, early marriages, cattle rustling, banditry attacks, lack of infrastructure and parents perception of education among others has contributes to class absenteeism, which resulted in continuous retention of pupils in lower primary schools. The study also established that children travelled long distances to school through harsh environment and on an empty stomach. The long distances that the pupils travelled made them arrive for classes late, which may have a harmful impact on their learning.

The execution of Free Primary Education programme in 2003 resulted to a noteworthy increase in enrolment at (20%) in primary schools in Kenya, from 6.0 million in 2002 to 7.2 million pupils in 2003. With Free Primary Education, it was hoped that every Kenyan child would have access to basic education and progression rates would improve. However, from 2003, grade retention continued and the population of retained pupils increased because of high enrollment rates witnessed from the period of FPE (UNESCO, 2014). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), 23.2% of all of the 2009-2010 pupils who enrolled in
public primary schools being retained a grade between class one and four. However, it is clear that retention rates can vary depending on time at which it is measured (NCES, 2011).

A study carried out in Kenya in Nyandarua District by Kinuthia, (2015) on factors leading to higher retention in public primary schools than private schools, identified school factors such as poor teaching, teacher absenteeism, discipline, school types and category, poor pupil-teacher relationship and dilapidated school infrastructure. Also lack of guidance and counseling programmes in public primary schools compounded with poor administration and transfer of teachers were some of the factors that led to poor coverage of curriculum and ultimately leading to massive class retention because at every end of term most topics were not covered (Kinuthia, 2015). However, this study did not identify or investigate the social cultural factors influencing retention in the area.

In another study by Njeru and Wawira (2011), on factors influencing class retention in Siakago Sub County of Embu County, they ascertained that decisions about the child who should be retained a grade are largely based on their ranking in their class than achievement of the academic objective specific to the grade. This means that if one was a weaker child in a very high ability class, the weaker child was likely to be obligated to be retained despite satisfactory achievement of the level objectives in the standard evaluation tests. The research also found out that children in lower classes of primary school who were ranked in the last three positions in their class had between 15% and 18% higher chance of be retained the grade than their classmates despite objective achievement. On the same note, the research found that the decisions about which child should be retained in a grade were frequently made in relation to the average performance of the class. This therefore position the weaker children in the
class at a higher threat of being forced to be retained a class compared to a class where the average performance was lower. However, the study did not identify other factors such as social, cultural and economic issues which would lead to class retention in the area.

The issue of retention is also common problem in Meru South Sub County as compared to other regions. According to Meru South Sub County Education Report 2013-2014 every school in the zone registered between 2 to 5 pupils who were retained a class in lower primary and in early childhood education Classes (ECE). As such over 10% of pupils retained a grade at these levels. Education is a vital element because it infuses knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for attaining economic growth. As such, Kenya constantly address the many challenges that face the education sector which include among others issues of admission, quality, equity, inefficiency, cost and financing which manifest themselves in form of wastage in the education sector. However, the issue of grade retention does not appear to be taken seriously in the policy framework for education and retention remains unsolved issue in education sector.

The interest to carry out the current study emanated from the fact that, despite the increasing rate of in public lower primary schools in Meru South Sub- county, little attention have been made to determine the factors contributing to it. The study therefore sought to investigate the socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to grade retention in public lower primary schools in Meru South Sub County.

1.2 Problem Statement

After the commencement of Free Primary Education in Kenya in 2003, the overall enrolment in public primary schools rose by 17.6% (from 6131.0 thousand to 7,208.1
thousand in 2003. A significant progress was achieved ensuring access to education through FPE. However, little attention was paid to high-grade retention in public primary schools and particularly lower primary classes in Kenya. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has established that approximately 23% of pupils who had enrolled in public schools have at least once retained in lower primary classes. Socio-cultural factors such as poverty, religion and poor school settings have been blamed for grade retention in upper classes in many of Sub Saharan Africa. It is not clear whether the same factors contribute to grade retention in lower primary schools in Kenya.

Various studies such as on grade retention in Turkana County, factors leading to grade retention in Nyandarua and factors influencing class retention in Siakago may not apply for Meru South Sub County which has different culture as well as social settings, thus creating a gap in knowledge. According to the data from Meru South Sub County Education Report 2013-2014 every school in the zone registered between 2 to 5 pupils who have retained in a class in lower primary and ECE. On average over 10% of pupils retained in lower primary school grade in all zones.

Studies conducted in Malawi, Ghana, Zambia, Ethiopia and Tanzania by Mingat (2002) showed that factors such as poverty and distance from home to school has been associated to grade retention. The socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to grade retention of pupils in public lower primary schools in Meru South Sub-county had not yet been determined. This study therefore sought to investigate the socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to grade retention in public lower primary schools in Kiagu division in Meru South Sub County, Kenya.
1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose for this study was to establish the socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to grade retention of pupils in lower classes of the public primary schools in Meru South Sub County, Kenya, in a bid to make recommendations on how to get lasting solutions to grade retention.

1.4 Objective of the Study.

Specifically the study sought to:

i. Establish whether socio-cultural factors contribute to grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County.

ii. Investigate contribution of socio-economic factors towards grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County.

iii. To determine strategies that can be employed to reduce grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County.

1.5 Research Questions

i. Do socio-cultural factors contribute to grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County?

ii. Do socio-economic factors contribute to grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County?

iii. What strategies can be employed to reduce grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County?

1.6 Significance of the Study.

The findings of this study may be useful to head teachers of the public primary schools towards school transformation aimed at preventing grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools. The outcome of this study will help
stakeholders such as parents, teachers and Ministry of Education officials among others to understand the effects of social, cultural and economic factors contributing to grade retention and try to look for interventions to curb this problem in all public schools.

1.7 Limitations of the Study.

The main encountered limitation was that the respondents were not willing to respond to the questions because they considered it personal. The researcher had inform them that the research was only for academic purpose. The other limitation was that the researcher was not in control over the attitude of the respondents who seemed uncooperative. However, to address this limitation the researcher sought for help from the institutions’ administration concerned to reach the respondents.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study.

There are many factors that would influence grade retention of pupils in public primary schools but the study only focused on socio-cultural and economic factors only. Additionally, the study was limited to lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub County.

1.9. Assumptions of the Study.

An assumption was made that the respondents had enough knowledge of the grade retention. Also there were identifiable socio-economic and cultural factors that contribute to grade retention of pupils in lower classes of the public primary schools in Meru South Sub County to satisfy the study objectives. Assumption was also made that the respondents were honest in giving information for the research.
1.10 Theoretical Framework.

This study is based on the Finn’s (1993) participation-identification theory which supports the notion that school engagement is integral to grade promotion and successful completion. In his theory, Finn’s (1993) defines engagement in school as having both a behavioral component (termed participation) and an emotional component (termed identification).

In a review of the literature on pupil’s engagement, Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) propose that pupils’ engagement has multiple dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Behavioral engagement draws on the idea of participation and includes involvement in academic, social, or extracurricular activities; it is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing grade retention. Emotional engagement focuses on the extent of positive and negative reactions to teachers and fellow classmates. Positive emotional engagement is presumed to create pupils’ ties to the institution and influence pupils’ willingness to participate in school. This enhances their objective achievement at each level hence making grade retention unnecessary. Cognitive engagement according to Fredricks et al. (2004) refers to the pupils’ level of investment in learning; it includes being thoughtful and purposeful in the approach to school tasks and being willing to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas or master difficult skills.

Pupils’ engagement measures have been shown to correlate positively with achievement and negatively with the likelihood of grade retention. Engaged pupils’ are more likely to earn better grades and perform well on standardized tests and will not therefore get frustrated and become at risk of grade retention. In his theoretical model Finn (1993) suggests that learners must actively participate in school and have a feeling of identification with school in order for them to remain in school and
complete at the appropriate time. Learners’ participation includes behavioral indicators such as attending school, being prepared for work, and being involved in extracurricular activities. The psychological indicators of identification with school include the feelings and sense of belonging associated with school engagement. Finn’s theory suggests that pupils’ participation in activities is directly related to grade promotion and successful school completion, which promotes identification with school.

Grade retention remains a persistent and critical issue in many school systems. Grade retention rate in Meru South Sub county has been shown to increase as they progress through class one to class three. This increase can be even more dramatic if it is influenced by socio-cultural and economic factors. The result of high grade retention rates among pupils means that they are excluded from the advantages that successful completion of school brings and as a result they are subjected to consequences such as child labour, child abuse, and poorer physical health and well-being.

This theory is relevant to the study since the theory will enable the current study to conceptualize that grade retention may be affected by socio-cultural and economic factors such as family background, customs and beliefs. Secondly, the Finn’s (1993) participation-identification theory is relevant for this study because pupils who enroll in school should complete and graduate at the right time regardless of their socio-cultural and economic differences. It is against this background that this study will investigate the socio-cultural and economic factors that contribute to grade retention of pupils in lower classes of the public primary schools in Meru South Sub County.
1.11 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows that there are various socio-cultural and economic factors that can both influence grade retention of pupils positively or negatively. These include parental decision, gender roles, cultural beliefs, parental income, family size, and parent’s education levels. These will be measured by a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. It was also conceptualized that grade retention may be influenced by government policy, school culture, ranking of pupils as well as pupil’s abilities which are the intervening variables in the study. The policies laid by the government will enable the stakeholders to look into the ways to reduce retention of pupils in a class or grade.

The intervening variables were built into the study and determined. It was anticipated that when enrolled pupils achieve the objectives at each grade and are promoted to the next grade in the next year, there would be enhanced participation in school, enhanced grade promotion and completion rates.
Figure 1.1: A Conceptual Framework on Interdependence of the study Variable

Source: Author (2018)
1.12. Operational Definition of Terms.

**Grade Retention:** Refers to a child repeating in current grade or class level.

**Lower primary:** It refers to standard one to three grade in the primary school.

**Parental Education Level:** Refers to the level of schooling reached and completed by parents of pupils in lower primary grades.

**Parental Income Level:** Refers to amount of money a parent gets monthly from employment or other sources.

**Parental Occupation:** Refers to the type of job that a parent of lower primary pupil is engaged in.

**Promotion rate:** Refers to the rate of progression of pupils who have successfully completed an academic year and moved up to the next grade.

**Pupil:** Refer to school going child in lower primary grades. They are expected to be between 6 to 8 years of age.

**Retention rate:** Refers to proportion of pupils from a group enrolled in a given grade in a given school-year who are repeated in the same grade in the following year.

**Socio-cultural Factors:** In this study refers to customs, traditions, perceptions and beliefs of an individual’s culture that can be key determinant in whether or not a learner be retained a grade in lower primary.
**Socio-economic Factors:** It refers to family financial capability which in many ways determines pupils’ education and undermines grade promotion.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises review of literature on related studies that contribute to an understanding of the study. The chapter is divided into the following sub headings: Social factors contributing to grade retention, cultural factors contributing to grade retention, economic factors contributing to grade retention.

2.2 Grade Retention Concept

Grade retention is the process of a kindergarten through twelfth grade student repeating the same grade due to failing it the previous year, these students are referred to as "repeaters" (Leckrone & Griffith, 2006). Repeaters can also be referred to as having been "held back". Students do not necessarily repeat in the same classroom, only the same grade.

In most countries, grade retention has been banned or strongly discouraged. In the United States, grade retention can be used in kindergarten through twelfth grade, however, students in grades seven through twelve are usually only retained in the specific failed subject due to each subject having its own specific classroom rather than staying in one classroom with all subjects taught for the entire school day as it is in grades kindergarten through sixth grade. In these grades the student must generally fail or score well below the accepted level in most or all areas within the entire curriculum to be retained. The student will then again repeat the entire school year within a single classroom and repeating the same subject matter as the previous year. (Mims, Stock, & Phinizy, 2001).
Where it is permitted, grade retention is most common among students in early elementary school. Students with intellectual disabilities are only retained when parents and school officials agree to do so. Children who are relatively young in their age cohort are four times more likely to be retained (Goldberg, 2005).

According to Shane, Sarah and Kaufman (2002), there is conclusive evidence that grade retention is significantly helpful, and much of the existing research has been methodologically invalid due to the selection bias in the group allocation phase. The three different types of studies that exist or have been proposed have inherent pitfalls to overcome before the resulting data can be deemed as accurate.

In Australia, grade retention is used, although in 2010 the New South Wales Department of Education and Training enacted a policy that states that student retention will no longer be allowed at any school. For example, as of 2010, students will not be repeating eleventh grade or twelfth grade due to the abundance of post school services available to them after they complete twelfth grade, services such as TAFEs or college universities.

In New Zealand, secondary schools commonly use a system of internal academic streaming in which children of the same age are subdivided on the basis of ability, and lower achieving students (those who would be retained under the North American system) are taught in different classes, and at a different rate, from higher achieving students, but are kept within their own age group. This system has largely rendered grade retention obsolete in all but the most exceptional circumstances (Goldberg, 2005).

Argentina considers grade retention in all grades except first grade and the last course of high school. In Elementary school students are retained when they fail in one of the
basic areas such as math, language and social sciences. In secondary school, students are allowed a maximum of two courses failed in order to be promoted. If they fail three or more, they should repeat.

Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and North Korea do not practice grade retention. Singapore practices grade retention in secondary schools if a student is unsuccessful in achieving a satisfactory accumulated percentage grade. The school authorities may also decide that it would be more appropriate for the student to advance to a higher level in a lower stream such as in the cases of Express and Normal (Academic) students. Grade retention is most common in Junior Colleges where a promotional criteria is set in place. Hong Kong practices grade retention in elementary and secondary school if the student obtains a failing grade even after taking a retest, though grade retention is very rare.

Norway, Denmark and Sweden do not allow grade retention during elementary school and junior high school (1-10th grade).

Greece allows grade retention if a student fails more than 5 final exams, or 5 or less both in May examinations and in September examination. A student who has missed more than 114 periods of class can also repeat a grade.

The United States and Canada both use grade retention. In the U.S., six year old students are most likely to be retained, with another spike around the age of 12. In particular, some large schools have a transitional classroom, sometimes called "Kindergarten 2", for six year olds who are not reading ready. School officials in some US states have the authority to allow students to be held back if they do not attend summer school (Mims, Stock, & Phinizy, 2001).
2.3 Socio-Cultural Factors Contributing to Grade Retentions.

A number of social factors have been found to influence grade retention. Typical definitions of retention are difficult to apply to special situations such as the multi-grade classes found in rural primary schools in many developing countries (Bropy, 2006). According to Rumberger (2005), learner’s family background is widely recognized as the most significant provider to accomplishment in schools. Rumberger’s point supports the result of former scholars who argued that the home has a major influence on student grade retention and retention in school in New York (Fontana, 2005). That it is the quality of relationships within the pupils’ home environment that has an important effect on school retention (Good, 2006). Additionally, Carter & Kennedy (2012) recently established that many variables in the family background have strong (direct and indirect) associations with pupils’ grade retention throughout school life. Such variables include family structure (socio-cultural and economic status).

Similarly, an important study was done by Good (2013) in United States. The study established that children from poor families have greater exposure to environmental toxins and violence, and more limited extra-familial social support systems. Parents in such settings would report lower educational expectations, less monitoring of children’s school work and less overall supervision of social activities. This inversely compares to pupils from high socio-economic and intact families which would influence parents decision on pupils retention (Kisanya, 2009). However, the above literature leaves a gap on to what extent social factors such pupils’ home background such as parental marital status, home environments and availability of social amenities of the pupils. Thus, there is need to establish pupils background factors which influence grade retention in lower primary.
2.3.1 Parental Decision Making

The parents’ role in the progress and educational progress of their children need not be over emphasized (Migosi, 2012). The family environment is one of the most significant factor in determining class retention of pupils in public primary schools in Kenya (Abagi, 2002). Developed Countries encourage the active concern of parents and local communities in the education of their children. However, this has not been the case in many Sub-Sahara Africa. There is a high rate of retention resulting in internalization of failure (Naliaka, 2014). The researcher fully agree with Correa-Torres (2004), that children who need assistance for their homework become frustrated and hopelessly resulting in poor performance in tests which results to retention of grades and that hinder them from attaining required results for promotion to the next level.

In some cases, parent’s demand that their children be retained a grade for personal or family reasons. Wainaina (2008) noted that some children be retained a class on request of their parents to allow their older siblings to proceed. This research is set to investigate how parents in Meru South Sub County influence grade retention of their children especially in public lower classes.

2.3.2 Gender Roles

Traditional beliefs in most local communities like the Maasai it is culturally believed that educating girls is a waste of time and money as they will eventually get married and that education benefits will go to the families they marry to Tobik (2010). According to Tobik, Maasai girls child spend a lot of time on domestic tasks than boys which affects her academic resulting to classes retention. Tobik further notes that in communities where women are believed to be inferior to men, girls are mostly influenced to be retained a grade because their education is not of value as per the
traditions and they may end up staying at home to carry out domestic tasks. Kerei (2005) notes that, as this culture is rampant in Maasai community, even in other communities of Kenya varied reasons lead to class retention.

Gender role can be defined as a set of social and behavioral responsibilities that are generally considered appropriate for either a boys or girls in a given society. Different opinions have been raised as to which observed variation in behavior and personality between genders are entirely due to inborn personality of an individual and which are due to cultural or social factors, and are therefore the product of socialization. This research will seek information on the influence of gender in grade retention in public primary schools by investigating which gender is more prone to grade retention and then identifying the impact of gender role in undermining grade promotion.

The roles that define gender are very reflective of male dominance in most of communities in Africa as well as Kenya. Odaga (2005) in a study of Luo community in Kenya, posits that men have established laws and customs to protect their position and block women access to power. Women are disadvantaged by being required to play certain roles for the smooth functioning of the society. Their primary roles is to be mothers and housewives and this weakens their position in the labor market where women become secondary bread winners and with designated careers like Nurses, caretakers, receptionist, and teacher. Tobik (2010) men have to force, intimidate and or influence women to become subjects so that they remain in power. Men occupy leadership authority positions in the society, women playing second fiddle. Some women who venture in men dominated careers are leveled as deviants and are treated with suspicion. As per reviewed literature on cultural factors, most of scholars such as (Tobik, 2010) and (Kerei, 2005) analyzed a tribe which as a very different culture from our area of study and most of the cultural value cannot be
applicable in our area of study. Also the study by (Odaga, 2005) on the Luo community has a very different cultural way of life from the area of study. There being a big difference in the culture within which the related research was done and Meru community, the current study would seek to fill this gape fill by studying the gender roles specific to this community that may be causing increased grade retention.

2.3.3 Cultural Beliefs

According to (Wainaina, 2008) cultural practices such as initiation ceremonies and gender socialization affect child performance hence may cause grade retention. In some areas where boy circumcision and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are traditionally practiced, pupils pull out of school even in lower grades to either take part or take up some of the role previously done by the initiates. Once initiated some learners develop negative attitude towards teachers and school. Practices such as circumcision and other rites of passage gives individuals an identity in the community to make a reasonable decision including being away from school (FAWE, 1995). Pressure is put on them to leave school and meet traditional expectations of the community (IPAR, 1997).

According to SACMEQ (2011) in most developing countries, gender differentials in education appear to be more pronounced both in terms of participation and internal efficiency and in cognitive performance with girls being the most affected. While grade retention rates to some extent do not differ greatly, more boys than girls complete schooling at the expected age of 14 years, especially at primary level (IMF, 2010). However, empirical studies remain to be done, especially in public lower primary schools giving cognizance to socio-cultural influences grade retention.
Boadu (2000) observed that cultural practices lead to differentiated outcomes in grade retention for girls and boys. The most important is the existence of gendered division of labour within the household, which can probably lead to higher opportunity costs being associated with the schooling of girls relative to boys. Factors related to cultural norms, traditional beliefs and practices have a strong influence on pupils’ grade retention in school. In some societies, initiation ceremonies are performed as early as the age of seven years. After undergoing the rituals, it is considered shameful for girls to return to school unlike boys (Boadu, 2000). However, it is not clear on the actual reason why grade retention in Meru South Sub County is increasing. This study will seek information to shed more light on this issue.

Juma (2009) argues that ethnicity in most communities has become a barrier and a limitation to successful grade promotion of primary education. Pupils face many obstacles in pursuing their education cycle due to traditional beliefs, attitudes, stereotyped beliefs on gender roles and lack of role models. Girls are expected to take critical role model of the mother and the boys that of the father. As they practice the parent roles they lack time to complete the school work or attend classes hence falling behind the school schedules that lead to frustration and a feeling of inadequate for school (Abagi, 1997). This study will seek to establish the socio-cultural factors influencing grade retention of pupils in public lower primary schools in Meru South Sub County.

2.4 Economic factors Contributing to Grade Retentions.

In educational and economic studies, it has been found that background variables including among others family setting and parents' education are determinants of the amount and quality of education children receive over their lifetime (Young, 2000).
2.4.1 Parental Income

Mingat (2002) established that the richest households, 76 percent of their children attend school more frequently compared to 40% of the poorest households. This means that children from poor households have much more rates of absenteeism than those from richer households. Mingat (2002) contends that the level of the family income is one of the most powerful influences on school enrolments rates in the developing countries. (Onyango, 2000), showed that parental socio-economic background influences their children’s participation in education. This is especially so for the developing countries where children of the poor families are not provided with adequate educational materials and most are not apt to enroll in school. If enrolled, they are more likely to drop out of school than children who are from better-off families.

Family income is a predictor of pupils’ grade retention. According to Asikhia (2010) lack of finance can contribute to high grade retention. Lack of school fees can lead to poor school attendance hence poor performance and consequent grade retention. Parents or guardians who are rich are capable of funding their children fees hence enabling them to remain and progress in school. This shows that parental income is an important variable to explain enrolment and retention. This may explain the counter intuitive effect of income on enrolment and retention rates.

Family income may have a direct impact on a child’s academic outcomes, or variations in achievement could simply be a function of the school the child attends (Aronson, 2008). Parents with greater financial resources are able to enroll their children in secondary schools and ensure they progress to completion through provision of the resources needed to support learning.
Children raised in poverty are faced with overwhelming challenges that affluent children never have to confront and their brains have adapted to suboptimal conditions in ways that undermine good school attendance (Asikhia, 2010). The most significant risk factors affecting children raised in poverty include chronic absenteeism and cognitive lags. Combined, these factors promote grade retention. This study will examine economic factors that influence grade retention among pupils in public lower primary schools in Meru South Sub County.

Constantino (2005) examined six communities in the greater Los Angeles, California, area and found that children in high-income communities had access to better schools than children in low-income communities. The researcher concluded that low socioeconomic status enhanced pupils’ grade retention. This study seeks to find out the economic factors that influence grade retention among pupils in public lower primary schools in Meru South Sub County.

In Kenya the Ministry of Education (1994) contends that financial ability of parents may lead to absenteeism of learners thus threatening student grade promotion. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2001) notes that school absenteeism is rampant in coffee, miraa and tea picking and stone harvesting areas around Mount Kenya. All these economic practices are common in Meru South Sub County. The Ministry of Education laments that although these activities appear to be supplementing family incomes, they disrupt the normal school routine leading to grade retention and consequently learners do not complete schooling at the expected time.
2.4.2 Family Size

Gomes (2004) explained that the number of sibling in a family determines how much resources can be allocated to each child attending school. Large families are challenged when it comes to educating their children and as such they opt to have some of the children stay home, and unfortunately, in most cases it’s the girl child because of social stereotyping. Children with special needs are also marginalized and are least likely to be retained.

Karuma (2010), contributed to the debate stating that as a family gets larger, parents have less time to spend individually with each child. As a result of this, the amount of time spent reinforcing learning and aiding in the education process decreases which makes educational performances to be poor leading to grade retention (Odaga, 2005). Investment in learning materials may also decrease as income is divided among more children. In Kenya this is very evident in the rural areas and such circumstances pupils in lower classes may be forced to be retained a grade so that the older one can continue with education (Karuma, 2010). However, the review did not outline much on the factors leading to lower primary retention but concentrated more on holistic retention. Thus, there need to establish economic factors leading to retention in regards to the lower primary to fill the gap.

2.5 Summary

Grade retention, or retention, is making learners who have not achieved the required age and fully mastered the specific objectives of the curriculum, achieved a certain academic standard or who are ranked among the last in the class be retained the academic year. The review shows that retentions contribute to decrease in completion rates in the education system and represent inefficiency in public primary schools. In
Kenya, the review shows that low achievement patterns tend to be associated to factors at both the school and the family levels but most of the literature did not point out the effects of social, economic and cultural factors influencing grade retention.

The review also shows that, retention decisions are mostly initiated by the school or parents rather than the learner. Such decisions may be communicated as recommendations rather than requirements in which case, the final decision is left up to the parents. When teachers make some of decision, they do not consider the social cultural background of pupils which would determine the need for repletion. The culture of a community is perceived as a main driver of retention in most of nomadic communities. As such the review does not show how culture influence retention in none nomadic communities such as the Meru Community.

From the above literature reviewed it has only dealt with the effect of socio cultural and socio-economic factors that contribute to grade retention, it has not mention on the strategies to curb this problem. Therefore there is a need for this study to determine the strategies that can be employed to reduce grade retention.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
The chapter outlines the overall methodology which was used in the study. This included the research design, population of the study, sample size, sample frame, data collection methods, research procedures and data analysis and presentation.

3.2 Research Design
The study used the descriptive survey research design to investigate the socio cultural and economic factors contributing to public lower primary school pupils’ grade retention in Meru South Sub County, Kenya. The descriptive survey research design was used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2002). It was intended to produce statistical information about the aspect of education under study by reporting the way things are (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The descriptive research survey design was concerned with conditions that are already existing, practices that are held, processes that are ongoing and trends that are developing. Descriptive survey research design was the most appropriate for the study because it was used to collect information about the socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to public lower primary school pupils’ grade retention in Meru South Sub County, without manipulation of the study variables.

3.2.1 Variables of the Study
The independent variables used in the study included:

1. **Socio-cultural factors:** This includes; parental decision, gender roles, cultural beliefs, involvement of parents in their children school work and parent’s regard
for ECE. This would be key determinant in whether or not a learner be retained a grade in lower primary. The variables were measured by asking the lower primary teachers and head teachers to state the extent to which parental decisions, gender roles and cultural beliefs contribute to grade retention in the school.

2. **Socio-economic factors:** This was about family financial capability which were suspected to determine pupil’s education and undermined grade promotion which were asked to both the lower primary teachers and the head teachers. The questions focused on parental income, family size and parents” education level.

The dependent variable in the study was grade retention in public lower primary grades. It was measured through questions to both the lower primary teachers and the head teachers in relation to the rate of grade retention in the lower primary unit.

### 3.2.2 Research Methodology

Qualitative approach was used since it focused on a descriptive and inductive study of people’s meaning and understanding of their own realities. It emphasized on grounded practices derived from a rich descriptive data. Secondly, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) argue that the qualitative research’s goal is to better understand human behaviour and experiences. The research used questionnaires to lower primary teachers and interviews to the head teachers of the sampled public primary schools as the qualitative data collection methods.

### 3.3 Location of the Study

The study was carried out in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County of Tharaka Nithi County. The Sub County has four education zones namely: Magumoni, Karingani, Iamba Ng’ombe and Mariani. According to the Distinct Education Office (2014-15), the rate of class retention in the sub county increased from 13.5% in 2014 to 15.7% by 2015 representing an increase by 2%. The area was therefore chosen
because of its high grade retention rate in public lower primary classes besides there being no similar research which has been conducted in the area focusing on socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to grade retention in these grades before.

3.4 Target Population

The target population included public primary schools in the sub county. They included all the 63 Public primary schools in Meru South Sub County. Out of these 63 schools Fifteen (15) are located in Magumoni zone, Sixteen (16) in Karingani zone, Ten (10) in Igamaba Ng’ombe zone, chuka zone nine (9) and Thirteen (13) in Mariani zone. The study population comprised of 252 teachers made up of 189 lower primary school teachers, and 63 head teachers, (DEO Meru South, 2015). The lower primary teachers were chosen because they are stakeholders in the system and they are knowledgeable about the social cultural and economic factors contributing to grade retention of pupils in public primary schools. They are also the custodians of pupil’s registers in the respectful classes. The target population of the schools in the sub county was tabulated in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Target population of schools in the sub county

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ZONES</th>
<th>Target Schools</th>
<th>Target H/T</th>
<th>Target Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magumoni</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karingani</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariani</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igambang’ombe</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuka</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Meru South County Director of Education (2016)
3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study used the stratified random and purposive sampling method to choose the sample schools and respondents. To get public primary schools, the stratified random sampling was used to get the sample size from Magumoni zones, Karingani, Chuka, IgambaNg’ombe, and Mariani zone. Kothari (2004) insists that when the target population is large (over 1000) a minimum sample of 20% is adequate for an education research, and when the target population is small (less than 1000) a maximum sample of 30% is adequate for an educational research. As such a manageable sample size was obtained using Kothari’s formula of 30% to get the sample of schools in each education zone in Meru South Sub County. All the Head teachers and lower primary teachers of the sampled schools were used as the sample in the study.

Table 3.2: Sampling Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ZONES</th>
<th>Schools Population</th>
<th>Schools Sample</th>
<th>H/T Sample size</th>
<th>Teachers Sample</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magumoni</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karingani</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuka</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IgambaNg’ombe</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariani</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6 Research Instruments

The study being a social science research study, it utilized the questionnaire to gather information from teachers and interview schedule to gather information from head teachers. A questionnaire as an instrument used to gather data, it allows measurement
for and against a particular viewpoint. A questionnaire was used because it has the ability to collect a large amount of information in a reasonably quick space of time. The interview schedule was used to the head teachers and it enabled the researcher to gather in depth information about the independent variables of study

3.6.1 Questionnaire for Teachers.

One questionnaire was constructed and administered to the teachers selected for the study by the researcher. They were made by the researcher and they were tested and validated during pilot study. The questionnaires consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed ended questions were used because they are easy to administer, analyzing and they are economical in terms of time and money. The open ended questions, on the other hand, were easy to formulate and they helped to collect more in-depth responses from the subjects.

The questionnaire had 5 sections, the first section (A) sought to gather the bio-data information of the respondents and enrolment and retention rates of the schools. Section (B) solicited information regarding social factors influencing retention. Section (C) covered cultural factors while (D) covered the social economic factors and characteristics.

3.6.2 Interview Guide.

An interview schedule was prepared by the researcher to guide the interview to the head teachers. This ensured that the researcher remain focused to the study variables. The interview questions were divided into two sections: section (A) sought details on socio-cultural and economic factors as well as the extent to which they contribute to grade retention in lower primary. Section (B) had questions regarding the frequency of grade retention in the school and the feeling of the head teacher about grade
retention. The researcher personally conducted the interviews and recorded the information given for analysis. Interview to the head teachers was chosen for qualitative study because it focuses on a descriptive and inductive study of people’s, meanings and understanding of their own realities.

3.6.3 Piloting

Before carrying out the actual study, the data collection instruments were pre-tested to determine their validity and reliability. Two public primary schools from Meru south Sub County were randomly selected for pilot study. The selected schools were not to participate in the actual study but they had same characteristics as those of actual school in the study. The purpose of the pilot study was to pre-test the research instruments in order to validate and ascertain their reliability. The researcher visited the respondents to book appointments and administers the pilot instruments.

3.6.4 Validity

The researcher constructed the research instruments. To enhance content validity of the research instruments, the researcher carefully set them as per the objectives of the study. Help was also sought in validation from education experts and peers. Their comments and suggestions of questions that could have been forgotten and deficiencies in structuring of the questions were revised. The pilot study helped to reduce errors in the data collection. Then researcher further improved the quality of the instruments by replacing vague questions with more suitable ones.

3.6.5 Reliability

In order, to make the correct inferences about a population, the instrument used must be reliable. The reliability of the instrument was arrived at by using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. The instruments with items from the domain of indicators that measured
factors contributing to grade retention were administered to appropriate groups (teachers and headteachers). The scored items in the instruments were then divided into two groups. The subjects’ total score from the two groups of items was computed and collated. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above is acceptable for descriptive research surveys. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 and 0.71 was obtained for the research instruments for class teachers and head teachers, respectively. The instruments were considered acceptable for data collection.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from Kenyatta University and a research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovations. The Meru south Director of Education was also contacted to give permission to conduct the study in the said area. The researcher booked appointments with the respondents to administer questionnaires and conduct interview. The researcher administered the questionnaires to teachers to fill in and gave them a time frame of one week. The questionnaire was used to gather the bio-data information of the respondents and enrolment and retention rates of the schools, information regarding social factors influencing retention, cultural factors and social economic factors and characteristics leading to grade retention in schools.

He conducted an interview with the Head teachers to collect information on socio-cultural and economic factors as well as the extent to which they contribute to grade retention in lower primary and the frequency of grade retention in the school and the feeling of the head teacher about grade retention.
3.8 Data Analysis

The Questionnaires were checked to remove those with incomplete items and multiple entries. The data collected was coded and entered in the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The research yielded data that required both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics entailed use of frequencies, means and percentages. Qualitative data from open-ended items was organized into themes and patterns pertinent to the study. A thematic analysis is a method of investigation that allows researchers to scrutinize data for emerging patterns of themes that reoccur. The stimulated patterns and themes offered a basis for additional interpretation. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest that themes assist in building a comprehensive description of an overarching theory. The outcome of the analysis and computations was presented in tabular form.

3.9 Logistic and Ethical Considerations

The logistical and ethical considerations that were taken into account in this study are described in 3.9.1 and 3.9.2 as follows:

3.9.1 Logistical Considerations

The researcher obtained a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations (NACOSTI). Before administering the instruments, permission to carry out the study in the public lower primary schools in Meru South Sub County was sought from the Sub County Director of Education. Head Teachers of the selected schools were consulted to allow the study to be carried out in their schools.
The researcher booked the appointments with the respondents and familiarization visit was conducted during which the researcher requested the teachers to provide their time tables. This enabled the researcher to prepare a visitation schedule to the schools. To avoid the teacher making any specific preparations, no special appointments were given.

### 3.9.2 Ethical Considerations

The research work was done in accordance with the set ethical standards which are of utmost importance especially when human subjects are involved. These ethical considerations ensured that professionalism was upheld during research work. These included:

i. Upholding and protecting the dignity and privacy of every participant in the research project. To ensure this, respondents were instructed not to write their names anywhere in the questionnaire or state it during interviews.

ii. Those involved in the study were assured of the confidentiality of the information given. The information given out by the respondents remained confidential and was used for the study only.

iii. The respondents were informed about the reasons for undertaking the study and the aims of the study in order to gain their full cooperation.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the analyzed data and discussion of the findings. In the preliminaries, the questionnaire return rate and the demographic data of respondents are presented. The second section comprise of the socio-cultural factors contributing to grade retention of lower public primary school pupils. The third section shows the economic factors leading to grade retention of lower public primary school pupils while the fourth section contain the strategies to reduce grade retention of lower public primary school pupils, following the study objectives which were:

The chapter is presented as per the research objectives, which were:

i. Establish whether parental decision, gender role and cultural beliefs contribute to grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County.

ii. Investigate contribution of parent’s income, family size and parent’s level of education towards grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County.

iii. To determine strategies that can be employed to reduce grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County.

4.2 Questionnaire Return Rate

The researcher distributed questionnaires to all the sampled lower public primary school class teachers and conducted interview to the sampled head teachers. The response rate to the data collection tool is as presented in Table 4.1.
Table 4.1: Questionnaire Return Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Returned</td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Returned</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F - frequency

Information on Table 4.1 shows that 96% of the distributed tools were responded to. The reply rate was adequate for this research. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2004), when the response rate is above 70% in an educational research the data collected is considered adequate percentage for data analysis.

The researcher sought to ascertain the response rate by gender and cross tabulate their gender. Information in Table 4.2 shows how the research respondents were spread by gender.

Table 4.2: Gender distribution of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teachers</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Information in Table 4.2 demonstrates that 54% of the class teachers who filled the questionnaires were male while 46% were female. The information further shows that most 85% head teachers who responded to the interview were male in contrast 15% who were female. The general distribution of the respondents shows that 62% of those who filled the questionnaires were male whereas 38% were female. Thus it was noted from the results that gender was moderately dispersed in the subset of the respondents, with a trivial positive partiality on males.

4.3 Rating of Grade Retention in Lower Classes According to Teachers

An investigation of the rating of grade retention in public lower primary classes according to teachers yielded the information presented in figure 4.1 below.

![Figure 4.1: Rating of Grade Retention in Lower Classes](image)

The results of the study showed that grade retention in lower classes was high with 31% of the respondents confirming so. However, 16% of the respondents felt that grade retention in lower public primary school pupils is very low. As such from the findings majority, very high (25%) and high (31%) confirms that grade repetition in lower classes in Tharaka Nithi County was high.
4.4. Socio-Cultural Factors Contributing to Grade Retention According to teachers

This section presents the data on the first objective of the study which sought to establish the socio-cultural factors contributing to grade retention of pupils in lower classes in public primary schools in Meru South Sub-County, Kenya.

4.4.1 Influence of Gender on Grade Retention.

The researcher sought to find out whether gender had any influence on grade retention in lower public primary school. The results are as discussed on table 4.2.

![Bar chart showing gender effect on grade retention]

Figure 4.2: The gender effect grade retention

The study established that girls were more affected by class retention as indicated by majority 63% of the class teachers whereas boys class retention was low as indicated by 37% of the respondents. This concurs with Boadu (2000) who observed that socio-cultural practices lead to differentiated outcomes in school performance for girls and boys and as such affect grade retention. He also stated that, the most important is the existence of gender division of labour within the household, which can probably lead to higher opportunity costs being associated with the schooling of girls relative to
boys. Juma (2009) also confirms this by arguing that, ethnicity in most communities has become a barrier and a limitation to successful grade promotion of primary education.

4.4.2. Assessment of Teachers on Parental Decisions and Children’s Retention in Public Primary Classes

In this section the respondents were requested to base their responses on their experience as teachers. The class teachers were requested to rank parental decisions on children retention in Likert scale in a descending order of Very high, High, Low and No Influence.

The results obtained are compiled on table 4.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-cultural Determinants</th>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>No influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ decision on grade retention</td>
<td>13(23%)</td>
<td>16(28%)</td>
<td>09(16%)</td>
<td>19(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Involvement in home chores and tasks</td>
<td>22(39%)</td>
<td>17(30%)</td>
<td>11(19%)</td>
<td>07(12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Parents’ involvement in children home work</td>
<td>21(37%)</td>
<td>16(28%)</td>
<td>11(19%)</td>
<td>09(16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s regard for early childhood education</td>
<td>16(28%)</td>
<td>20(35%)</td>
<td>10(18%)</td>
<td>11(19%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in table 4.3, majority (33%) of the teachers reported that parents’ decision on grade retention of pupils in public lower primary classes was of no influence. This figure is higher than those who responded that parents’ decision highly influence children’s’ grade retention. The findings fully agreed with Migosi (2012) who emphasized on the parents’ role in the educational progress of their
children. The study also established that Children’s involvement in home chores significantly contributed to class retention in lower public primary classes with 39% of teachers stating it highly influenced class retention. Similarly, Parents’ Negative attitude towards education was perceived to have an influence on children’s retention in lower public primary classes, as was indicated by a majority (63%) who rated the influence as either very high of just high. Further, majority (37%) argued that parents’ lack of involvement in children home work greatly influenced lower primary class retention. Low regard for early childhood education by parents has been identified as highly influencing lower primary class retention as was indicated. The findings concurs with Carter & Kennedy (2012) stating that family background has strong (direct and indirect) associations with pupils’ grade retention throughout school life, which include family structure (socio-cultural and socio-economic status).

The teachers’ report that socio cultural factors contribute towards lower primary school pupils grade retention were corroborated by that of the head teachers as demonstrated in table 4.5

**Table 4.4: Head teachers’ view on the contribution of socio-cultural factors in pupils’ grade retention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-Cultural factors</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large family size contribute to low pupils grade retention</td>
<td>SA 53 A 9 U 4 D 1 SD 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parenthood contribute to low pupils grade retention</td>
<td>SA 64 A 3 U 0 SD 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family conflicts and violence contribute to low pupils grade retention</td>
<td>SA 55 A 6 U 7 SD 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the majority (53%) of the head teachers, large family size contributed to lower public primary school pupils’ grade retention. This is in line with the study
done by Karuma (2010) who found that, when the family gets larger, parents have less time to spend individual with each child. As a result of this, the amount of time spent reinforcing learning and aiding in the education process decrease which makes educational performance to be poor leading to grade retention. The study further established that single parenthood contributed to lower public primary school pupils grade retention, as was revealed by (64%) of the respondents.

Family conflicts and violence contribute to lower public primary school pupils grade retention, as reported by (55%) of the respondents. The study further established that religious fanaticism and cultic practices contributes to lower public primary school pupils grade retention in some areas, as was indicated by (48%) of the respondents.

The head teachers suggested that the community should be sensitized on the importance of education to the children. They suggested that the government should partner with the community and administrative leaders to ensure that all the children progress to the next class with none being retained.

4.5 Socio-economic Factors Leading to Class Retention

The second objective of the study sought to establish the economic factors leading to grade retention in lower primary schools. Attention was given to parental occupation, income of the parents and education level of the parents as economic determinants. The findings are presented in the subsequent sections

4.5.1 Parents’ Occupation and Children’s Retention in Lower Primary Classes

The occupation of parent and guardian of pupils in lower primary schools as reported by the teachers from the sampled schools is shown in Table 4.7.
Table 4.5: Occupation of parents/guardians of lower primary school pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Employed/ Business</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formally employed</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial farmers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistent farmers</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual laborers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in table 4.5, parents who were self-employed or in business constituted 11%, while those formally employed represented 13%. Those in commercial farming represented 13%, but majority of parents and guardians comprising 39% were subsistent farmers. Those who engaged in casual labor and other activities were a minority comprising of 16% and 8% respectfully.

4.5.2 Parents Socio-economic Level and Relation to Class Retention

The teachers were given some statements in relation to socio-economic status of parents which would influence pupils grade retention in lower primary and they were requested to rate them in a five point Likert scale. The scale options ranged from of strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Table 4.8 shows the findings.
Table 4.6: Relationship between Parents’ Socio-economic Level and Grade Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children of parents with high income are rarely retained in classes</td>
<td>34(44%)</td>
<td>28(36%)</td>
<td>3(4%)</td>
<td>6(8%)</td>
<td>6(8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of Parents with low income are retained classes in more often</td>
<td>33(43%)</td>
<td>31(40%)</td>
<td>2(3%)</td>
<td>4(5%)</td>
<td>7(9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who are retained in lower classes often come from large families</td>
<td>22(29%)</td>
<td>17(22%)</td>
<td>4(5%)</td>
<td>13(17%)</td>
<td>21(27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s education level contribute to grade retention</td>
<td>26(34%)</td>
<td>32(41%)</td>
<td>0(0%)</td>
<td>10(13%)</td>
<td>9(12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the 77 respondents, 44% strongly agreed that children of parents with high income rarely be retained classes. In regard to the statement that children of parents with low income be retained classes more often, 43% strongly agreed and another 40% also agreed. The statement that children who were retained in lower classes often come from large families, had 51% strongly agreeing and another 44% disagreeing, with only 5% claiming they were not decided on the matter.

The study concluded that children of the poor families were more vulnerable to grade retention in lower public primary school pupils. Family income was a major factor of pupil’s grade retention where poverty contributed to high grade retention in the area. Good (2013) concurs with the findings stating that children from poor families have greater exposure to environmental toxins and violence, and more limited extra-familial social support systems. Parents in such settings would report lower educational expectations, less monitoring of children’s school work and less overall
supervision of social activities. Mingat (2002) also agrees to this by stating that the richest households, 76% of their children attend school compared to 40% of the poorest households leading to grade retention.

In addition, parent’s education level was found to contribute to grade retention with 75% in agreement. The study inferred that parents who have low education level contribute less towards educational achievement of their children and may result into class retention in lower public primary school. This is in agreement with the study done by Asikhia (2010) who contents that lack of finance can contribute to high grade retention. Lack of school fees can led to poor school attendance hence poor performance and consequent grade retention.

An item was included in the interview schedule for the head teachers to establish the economic factors that contribute to public lower primary schools pupils grade retention in schools. Some of the socio-economic factors identified were the income of parents whose children are more prone to be retained in a grade and the parent’s education level.

77% of the head teacher stated that parents who are economically stable had high chances of supporting their children in school than the poor parents. There are still many “hidden costs” that make FPE expensive to some children and they in many ways lead to grade retention in this area where most parents are economically unstable. Children from poor families have high chances of being retained in a grade as observed by 56% of the head teachers. Big family size, which translates to high expenditures at home influenced the chance of grade retention in the area.
4.5.3 Other Factors that Contribute to Grade Retention in Lower Primary Classes.

The 53% of class teacher who responded to the questionnaires of the study identified factors such as the level of poverty in the sub county. In their opinion, although the sub county is well-endowed with resources irresponsible and uneducated parents are not able to exploit them. Children, and especially boys are involved in manual jobs and girls take up household works in the name of helping parents. This is done at the expense of school work and schooling which in turn influence grade retention.

Since most of the parents are illiterate their contribution towards education of their children is minimal. They are not concerned about the performance or discipline of their children.

Other factors included, child labour, divorce of parents which subject children to a lot of stress, orphanage due to HIV/AIDS, drunkards’ parents, separation among parents and negative attitude towards education by especially young uneducated parents.

Parental role was indicated as important factor e.g. Lack of parental advice, support and attention are the causes of their children’s retention.

4.6 Strategies to Reduce Grade Retention

The third objective of the study sought to identify the strategies which would be applied to counter class retention in lower classes in the schools.

4.6.1 Community Based Strategies that can be Employed to Mitigate Socio-Cultural and Economic Factors Leading to Grade Retention

When the head teachers and teachers were asked on the strategies to put in place to reduce retention rate in lower primary schools they gave the following suggestions;
Parents are encouraged to be involved in encouraging their children to do their home work. This will enhance children practice and mastering what was taught in class. The pupils will therefore perform well in class hence reducing retention rate.

The respondents suggested that there was need to sensitize the community on equity in provision of education for both boys and girls. This can be done by parents taking off some home duties from the girls to ensure that they concentrate more on their education thus achieve the intended objectives thus avoid retention. In addition, parents need to be educated on the policy of social promotion. This will reduce cases of children being retained as a result of parent’s decision.

Secondly, the community should be encouraged to practice family planning thus ensure that they get a number of children they can support especially in education. This will enable the parents to provide their children with needed learning materials in school. This will enable them not to miss classes, improving their performance in school hence low retention rate.

Thirdly, the community needs to come up with projects at both individual and community level to ensure economic sustainability. This will give them economic power to participate in cost sharing in school for feeding programme and other fees required by the school for their children. This will enable pupils attend school regularly thus reducing retention rate caused by poor performance.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
This chapter presents summary of the major findings and conclusions as per the research objectives. Recommendations of the study and suggestions for further studies are also presented.

5.2 Summary of the Main Findings

5.2.1 Introduction
The purpose for the study was to establish the socio-cultural and socio-economic factors contributing to grade retention of pupils in lower classes of the public primary schools in Meru South Sub County, Kenya. Data of the study was collected from a sample of 57 lower primary class teachers and 20 head teacher totaling to 77 respondents. The head teachers participated as respondents through an interview schedule.

5.2.2 Socio-Cultural Factors Contributing to Grade Retentions.
The results showed that parents’ decision did not have a significant influence on grade retention in schools with a majority 33% of teachers in support of this. However, 13% rated parents’ decision as very high suggesting that there are some pupils who are retained in a grade as a result of parents’ decision. The results also showed that children’s involvement in home chores highly influencing grade retention. Lack of parents assistance of children with school work at home, was very high and it influenced grade retention in lower primary. Low regard to early childhood education by parents was also reported to make a major contribution to grade retention. The
study concluded that, learners and family socio-cultural background were the most significant factors to grade retention in lower classes.

Traditions and societal norms were major factors influencing girls’ education in Meru South. The results also showed that girls were more affected by retention in lower classes in the Meru South than boys.

It was established that children from poor families had limited social support systems which lead to grade retention.

The head teachers stated that the main contributor was learners’ family background which significantly influenced children behavior both at home and in school. Thus, home setting was a major factor influencing children’s grade retention. In addition many school age girls Within Meru South Sub-county got involved in household choruses which affect their leaning leading to grade retention.

5.1.3 Economic Factors Leading to Class Retention

The occupation of most parents and guardians of standard one to three pupils in this location were subsistent farmers constituting 39%. The other relatively high percentage (16%) constituted of casual laborers. The economy here is largely dependent on subsistence agriculture which is likely to fail due to drought and even when the harvest is good, it is just enough for family use leading to grade retention due to lack of finance. As per the statement that children of parents with high income rarely be retained classes a majority 44% of respondents strongly agreed. On the other hand in regard to the statement that children of parents with low income be retained classes more often, a majority 40% agreed.
The statement that children who are retained in lower classes often come from large families, there was mixed response where 29% strongly agreed and another 27% strongly disagreed. This showed that though some children of the poor families were not provided with adequate educational materials which in effect influenced class retention there are those who come from such families and were not affected.

Parent’s education level was established to contribute to grade retention with 41% in agreement. The study concluded that parents who are illiterate contribute less towards education of their children and may result into stagnation as well as class retention in most cases.

**5.1.4 Strategies to Reduce Grade Retention**

The strategies that the community should take include marketing the school and provide facilities and should protect the school from eternal challenges. The parents should assist in enforcing the already laid down policies and procedures e.g. corporal punishment, extra tuition and provide teachers with motivation. Community can also improve the school infrastructure and ensure that children go to school by providing pupils with personal needs, providing good learning environment at home, participating actively in school activities, Meeting school financial obligations where the government has not supported, supporting the school in maintenance of discipline, providing conducive learning environment for both learners and teachers and enhancing discipline.

The head teachers suggested and identified some of the challenges that the community would come in hardly to assist to counter grade retention. The head teachers noted that when pupils are asked to be retained a class at the beginning of the year the pupils get upset and the community can advise their pupils the importance of such a move.
This is because some pupils fell hopeless or turn violent but with time interacting with teachers and peers or by getting good academic result their attitude become positive. to succeed.

5.2 Conclusions of the Study

Based on the findings, the study concluded:

Social-cultural practices such as parental decision on grade retention, gender roles, cultural beliefs, parents’ level of involvement in school work have a great impact on pupil’s grade retention.

Socio-economic factors such as Parents’ income, Family size and parents’ education level have an influence on grade retention of lower primary pupils in Tharaka Nithi County. Children who comes from homes with large family size and their parents have lower income are the most affected and they retain in class than those from rich and small family size families. Also most children whose parents have lower education level retain in class than those whose parents have higher education level.

When parents encourage their children to do homework they enhance children practice and mastering what was taught in class and this reduce retention rate. Also if the community is sensitized on equity in provision of education for both girls and boys, retention rate will be reduced in schools.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of the study the researcher recommends the following.

i. Parents should delegate less domestic chores to the girl-child to concentrate in school work for example doing their homework.
ii. Parents and community should be sensitized on the effect of some cultural practices which affects education of their children.

iii. Schools and parents should collaborate in making early interventions aimed helping pupils who show tendencies of being slow in learning to achieve the objectives in the planned time.

**5.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research should focus on:

i. Investigating the relationship between socio-cultural and economic factors and grade retention in lower primary school of different gender.

ii. Investigating the relationship between school management style and pupils retention in lower primary school.

iii. A replication of the study in another Sub-County located outside the area in order to validate findings of this study.
REFERENCES


Johnson, C.S. (2011) *Early In-Grade Retention in the Prediction of TAKS Reading Achievement Scores Among Third Grade Pupils in a South Texas School.* Gonzaga University-Spokane Washington. Encounters 17(1).


Omolo, A.M (2013) *The factors influencing the retention of pupils in public primary schools in drought prone areas of Turkana Central division.* (Master’s Thesis) University of Nairobi. Nairobi University Press.


Terry, S.E. et al. (2011) *Teachers’ Beliefs Towards Grade Retention in a Rural Elementary School*. Marshal University Graduate College, Ohio.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTION LETTER TO RESPONDENTS

Brian Murithi

Kenyatta University

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: RESEARCH PROJECT ON SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GRADE RETENTION OF PUPILS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MERU SOUTH SUB-COUNTY

I am a student of Kenyatta University. The questionnaire attached has been designed to gather information on the topic shown above. This information will be used to complete a research project as a requirement for a Master’s degree in education of Kenyatta University. The information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. You are advised not to indicate your name on the paper, but other details are very important as per this research work.

Please spare some of your time and fill in the attached questionnaires to the best of your knowledge. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Brian Murithi
APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LOWER PRIMARY TEACHERS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on the social, cultural and economic factors contributing to grade retention of pupils in lower classes of the public primary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. You have been identified to participate in this study by filling in the questionnaire. If you do so, your identity will be treated confidentially and the information you give will only be used for academic purposes. Please answer all the questions provided as honestly as possible, to the best of your knowledge. Kindly do not write your name on this questionnaire.

Section A: Demographic data

1. What is your age?
   20 – 30 years [ ] 30 – 40 years [ ]
   40 – 50 years [ ] 50 – 60 years [ ]

2. Please tick against your gender
   Male [ ] Female [ ]

3. What is your highest academic qualification?
   M. Ed [ ] B. Ed [ ]
   Diploma [ ] P1 [ ]
   Others (specify) ________________________________

4. How long have you been teaching in lower primary classes (tick one)
   1 – 5 years [ ] 6 – 10 years [ ]
   11 – 15 years [ ] More than 15 years [ ]

5. How would you rate the retention in lower classes in your school?
   Very High [ ] High [ ]
   Low [ ] Very low [ ]
SECTION B: SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS LEADING TO CLASS RETENTION

1. a) Which gender is normally affected most by class retention issues?
   Boys [ ]   Girls [ ]

   b) Are parents in Meru South gender biased in education of their children?
   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

2. The table below represents statements about socio-cultural determinants of class retention. Based on your experience as a teacher. Indicate to what extent they lead to grade retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Determinants</th>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>No influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative attitude towards education by parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child home chores and tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents assistance of children in school work at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low regard to early childhood education by parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. a) In your opinion, what are the cultural beliefs that contributing to public lower primary schools pupils’ grade retention in your school? Name them and how they contribute.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________


SECTION C: ECONOMIC FACTORS LEADING TO CLASS RETENTION

1. What is the occupation of most parent/ guardian of standard one to three pupils in this school?
   - Self Employed/ Business [ ]
   - formally employed [ ]
   - Commercial farmers [ ]
   - Subsistent farmers [ ]
   - Casual laborers [ ]
   - Any other; specify

2. The statements below are related to level of income of Parents. Please tick appropriately

   **Key**
   - **SA** = Strongly Agree
   - **A** = Agree
   - **U** = Undecided
   - **D** = Disagree
   - **SD** = Strongly Disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children of parents with high income rarely be retained classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of Parents with low income be retained classes more often</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who be retained lower classes often come from large families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. In your own opinion, does the parent’s education level contribute to grade retention?
   - Yes [ ]
   - No [ ]

4. If yes, explain how it does.
   - __________________________________________________________
   - __________________________________________________________
   - __________________________________________________________
   - __________________________________________________________
SECTION D: STRATEGIES TO REDUCE GRADE RETENTION.

1. From your experience, what other factors contribute to grade retention in lower primary classes.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Suggest community based strategies that should be employed to mitigate socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to public lower primary schools pupils’ grade retention in your school.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. What other suggestions would you propose to reduce public lower primary schools pupils’ grade retention in your school?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your cooperation
APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEAD TEACHERS

Introduction

My name is Brian Murithi Humphrey, a master student at Kenyatta University. The purpose of my visit to your school is to carry out a research on socio-cultural factors contributing to public lower primary schools pupils’ grade retention in Meru South Sub County. Your school has been selected for the study. Please answer the following questions as truthful as possible. All information will be treated confidentially and your identity will not be revealed.

Section A: Demographic data

1. What is your age?
   20 – 30 years [   ] 30 – 40 years [   ]
   40 – 50 years [   ] 50 – 60 years [   ]

2. Gender(tick one)
   Male [   ] Female [   ]

3. What is your highest academic qualification?
   M. Ed [   ] B. Ed [   ]
   Diploma [   ] P1 [   ]
   Others (specify) __________________________________________________

4. How long have you been serving as a head teacher (tick one)
   1 – 5 years [   ] 6 – 10 years [   ]
   11 – 15 years [   ] More than 15 years [   ]

5. How would you rate the retention in lower classes in your school?
   Very High [   ] High [   ]
   Low [   ] Very low [   ]
Section B: Socio-cultural Factors
4. Which socio-cultural factors do you think contributing to public lower primary schools pupils’ grade retention in Meru South Sub County?
5. In your opinion, what are the cultural beliefs that contributing to public lower primary schools pupil’s grade retention in your school?
6. Are there any myths and taboos that contributing to public lower primary schools pupils’ grade retention in your school? If any, name them and how they contribute.
7. How can the teaching in lower primary be improved to make it more culturally sensitive?

Section C: Economic factors
1. Which Economic factors do you think contributing to public lower primary schools pupils’ grade retention in your school?
2. On average, how would you rate the income of parents whose children are more prone to be retained a grade?
3. In your own opinion, does the parent’s education level contribute to grade retention? If yes, explain how it does.

Section D: Strategies to reduce grade retention.
4. Suggest community based strategies that should be employed to mitigate socio-cultural factors contributing to public lower primary schools pupils’ grade retention in your school?
   What other suggestions would you propose to reduce public lower primary schools pupils’ grade retention in your school?
APPENDIX IV: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION LETTER FROM GRADUATE SCHOOL

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

FROM: Dean, Graduate School
TO: Brian Murithi Humphrey
C/o Early Childhood Studies Dept.

DATE: 29th June, 2017
REF: E35/CE/22551/010

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

We acknowledge receipt of your revised Research Proposal as per our recommendations raised by the Graduate School Board of 14th December, 2016 entitled “Socio-Cultural and Economic Factors Contributing to Lower Public Primary School Pupils’ Grade Retention in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya”.

You may now proceed with your Data Collection, Subject to Clearance with Director General, National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation.

As you embark on your data collection, please note that you will be required to submit to Graduate School completed Supervision Tracking Forms per semester. The form has been developed to replace the Progress Report Forms. The Supervision Tracking Forms are available at the University’s Website under Graduate School webpage downloads.

Thank you.

HARRIET ISAIOKE
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

C.c. Chairman, Department of Early Childhood Studies

Supervisors:

1. Dr. Mary Ndani
C/o Department of Early Childhood Studies
Kenyatta University
APPENDIX V: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FROM NACOSTI

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Ref: No: NACOSTI/P/18/68509/23668

Date: 24th July, 2018

Brian Murithi Humphrey
Kenyatta University
P.O Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Socio cultural and economic factors contributing to lower public primary school pupils grade retention in Tharaka Nithi County Kenya” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Tharaka Nithi County for the period ending 24th July, 2019.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Tharaka Nithi County before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit a copy of the final research report to the Commission within one year of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.

BONIFACE WANYAMA
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Tharaka Nithi County.

The County Director of Education
Tharaka Nithi County.
APPENDIX VI: RESEARCH PERMIT

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MR. BRIAN MURITHI HUMPHREY
of KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, 337-60400
Chuka, has been permitted to conduct
research in Tharaka-Nithi County
on the topic: SOCIO CULTURAL AND
ECONOMIC FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO
LOWER PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
PUPILS GRADE RETENTION IN THARAKA
NITHI COUNTY KENYA
for the period ending:
24th July, 2019

Applicant:

Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation

CONDITIONS
1. The License is valid for the proposed research,
research site specified period.
2. Both the Licensee and any rights thereunder are
non-transferable.
3. Upon request of the Commission, the Licensee
shall submit a progress report.
4. The Licensee shall report to the County Director of
Education and County Governor in the area of
research before commencement of the research.
5. Excavation, filming and collection of specimens
are subject to further permissions from relevant
Government agencies.
6. This License does not give authority to transfer
research materials.
7. The Licensee shall submit two (2) hard copies and
upload a soft copy of their final report.
8. The Commission reserves the right to modify the
conditions of this Licence including its cancellation
without prior notice.

RESEARCH CLEARANCE
PERMIT

REPUBLI C OF KENYA
National Commission for Science,
Technology and Innovation

CONDITIONS: see back page

Permission No: NACOSTI/P/18/68909/23668
Date of Issue: 24th July, 2018
Fee Received: Ksh 1000