



Public Benefit Organizations' Education Interventions and Sustainable Household Poverty Reduction in Mwingi North Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya

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Abstract: *Despite ongoing efforts by Public Benefit Organizations (PBOs) to support government initiatives in reducing poverty in Mwingi North Sub-County, Kitui County, indicators reveal a persistent and worsening situation. Illiteracy and low school enrollment rates are high, with poverty prevalence estimated at 41.9%. Although other actors, such as Compassion International Kenya, have helped address these issues, their impact has been limited. This study examined the effect of PBO-led educational initiatives on sustainable household poverty reduction based on Social Capital Theory and the Capability Approach. Using descriptive and correlational research methods, the study focused on a population of 162,218, with an accessible target of 131,883 (81.3% of those in poverty). A sample of 399 respondents was calculated using Slovin's formula, with simple random sampling used for household selection and purposive sampling for key informants for the PBO personnel. Data collection involved interviews, utilizing questionnaires and key informant guides. The reliability of the instruments was confirmed through expert review and Cronbach's alpha of 0.967, obtained from 40 respondents in a similar area, which exceeded the benchmark of 0.70. Quantitative data were analyzed with SPSS v.29 and Pearson's correlation, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Results at a 99% confidence level showed that education had a significant positive relationship with poverty reduction ($r = 0.051$, $p < 0.01$, $\beta = 0.192$). Notably, 40.5% of respondents disagreed that PBO involved parents and communities in educational awareness. The study concludes that increasing community participation is essential for improving school enrollment and supporting long-term socio-economic change.*

Keywords: PBOs, Education, Sustainable, Household, Poverty, Reduction

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1. Introduction

A study by Alkire, Kanagaratnam and Suppa (2022) showed there was a high poverty rate globally in the urban and rural areas, with 1.7% and 26.1% respectively. Globally, about 57 million primary school children were not in school. Unless thorough strategies were taken, 43% of these children who had

dropped out of school had no access to education in absolute poverty. Aikaeli, Garcés-Urzaínqui and Mdadila (2021) investigated in Tanzania, where household heads who had not completed their primary education were at a high risk of poverty by 13%. The possibility of falling into poverty was 30% for individuals without a higher education. In Kenya, Paslakis et al. (2020) noted that low enrolment of students in

schools was related to high levels of illiteracy. This was associated with several factors, including the parents dying from HIV/AIDS.

Additionally, the children lacked educational materials such as uniforms, books, writing materials and fees. The government offered free primary education however, the number of student enrolments was low. Additionally, in Mwingi North Sub-County, statistics revealed that most children did not attend school, accounting for about 41.9%, due to poverty (Kikuvi, 2021). To date, the illiteracy level within the sub-county has not dropped despite the interventions from the government and other agencies such as the PBOs. Globally, some of the PBOs worked towards reducing poverty by addressing poor education Chankseliani, Qoraboyev and Gimranova (2021). A good example was World Vision, which helped at least 1 billion children access better education. The PBO used a mechanism of participatory development where the community suggested what they wanted to address regarding poor education. This gave the communities a sense of belonging as their views were taken into consideration. The PBO provided learning materials, scholarships and uniforms for the children, which increased school enrolment. However, the problem was not covered whole as most of the children were still at home.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite numerous consistent interventions by the National, County Governments and PBOs to reduce poverty levels in Mwingi North Sub-County, Kitui County, the situation has persisted and worsened in the study area. The problem has been partly addressed by Compassion International Kenya; however, it continues to persist. Therefore, this upward trend indicates that the education interventions by the PBO in Mwingi North Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya, are not decreasing. The poverty levels related to education are increasing. The study examined the influence of PBO's education interventions on sustainable household poverty reduction in Mwingi North Sub-County, Kitui County, Kenya. The objective of the study was to analyze how PBO's education interventions impact sustainable household poverty reduction in the area.

2. Literature Review

Reza (2022) investigated the success of 6 PBOs involved in education in Bangladesh, Asia. Using a qualitative study design through interviews, the researcher found out that; one of the organizations in Bangladesh known as Speak Up for the Poor, gave homes to young girls who came from marginalized communities and trained them professionally, so they became successful in their communities through a program known as Girls Education Programme (GEP). In thirty communities, more than 1300 females were reached. Similarly, development in Literacy (DIL) was established to provide better, more

affordable education to Pakistani children by enrolling them in schools. Therefore, this research adopted the interview as a method of data collection, where the PBO was noticed to have intervened in the Education sector within the region.

Naguib, Afandy and Elbagoury (2022) used a comparative approach and researched the effectiveness of 3 PBOs on education in Tunisia, Northern Africa. Evidence relating to one of them indicated that it created more than 35,000 non-formal schools and the number of children was about 1.2 million. The number of enrolments increased. This leveled up the ratio of male to female enrolment in schools. The study concluded that the number of non-formal schools established by the PBOs was many compared to those of the government and private. Additionally, there was evidence that they performed very well compared to the other formal schools in the country. An investigation of 1 PBO in Zambia, known as World Vision, created a difference in children's education.

Research by Kuyenda (2021) indicated that the organization provided modern libraries, gave scholarships to poor students and trained local teachers. Additionally, the organization-built houses for them to stay near the school and provided learning materials to the school. There was high enrolment after the organization built the schools because the children within the country were poor, as most dropped out due to a lack of fees. A study by Dashti, Moulabuksh and Ali (2021) investigated the influence that several PBOs had on education in Pakistan. Using research articles, the researcher found out that there was a high rate of poverty in the country, which led to most of the children not enrolling in school. The organizations led the establishment of schools that the children enrolled in without paying a fee. Evidence was proven through a PBO known as The Citizen Foundation in Pakistan, whose mission was to increase the children from poor backgrounds in schools. It established more than 1600 schools and enrolled about 253,000 children from the marginalized communities.

The other PBO in Pakistan that educated children was the Care Foundation, which dealt with the children who were prone to hazardous areas. For example, when floods came that the children did not go to school, the organization helped to enrol them in nearby schools, which were not affected by the calamity, for continuation. Statistics showed that about 890 schools were established by the organization. An investigation of 1 PBO in Zambia, known as World Vision, created a difference in children's education. Research by Kuyenda (2021) indicate that the organization provided modern libraries, gave scholarships to the poor students and trained local teachers. Additionally, the organization-built houses for them to stay near the school and provided learning materials to the school. There was high enrolment after the organization built the schools, because the children within the country were poor, as most dropped out due to a lack of fees.

Yusuf (2022) explored the influence of PBOs on primary education in Mogadishu. A sample of 133 community members from a population of 200 was used and 67 were the PBO officials. The researcher used a descriptive research design and the methods of data collection were through the use of questionnaires. The findings were that 95% of the community members stated that the PBOs provided scholarships. The organization provided learning materials and school uniforms for the students.

A study conducted by Yambo (2022) investigated the influence of the PBOs on children’s education in Kisumu County, Kenya. The researcher used a descriptive research design using a sample of 241, which comprised 19 NGOs and 222 community members. The findings were that 76% of the respondents said that the PBO positively impacted the people in the area because the residents themselves were poor, hence could not afford to pay fees for their children in schools. Further evidence was from communities that embraced the initiatives that made them enroll their children in school.

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study used the Capability Approach, developed by Amartya Sen and expanded by scholars such as Nussbaum and Alkire, and the Social Capital Theory, introduced by Pierre Bourdieu, jointly offer a comprehensive framework for understanding sustainable household poverty reduction. The Capability Approach emphasizes that poverty is not just a lack

of income but the deprivation of essential capabilities and opportunities needed for individuals to lead meaningful lives, focusing on components like functioning, freedom, and conversion factors. On the other hand, the Social Capital Theory stresses the significance of social networks—bonding, bridging, and linking social capital—in accessing and mobilizing resources for community development. In Mwingi North Sub-County, Kitui County, PBOs apply these theories by creating opportunities for education, healthcare, and social services while building strong social ties with communities and other agencies to secure and distribute resources effectively. Through scholarships and collaborative networks, PBOs enhance community well-being and long-term development. Despite their impact, both approaches face limitations, including difficulties in quantifying capabilities and the risk of fostering dependency on external support.

3. Methodology

The study took place in Mwingi North Sub-County, Kitui County, which had a population of 162,218 and an area of approximately 4,824 square kilometers. This study adopted a descriptive and correlational research design, which provided information without manipulation. On the other hand, correlational research design helped in examining the relationship between the PBOs' Education interventions and sustainable household poverty reduction.

Table 1: Sample size for the PBO

PBO	Population size	Sample size
Compassion International Kenya	30	10
TOTAL	100	10

Table 1: Sampling Frame

Wards	Population size	Number of villages	Sample size
Kyuso	60, 375	12	74
Tseikuru	37, 890	12	74
Mumoni	32, 422	8	74
Ngomeni	18, 447	14	74
Tharaka	13, 084	7	73
TOTAL	162, 218	53	369

This research employed the use of structured closed-ended questionnaires for the household members. The questions were based on research objectives. The use of interview schedules provided the researcher with an opportunity to gather in-depth data, as respondents were free to answer based on how they felt without being limited to specific choices. The pilot testing was conducted in Kitui South Sub-County, which had a close poverty index level of 74.2%. Therefore, the researcher used the piloting site to determine whether the

questionnaires were reliable and valid (Kitui County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027, 2023). Reliability ensured that the research instrument tools were accurate. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient score was 0.967 above 0.7.

The research employed face validity, which assessed the appearance of the use of questionnaires and interview guides in the research, with the help of the supervisors who were experts in the field, to ensure they were well structured

(Quintão et al., 2020). The study employed content validity, which portrayed the whole domain that the research tended to cover all aspects of the content. Additionally, the research used construct validity to capture whether the research instrument measured the speculative concept on the indicators and performance of the PBOs towards poverty reduction in the communities. This was enhanced through a review of the literature to understand what the questionnaires needed to capture.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0. Therefore, regression analysis analyzes the quantitative data. Simple linear regression to analyse each independent variable with the dependent variable. A diagnostic test was used to investigate whether the calculated model and the assumption made about the data and the model were compatible with the recorded data Test for Multicollinearity, Test for Heteroskedasticity, Test for Normality.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The study revealed that the PBO played a significant role in supporting education in Mwingi North Sub-County by

Table 3: PBOs Education Initiatives

Descriptive Statistic (Variable)	SD	D	N	A	SA	St. Dev	Mean
Provision of school fees and Uniform	4.3	7.2	16.1	49.1	23.3	1.0156	3.799
Provision of support for learning Materials	5.7	11.5	13.3	43	26.5	1.1424	3.731
Construct learning classrooms	28.7	24.7	15.8	14.3	16.5	1.4435	2.452
Provide resources and specialized training	17.2	21.9	14.7	27.6	18.6	1.3885	3.686
Promote digital literacy	14.3	26.2	22.9	31.2	5.4	1.1991	2.413
Provide school meal programs	26.5	25.1	22.2	22.9	3.2	0.8560	1.5125
Train local teachers	65.2	24.7	4.7	4.3	1.1	1.0679	2.4133
Engage parents and communities to raise awareness about education	14.7	29	28.7	25.4	2.2	1.1619	2.871

The training of local teachers was another area of concern, as 43.7% disagreed that the PBO had made such efforts. Although external studies in Pakistan, Mongolia, and Tanzania showed strong PBO involvement in training teachers, Mwingi North showed minimal results in this area. While some global studies praised PBOs for organizing workshops and empowering teachers, this was not reflected locally. This training gap may have limited the ability of local schools to deliver quality education and sustain teacher availability, especially in remote areas.

providing school fees and uniforms, with 72.4% of respondents expressing satisfaction. A mean score of 3.7993 indicated a strong agreement, affirming that this support positively impacted school enrollment, especially for girls. These findings align with a study by Anyango (2024), which noted similar impacts in Kenya. Additionally, most respondents confirmed that PBOs provided supportive learning materials, with 69.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing, reinforcing conclusions from studies in Nigeria and Ghana.

However, the PBO's efforts in constructing learning classrooms were poorly rated, with 53.4% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The low mean score of 2.4523 reflected dissatisfaction with this aspect of the intervention. Similarly, the provision of digital literacy was poorly rated, with 51.6% disagreeing that the PBO promoted it. Despite successful digital literacy projects reported in Malaysia and Ghana, the local findings indicate that digital infrastructure and training in Mwingi North remain insufficient. Respondents also highlighted a lack of school meal programs, with 89.9% disagreeing that meals were provided, unlike successful models in South Africa, Europe, and Central Asia.

Lastly, community and parental engagement in educational awareness by the PBO received mixed responses, with 40.5% disagreeing and only 36.6% agreeing. Although various studies documented successful community engagement in Pakistan and India, these efforts were less apparent in Mwingi North. The study concludes that while the PBO made commendable progress in funding and material provision, more focus is needed on infrastructure, teacher training, digital literacy, meal programs, and

community involvement to improve educational outcomes in the region.

4.2 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was used to establish the nature of the relationship among the variables through equations. However, before conducting the simple linear relationship between the variables, the diagnostic test was done through multicollinearity, heteroskedasticity and normality

Table 4: Regression analysis for PBO (Education Initiatives) and Sustainable household poverty reduction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.226 ^a	.051	.048	.60887

a. Predictors: (Constant), Education

b. Dependent Variable: Poverty reduction

Table 4 below indicates that R Square = .051, implying that Education Initiatives undertaken by the PBO can only explain approximately 5.1% of the Sustained Poverty Reduction.

4.3 Regression ANOVA

Table 5: Regression ANOVA for PBO (Education Initiatives) and sustained household poverty reduction

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.535	1	5.535	14.931	.000 ^b
	Residual	102.691	277	.371		
	Total	108.226	278			

a. Dependent Variable: Poverty reduction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Education

The ANOVA results in **Table 5** emphasize the relationship between Education Initiatives undertaken by the PBO and Sustainable Poverty Reduction. The results indicate that $F(1, 277) = 14.931, p < 0.01$, implying that a relationship exists

between the Education Initiatives undertaken by the PBO and Sustainable Household Poverty Reduction.

4.4 Regression Coefficients

Table 6: Regression Coefficient for PBO (Education Initiatives) and Sustainable Household Poverty Reduction

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	2.116	.147		14.442	.000
	Education	.192	.050	.226	3.864	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Poverty reduction

The coefficients were beneficial in determining the influence of the Education initiatives undertaken by the PBO on Sustainable household poverty reduction in Mwingi North Sub-County, Kitui County. The results below, in **Table 6**, show that the beta value is 0.192, implying that a one-unit rise in Education initiatives undertaken by the PBO results in a 0.192-unit increase in Sustainable poverty reduction. The significant value is 0.000 and being less than the significance level of 0.01, a conclusion is made that there is a linear regression relationship between PBO (Education Initiatives) on sustainable household poverty reduction.

The study supports the findings from Rumenya and Kisimbi (2020) who found that there was a positive linear relationship between the PBOs' initiatives and the Education sector, where ($r=0.015, p>0.05$). The PBOs used different approaches to satisfy the Educator sector to reduce the number of school dropouts and increase new enrolments. Further, the research supports the study by Kabiru (2020), who found that there was a positive linear regression between PBOs' initiatives and Education. The initiatives accelerated the school enrolment within Mwingi North Sub-County, Kitui County. The regression equation is given by:

$$Y = 2.116 + .192 E$$

Where Y is the Sustainable household poverty reduction and X is the PBO (Education Initiatives)

4.5 Interview Schedule for PBO Staff

The interviews revealed that Compassion's primary focus was on poor households in Mwingi North Sub-County, prioritizing children—especially girls, children with disabilities, and those from abused families. The organization paid 90% of school fees and used community engagement methods such as barazas and workshops to tailor education initiatives. They collaborated with local authorities and schools, supported parent-teacher associations, and implemented income-generating projects like goat selling and certified seed growing to enhance sustainability. Challenges included parental ignorance and dependency, though funding from Compassion International and religious groups supported most efforts, with a long-term goal to open a teaching academy to empower local communities.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study found that the PBOs provided school fees and uniforms to children from poor households and supported learning materials. This demonstrated that the PBO played a significant role in increasing school enrolment. However, it was further noted that the PBO did not furnish resources, specialized training, or promote digital literacy. Additionally, the PBO failed to establish school meal programs for the children, offer training to local teachers, or engage parents and communities to raise awareness about education. This illustrated why poverty continued to exist in Mwingi North Sub-County, Kitui County. Therefore, the study concludes that the Public Benefit Organizations influence Sustainable Household Poverty Reduction through Education Initiatives.

5.2 Recommendations

This research recommends that the Government offer support to the PBOs in the form of funding to help children in poor households. This is because the PBOs fill the gap that the Government cannot, therefore, it will ease the burden that the PBOs have towards improving the Education sector. The PBOs should involve household members in raising awareness on the importance of education. This will boost the number of school enrollments in the region. The PBOs can also link education with job opportunities such that after the children are done with schooling, they can work in the organization, thus earning a salary to help cater to their basic needs. This will lead to high school enrollment within the region. The

PBOs should implement regular monitoring and evaluation of educational interventions to assess their impact on poverty reduction among low-income households. This approach strengthens program effectiveness and ensures the sustainability of outcomes.

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