

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Socio Economic Status of Students at Higher Education Level in Kenya: A Case of Moi University

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to investigate the Socio-Economic Status of Students at Higher Education Level in Kenya: A Case of Moi University. The study was carried out in the 1995/96 academic year and focused on selected faculties and schools in regard to Socio Economic Status of Students in University enrolment at undergraduate level. The population studied was drawn from all faculties/schools at Moi university Main campus, Chepkoilel Campus, Faculty of Health Sciences and Maseno University College. Proportionate random sampling technique was employed in identifying the respondents to this study. The questionnaire and document analysis guide were the key instruments used in this study. The construction of the questionnaire items was based on the information gathered during the literature review. The literature helped to identify the items that could lead to determining the Socio-Economic Status of Moi University Students. The test-retest method was used in determining the reliability of the questionnaire which yielded a coefficient of $r=0.74$. For secondary data, the study used Document Analysis Guide which was used to collect data from the university authorities and the Ministry of Education Statistics Division and number of candidates who sat for Kenya Certificate for Secondary Education in the years 1990-93. The return rate of the questionnaires was 70%. This was calculated from the number of questionnaires administered (822). This return rate was therefore considered sufficient to provide the required information. Data from the questionnaire and the Document Analysis Guide were analysed using descriptive statistics. Although the measurement of socio-economic groups in low developing countries is a challenge, the researcher used parent's occupation, education and monthly income to gauge the socio-economic groupings. Results of father's educational background showed that male students were drawn from fathers who had lower educational level than their female counterparts. Results of mothers' educational background indicated that male students have a higher number of mothers without formal schooling, unlike their female counterparts and female students have a better representation in mothers' education particularly at higher levels of education. Generally, this data showed that parents of female students have better education than male students' parents. Data on students' mothers' occupations showed that most of the student's mothers are peasant farmers. However, male students showed a higher representation here than their female counterparts. Female students have more numbers of mothers who are school teachers, small scale businesswomen and civil servants unlike their male counterparts. Mothers' educational background shows that 85.91% and 56.38% of the male and female students respectively come from the low socio-economic group while the rest form the middle and upper socio-economic groups. This shows that almost 50% of the students are drawn from peasant background. The available information from this study, therefore, indicates that most male students are drawn from a lower socio-economic group while female students are drawn from middle socio-economic groups.

Keywords: Socio economic status, students, higher education, Kenya, Moi University

1. Introduction

The rationale for disparities in Kenya is diverse and originates in the economic mode of colonial development, the location of missionary activity and the pattern of local self-help activity (ILO, 1972; Court and Kinyanjui, 1980). These disparities in education have continued to show up in regional economic developments in Kenya over the years.

The distribution of education opportunities has historically been inequitable across Africa (Sumner, 1963) and elsewhere (Sen, 1992). Part of these disparities draw their roots from the history of colonialism in Africa. This is because formal education in Africa was mainly introduced in the wake of colonial penetration and areas to be first "opened up" such as the coastal areas of Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria, enjoyed some advantage in the educational sphere over other countries (Data, 1984:145). The earliest Western -type school was set up in Sierra Leone in 1792 (Sumner, 1963:5). In Ghana, the Portuguese are believed to have built a school in the sixteenth century while the Christian Missionary Society put up a school at Badagri in Nigeria in 1840s. Formal education in these regions, paved way for higher education that has taken root in most of the West African countries.

Apart from Egypt, West African countries boast of earliest universities than most parts of Africa (Ehret, 2002). Some of these inequalities in the distribution of university education in Africa were brought by the activities of the Christian missionaries. Some countries, particularly in southern Africa, racial discrimination in higher education has been noted, for example, in Zimbabwe, school attendance for European children has been compulsory since 1930 while that of Asian children since 1938 but no such provision was made for African children. He European children had a privilege of

almost automatic entry to Secondary school while those of Africans had no such provisions. Atkinson (1972: 200) observes that African children could study only for the Cambridge school certificate and had few opportunities for specialization that would prepare them for university programmes.

Sifuna (1980) argues that; Education both in the colonial days and post-independence was designed and manipulated to enhance the socio-economic development of the traditional elite, in this way, it has been geared to producing a small class of people who are capable of dominating and oppressing a majority. The early missionaries selected children of chiefs, preachers, catechists, businessmen and those who accepted the tenets of Christianity. This therefore means that the inter-generational effect has continued to widen the disparities from primary, secondary to higher levels of education. There also exists an imbalance in the use of opportunities for higher education (Datta, 1984). Available information suggests that students with fathers or guardians in professional occupational categories are more than proportionately represented at universities throughout the African continent (Datta, 1984). A study by Fields (1974) on social composition of university students in Kenya revealed that most of the students were drawn from high socio-economic backgrounds. On the contrary, studies conducted by Barkan (1967) indicate that social composition of university students at Makerere (Uganda), Dares salaam (Tanzania) and Legon (Ghana) were drawn from peasant families followed by students belonging to civil servants. Gustav (1965:151) notes that; *at the university of Legon (Ghana) the students whose fathers were engaged in non-manual jobs and occupations decreased from 56 in 1953 to slightly more than 43 percent in 1963 while the proportion of students whose fathers and guardians were farmers and fishermen rose from 26 percent to 39 percent during the same period.*

In such a controversy, reliable data on the student composition at university level is very crucial in making decisions on who benefits from the government scholarships and bursary schemes.

The government of Kenya, immediately after independence, established the Kenya Education Commission that was to survey educational resources in Kenya, and advice government in the formulation and implementation of national policies and goals for the education. One of the goals of education formulated was promotion of social equality and removal of barriers/divisions in Kenya particularly with regard to race, tribe and religion (Republic of Kenya, 1964). However, considerable differences have continued to be noted in educational participation of individuals classified by sex, socio-economic background, urban and rural areas, race, language and religion (Fields, 1980). These differences are not only evidenced in primary and secondary schools but also in institutions of higher learning particularly at the university level.

Maundu, et al (1984) and Jabre, (1988) noted that causes of gender disparities in education are largely cultural though reinforced by economic circumstances in that parents give priority to boy's education which is considered more important than girls education in most societies. In pastoral areas, for example, boys are normally expected to be with their fathers learning about the secrets of the family and participate in cattle rearing while girls are expected to have been married (Maundu, et al 1984 and Jabre, 1988).

The government of Kenya, since independence, has tried to tackle this problem of educational imbalances. For example, the sessional paper no.10 of 1965 on African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya, has acknowledged the government's commitment to the objectives of social justice and equality of opportunities in economic, political and educational spheres. The government has, through various policy recommendations tried to address itself to improve access to the opportunities for the disadvantaged groups in society (Republic of Kenya, 1979). The government also set up a presidential working party on education to re-emphasize the government policy in providing equal education and training opportunities to all areas in an attempt to reduce these inequalities (Republic of Kenya, 1988).

The key recommendation of the report on the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies was to review regional imbalances in education regularly so as to find ways and means of reducing them (Republic of Kenya, 1976). This study is an attempt to look at the regional imbalances that could have been sparked by distribution of higher education opportunities in Kenya.

Given the critical role that higher education plays in addressing inequalities in the country, it is therefore prudent to examine the composition of university students in Kenya. This demand for responses to key question on, who goes to university in Kenya? This study is pegged on the key recommendations of the report on National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies which recommended that regular reviews be conducted to show regional imbalances in the provision of education and provide relevant recommendations on how to reduce the said inequalities (Republic of Kenya, 1976). This study is an attempt to provide a small contribution towards that direction.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The human capital theory in the educational system postulates that the greater the investment in education, the greater the collective benefits to society and the greater the profits the participant is likely to get (Bowman, 1968:246). Since university education is the highest, its benefits must be shared by a wide range of people.

Studying inequalities is important because the educational inequalities are followed by inequalities in the labour market; and these in turn produce and reinforce inequalities between individuals, social groups, incomes, living standards and political power in society (Debeauvais 1981:5). Bray (1986) and Wainaina (1984) observe that education promotes mobility within society and is therefore the most efficient institution for reforming society for the better.

Some studies on university student composition have been carried out at faculty level, for example, those by Eshiwani, (1975, 1983) while others were done by Hughes and Mwiria (1988), Kinyanjui (1979) and Hughes (1986). This study aims at providing up to date information encompassing the entire Moi University because we do not have data that shows the socio-economic background of Moi university student composition.

Blaug (1981) notes that studies on student composition at higher levels have received little attention in educational research. He observes: it seems to me that there is a research area of enormous importance that has gone almost completely neglected. Apart from the Fields study of Kenya, I know of only two or three information on the socio-class composition of students in higher education (P: 93)

It is only through such information gathering that we can tell of problems in identifying the incomes of students' families for purposes of devising income-contingent scholarship programmes and student loan schemes (Blaug, 1983). Kenya is in category of the countries which have chosen a capitalist path to development, but at the same time subscribing, in its policy statement commitment, to some elements of equality in economic, political and educational spheres. The most explicit expression of the commitment to equality in the provision of education since independence was made in 1976 in the report of the National Committee of Educational Objectives and Policies which recommended, inter alia, the removal of social and regional inequalities. Subsequently more government attempts have been made in an effort to redress educational disparities in the country, for example, through bursaries and scholarship programmes. Yet in the midst of this enthusiasm, there remains shortage of hard data on the student composition at higher levels of education in Kenya particularly at the university level. It is through knowing who deserves government assistance that educational equality can be addressed.

1.2. Conceptual and Analytical Framework

This study is based on Rawls' theory of social justice, that is, "fairness" or equal chances of participation. To have justice therefore, means all social primary goods, liberty and opportunity, income and wealth and the bases of self-respect are to be distributed equally. Rawls (1971) in his book defines justice as the elimination of arbitrary distinctions and the establishment, within a structure, of a practice of a proper balance between claims. Therefore, the social and economic inequalities are to be set up for everyone's advantage and under conditions of equal opportunity. He reinforces his argument by saying that;in order to treat all persons equally, to provide genuine equality opportunity, society must give more attention to those with fewer assets and to those born into the less favourable social positions. The idea is to redress the bias of contingencies in the direction of equality. In pursuit of this principle greater resources might be spent on the education of the less (or the disadvantaged) than the most intelligent at least over a certain time of life (Rawls, 1971:100). The desire of this argument is to redress inequality and achieve parity at all levels.

2. Literature Review

In his state-of-the-art report, Anderson (1983) points out that there are practically no surveys conducted in developing countries on the socio-economic background of university students. There are, however, place meal studies that deal with one or two variables in universities. These studies were unfortunately done many years ago. There is therefore need for an up to date study which the present work hopes to fulfil.

In the 1950s German Social Scientist became interested in studying the social background of university students at a time when less than 10 per cent of an age-cohort completed the full Gymnasium, which was a prerequisite for admission to university. Dahrendorf (1965) in a series of articles elucidated the situation in the Federal Republic of Germany in the early 1950s by summarizing it in the following way. About 50 per cent of the university students came from the homes of civil servants and high-level professional who represented about one per cent of the work force, whereas one percent of the students came from working class homes which represented about 50 per cent of the workforce. Later the Bundesministeriumfurwissenschaft put together some statistics which showed the changes over time from early 1950s to mid-1970s (Teichler&Sanyal, 1982:57). The statistic in Table 1 indicates a changing trend in German university admission between 1950s and mid-1970s. Manual workers who formed a large percentage of the workforce had an increase in the number of students entering the university whereas the civil servants and the self-employed had a reduction in the number of students entering the university.

Home Background	1952	1967	1976
Civil Servants	38	30	25
Self-employed	35	30	24
Manual workers	4	7	13
Others	23	33	38

Table 1: Federal Republic of Germany: Social Origin of Students, 1952-1976

Jayaram (1987) conducted a study on the social background of students in Bangalore, India. He related the study of higher education to the historical and socio-economic background of the recipients of higher education, with a view to enquiring into the hypothesized relationship between higher education and social mobility. The study comprised a sample of 344 students and he used a questionnaire to collect information on students concerning their sex, religion and caste, parent's education and occupation, family income, rural-urban background and type of schooling. Nearly 75 percent of the students in the sample were boys and only 24.2 percent were girls. The study showed that girls had no representation in the post-graduate technology course while their representation in research (18.2%) and post-graduate science (21.7%) was small. They were better represented in medicine, forming 34.5 per cent of the 200 medical students in the sample. The National Committee on the status of women also noted that in professional education the enrolment of women was substantial in education (38.0%), medicine (21.0%), and Arts (32.0%), but meagre in Commerce (4.0%), Law (5.0%), Agriculture (0.7%) or Engineering (1.0%) (I.C.S.S.R., 1975:90).

Sanyal and Josefowicz (1978) conducted a study of graduates and employment in Poland. They referred to data on the flow of students from secondary to tertiary education and related the flow to social background. They found that in families of white-collar employees the usual pattern was to send children to secondary school which could prepare them for the university. There were in Poland striking disparities between the social classes in terms of percentage of young people applying for admissions to institutions of higher education. Young people whose parents were workers and peasants were highly under-represented in the university in comparison with children from more educated families.

Anderson (1983) in an attempt to collage available information originating from national surveys set out to elucidate the problem of whether, and to what extent, schooling becomes more equitably distributed as societies become more developed. He operates with what he calls a selectivity index which is derived from a base population of the fathers and the percentage of certain age-cohorts enrolled in post-primary education. A generalization that he derives from derives from this study is that in high income western countries, children of farmers tend to be better represented than those of farmers or peasants, which he interprets as a reflection of early stages of urbanization and modern sector employment.

Gold Thorpe (1965) compared two studies on father's occupations of university students of east Africa. One was conducted by Van den Bergge in 1968 and the other one by himself in 1958. The results showed that middle income groups, comprising clerks, primary school teachers, small traders and semi-professionals seemed to have gained at the expense of professionals, senior civil servants, large businessmen and managers of big enterprises. This study is deficient in that it uses more variables and it provides the most recent information on the state of student composition at the university level in Kenya.

Barkan (1975) compared the social composition of university students at Makerere (Uganda), Dares -salaam (Tanzania) and Legon (Ghana) in 1966-7. The findings of his study revealed that students whose parents were peasant farmers were over-represented at the universities.

Fields (1974) conducted a survey of 70 well-educated Kenyans in their thirties and forties in 1970. Table 2 reports the responses of those 38 who had completed secondary schooling and who had children of the appropriate age for answering the questions. All respondents had at least completed secondary school and half had either high school certificate or university education.

Similarly, Njenga (1986) reported that the parents of the women in her sample of 410 agriculture, Veterinary science and Engineering University of Nairobi graduates were most educated and had higher incomes than did the parents of men graduates. These findings are consistent with data gathered throughout the third world on women in secondary and post-secondary education (Bowman and Anderson, 1980). Eshiwani, (1983b) investigated the background of Kenyatta university students in Kenya. The aim was to provide in-depth analysis of the students by examining their general bio-data, social background, educational background and their educational as well as occupational aspirations and expectations. The sample of this study consisted of 442 first year undergraduate students at Kenyatta University College. Of these students, 232 were males and 210 females. The students were all enrolled in the Bachelor of Education Degree programme.

Maundu (1988) conducted perhaps one of the most extensive studies on the family background and student achievement in Kenya. Six schools were selected for the study, two national, two provincial, and two Harambee. Six school heads, thirty-three form IV Science/Mathematics teachers and 478 Form IV students were surveyed. The student sample consisted of 287 boys and 191 girls. Data were obtained through the use of informal interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations. In this study, family background was represented by parental education and occupation. The results of this study showed that more than half (57%) of the fathers of students enrolled in national schools had attained at least a Form IV level of education. The percentage of fathers of the students in the other two types of schools who had gained such a level of education was much lower (about 37 and 23 for provincial and Harambee schools respectively). The mothers Form IV or higher level of education across the three types of schools presented a similar trend with percentages 36, 17 and 7 respectively. The proportion of mothers in managerial/professional and skilled occupations was lower than that of the fathers across all types of schools especially for students in Harambee schools. About 40% of the fathers whose children attended extra-provincial schools were unskilled. The present study has included the income variable to parent's occupation and education in determining the family's socio-economic background.

Educational Attainment	Fathers of University of Nairobi Students in 1970	All African Males Aged 40 and Over in Kenya in %
None	21	80
Some Primary	56	17
Some Secondary (Forms I-IV)	19	2
Post-Secondary (Form V or more)	4	1

Table 2: Educational Attainment of Fathers of University of Nairobi Students and All Adult Males in Kenya in 1970

Fields (1974) study was mainly concerned with educational attainment of the university of Nairobi student's fathers. It did not consider other factors such as the occupation of the parents and their levels of income. The present study has combined all the three variables in yielding a clearer picture on the socio-economic background of Moi university students.

Sabot et al (1990) developed a model on the school enrolment and family background in a constrained meritocratic system in both Kenya and Tanzania. This model predicted a positive relationship between socio-economic background and educational attainment. The results of this study showed a strong correlation in both countries between father's education and the level of education achieved by the employee (student). As father's education increases so does the percentage of children attaining high levels of education. The study revealed further that when school quality is standardized, the educational level of parents is also positively related to performance in primary school. Moreover, children of more educated parents are likely to attend above-average primary schools because of the concentration of educated [parents and high-quality primary schools in urban areas. This suggests that their representation at higher levels of education will be much greater. The present study focuses on enrolment at the university level and family background. The findings of Sabot's study and those of the present study concur although Sabot's study was concerned with the primary level whereas the present study is concerned with the university level.

Ndege (1992) investigated the influence of parental educational attainment, parental occupation, family income and family size on the academic achievement of pupils in nine schools in Kisii district. The sample of pupils used was taken from boarding, rural day and sub-urban day schools in Kisii district. Three questionnaires were administered on 332 standard eight pupils, 9 head teachers and 4 education officials. The findings of this analysis showed that the selected socio-economic variables (parental education and occupation, family income and family size) were powerful determinants of the school that the pupils joined. Pupils whose parents were highly educated had high status job, were high income earners or had small families appeared to join boarding schools in larger numbers than those from families of the lowly educated parents. This study focused on the pupil's academic achievement and their family socio-economic background with particular reference to primary schools in Kisii District. The present study has looked at the socio-economic composition of students at the university level. It has also used ways of determining the socio-economic status of the family. The present study is not only concerned with the family socio-economic background but also regional and gender inequalities in Moi university.

Teichler and Sanyal (1982) conducted a study on the student socio-economic background in Germany and noted that the differences in participation were less striking than in earlier surveys with regard to the early 1950s depending on somewhat different categorization of the occupations. But the gap between those belonging to the established class, educated professionals and the workers was still big.

The situation was the same in other highly industrialized countries for instance Sweden. By the mid-1940s when the first studies began to be conducted on the "reserve of ability" (Husen, 1948), surveys showed that only 1-2 percent of children from working class families reached the university, whereas the corresponding figure for those whose parents were professionals, middle or upper civil servants was 60 to 70 percent. This study was conducted in developed countries and may not hold true for the developing countries such as Kenya. The classification of occupations made on this study is not applicable today due to the many occupations that have come up.

Studies on the socio-economic background of women students (Siva Kumar, 1982 and K. Ahmad, 1974) and education, women students (Mehta, 1970 and Goldstein, 1972) in India have shown that the opportunities for higher education available to women are mostly appropriated by those in the upper social strata. In the case of religion and Caste, Jayaram's found that a predominant majority of the sample students (i.e. 77%) were Hindus, consistent with their percentage in the total population of the country (i.e. 82.7%). Christians were the next largest religious community in the sample (i.e. 18.3%) and most of them were pursuing medicine, largely in private medical college. Muslims and other religions communities, though few in the sample, were better representation among Christian (36.5%) than among Hindus (24.5%) and there was no Muslim woman in the sample.

Of the 265 Hindus, 60 percent were Brahmins and 33.6 percent were upper caste non-Brahmins, with the lower castes forming 4.1 percent and 2.3 percent declining to disclose their caste identity. The predominance of Brahmins and other upper castes in higher education is amply confirmed. Brahmins tended to investigate towards the professional and prestigious types of education. This study focused on representation of gender at faculty level but not religion.

Jayaram's (1987) study also focused on the socio-economic background of the students. Three variables were used in his study, that is, parental education, occupation and family income. A majority (58.1%) of the students in the sample had university educated fathers, 33.3 percent post graduates. Only 3.8 percent of the fathers had no formal schooling.

A higher percentage of the fathers of medical students (69%) had higher education than the fathers of research scholars (53.3%) or postgraduate students (39%). A majority (84.6%) of the students had fathers with better occupations, here defined as those occupations which command money or power or prestige or all of them. Over 30 per cent of the parents were executives and 31.1 percent professionals only, 8.7 percent of the students had fathers who were clerks and the percentage of workers children in higher education was negligible (1.2 percent). As regards the occupation of the mothers of students, only 38 (or 11.1%) were employed. Thirty three of these 38 are professionals who had better occupations. These findings indicate that an overwhelming majority of the sample students came from better occupational background and nearly 10 percent of them had both of their parents in better occupations.

Jayaram (1987) grouped the information about monthly family income of students into three groups, that is low income: RS 750 and below, medium income RS 751 to 1500 and high-income RS: 1501 and above. It was found that 71.8 percent of the sample students came from families whose monthly income exceeded RS 750. In terms of analytical categories, the percentages of the sample students belonged to high, medium and low-income families was 30.8, 44.2 and 25 respectively. In general, it could be said that students in higher and professional education came from an economically

sound background. Jayaram (1987) did not take into consideration the regional differences that may have existed in India. He also undertook his study in India and this may not be practical to Kenyans situation.

Van den Berghe (1969), in his study of 130 African students attending the university of East Africa, found that 40 percent of the women in that sample had fathers who had completed secondary education compared to only 7.9 percent of male students. Hughes (1986), in his study of 295 university of Nairobi graduates from the years 1970, 1975, 1979 and 1983 corroborated Van den Berghe's findings.

Based on parent's education, occupation and income level, women tended to come from higher socio-economic background.

Fields (1975) conducted a study in Kenya on incidence of taxes and distribution of Higher Education by income of student's parents in 1971. This study was mainly concerned with the financing of higher education and its equity implications. The study found that the lowest income group constituted 90% of all taxpayers but provided 60 to 75% of students in higher education whereas the richest 1% of taxpayers provided 6 to 10 of the students.

Data was obtained using a questionnaire which was designed and administered to the students. Data obtained showed that 52.5% of the students were male, while 45.5% were female. In the case of mother's education 91.4% of the students had mothers whose highest level of education was primary education. Forty two percent of the mothers had no formal schooling and only 1.4 percent of them had university education in addition to this, 41.0 percent of the students' fathers had some kind of part time courses in comparison to 58.6 percent who did not have any. In the same context there were only 27.8 percent of the mothers who had attended some part time courses in comparison to 70.8 percent who did not attend any. This data offered grounds for concluding that the majority of the students had parents who had little or no formal schooling.

Data was also obtained for the occupation of fathers of the students. The results showed that 48.4 percent of the fathers were peasant farmers, 14.3 percent were teachers, 3.2 percent were clerical officers, 2.0 percent were non-executives or industrial workers, 7.7 percent executives, 7.0 percent businessmen and only 0.5 percent were politicians. In summary, the majority of the students had a peasantry background while a large proportion of the student's fathers featured strongly in the less prestigious occupations. The proportion of students whose fathers were teachers was considerable, indicating that the students whose fathers are teachers take a large slice of university admission probably due to receiving encouragement or inspiration from their parents to pursue further education.

Data was obtained on the main source of school fees. This was an indicator of the economic level of the parents. Results showed that 39.8 percent of the students got fees from father's salary, 36.4 percent from their family farm produce, 11.8 percent from brothers and sister's salary, 4.3 percent from uncle, or relatives' salary, 2.5 percent from mothers' salary and only 2.3 percent from the family shop. A few conclusions can be drawn from these data. First, there appears to be a general shift from the former general responsibility for providing school fees for the younger siblings. Still, most people depend on the produce from the family shamba.

Another indicator of the economic burden to the family is the number of children in the family. Data obtained in regard to this showed that 47 percent of the students came from families with 7-8 children, 32.0 percent from families with 5-6 children, 13.0 percent from families with 9 or more children and 1.4 percent from families with 1-2 children. This therefore means that most of the students came from families with a lot of children, a reflection of the economic burden on these families.

3. Summary of the Reviewed Studies

Studies by Dahrendorf (1965), Teichler and Sanyal (1982) focused on the social background of university students at the same time when very few (less than 10%) of an age-cohort completed the full Gymnasium. Their studies mainly covered the home background in terms of the occupation of the parents. The present study has analyzed the educational and occupational background of the parents and their monthly incomes. By doing so, a clearer picture is found on the socio-economic status of the Moi university students.

Other studies on socio-economic status of university students were conducted by Jayaram (1987), Van den Berghe (1969), Sanyal and Jozefowics (1978), Anderson (1983), and Barkan (1975). All these studies were done in other countries and a long time ago. The present study has been done with these studies in mind. Other studies done in Kenya, for example those by Fields (1974), Njenga (1986), Eshiwani (1983b) and Goldthorpe (1965) were done some years back. This study presents a current trend on the socio-economic representation of the Moi university student composition.

4. Methodology

The population studied was drawn from all faculties/schools at Moi university Main campus, Chepkoilel Campus, Faculty of Health Sciences and Maseno University College, that is, School of Social, Cultural and Development Studies, Faculties of Technology, Information Sciences, Forestry and Wildlife Management, Science, Health Sciences, Law and Education. The study was restricted to the undergraduate students in all years of study during the 1995/96 academic year of study.

Proportionate random sampling technique was employed in identifying the respondents to this study. According to this technique, each faculty/school in Moi University was represented in exact proportion to its student enrolment. Due to the large number of population, 10 percent of the total enrolments in each Faculty/School were considered for the study except the Faculty of Law which is considered 26% of the students due to the low enrolment in the faculty. This ratio was considered appropriate in social sciences (Kerlinger, 1973).

The questionnaire and document analysis guide were the key instruments used in this study. The Questionnaire was prepared by the researcher and contained items seeking information on the enrolment in the university by region, gender and socio-economic background. The construction of the questionnaire items was based on the information gathered during the literature review. The literature helped to identify the items that could lead to determining the socio-economic background of the students.

The questionnaire as an instrument was chosen because it was possible to reach many respondents. The instrument also offered the respondents an opportunity to freely express themselves in an impersonal atmosphere without the face to face embarrassment, particularly when they required responding to the item on home background. The test-retest method was used in determining the reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to the same students used in the pilot study within an interval of one week. The responses to the items on the questionnaire were assigned numerical scores. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was worked out to give $r = 0.74$. This was considered enough measure to make the instrument reliable (Kerlinger, 1973). For secondary data, the researcher developed a proforma (Document Analysis Guide) which was used to collect data from the university authorities and the Ministry of Education Statistics Division, number of candidates KCSE 1990-93. The data collected included: the total university intakes in the last five years, enrolment by sex, and enrolment by faculty/school and home provinces districts of the students.

A letter of introduction was attached to each questionnaire, stating clearly the purpose of the study. The questionnaires were given out to 822 sampled students using research assistants who were picked from each faculty/school and well trained on the exercise. The research assistants were quite familiar with their fellow students and therefore it was better to use them. The questionnaires were administered to the students and were requested to return the filled questionnaires to the research assistants. Some cases where the sampled students took long to return the questionnaires, the research assistants made a follow up to collect them from the students. The return rate of the questionnaires was 70%. This was calculated from the number of questionnaires administered (822). This return rate was therefore considered sufficient to provide the required information.

The questionnaire was subdivided into two sections. Section: "A" sought information on the student's personal background and section "B" sought information on the family's socio-economic background.

A proforma seeking information from the university was given to the officers in charge of student registry (Admissions) by the researcher. The officers provided the information that was sought in regard to student distribution in faculties, students' gender and districts and provinces of origin. Data from the questionnaire and the proforma were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

5. Findings

This paper presents regional representation in Moi university enrolment using the Lorenz curve and its related Gini's coefficient and the coefficients of equality in the 1995/96 academic year.

The sampled students in his study were drawn from Moi University which included main campus, Faculty of Health Sciences, Chepkoleil Campus and Maseno University College. Table 3 gives an analysis of the sampled students. This table shows that most of the male students were drawn from Nyanza (21.85%), Rift valley (20.05%) and Eastern (19.79%) provinces. While most of the female students were drawn from Central (27.66%), Eastern (19.15%) and Rift valley (19.15%) Provinces. A total of 577 students were used in this study. Out of this, male and female students formed 67.3 and 32.70 percent respectively. The age of most students was between 18 and 24 years which was represented by 83.56 percent while 15.4 percent were more than 24 years old and the rest (0.14%) were below 17 years of age. This trend in age can be explained by the fact that the [present system of education (8-4-4) admits younger students to the universities than the previous (7-6-3) system.

Provinces	Male N=389	Female N=188
Nairobi	5.14 (20)	6.38 (12)
Central	16.2 (63)	27.66 (52)
Eastern	19.79 (77)	19.15 (36)
Rift valley	20.05 (78)	19.15 (36)
Nyanza	21.85 (85)	10.64 (20)
Western	13.88 (54)	10.64 (20)
North Eastern	0.52 (2)	3.72 (7)
Coast	2.57 (10)	2.66 (5)

Table 3: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students by Province

Note: - Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies

-The Total N Should Be 577 (N = 577)-Where This Does Not Total It Means There Were No Response. This Applies to the Subsequent Tables (4.1 – 4.19)

On marital status, 98.4% indicated that they were single while the rest (less than 2%) were married. This can be explained on the basis of the nature of the economic burden of maintaining a family considering that most of these students are not yet economically self-reliant at the time of admission to university. On religion, it was interesting to note that 97% of the students in the sample were Christians of which 63% were Protestants while 37% were Catholics. The Muslims formed 1.2 percent while the rest were Hindus and Traditionalists forming 1.6 percent. Studying the religion of

the students is important because while university education is considered largely with the intellectual life of the students, their spiritual life also matters. This statistic will be of use to those planning for pastoral care at the university.

Student's performance at high school was also studied. It was found that 22.3% of the students scored an aggregate grade of B+ and above while 61.5% scored a B (plain) and a B (minus), the rest of the students scored C+.

The student's birth order was also studied. There were two reasons for studying the birth order of the students in this study. First, the researcher would be able to gauge the age-range of the parents of the students and secondly, the researcher would also be able to assess the student's responsibility towards their families. The results of this study showed that 23.9% of the students were first born, 19.4% were second born, 14.9% were third born and 10.4% were fourth born and above. A further categorization by male and female students is shown in Table 4.2. These results imply that the majority of Moi university students have relatively younger parents' because of this; it does seem that not more than 50% of the students would have a major financial responsibility towards their sisters and brothers. This is in contrast to university students of the 1970s and earlier who had heavy extended family financial responsibilities even while a university.

There has been much effort towards giving opportunity to the less fortunate members of our society, the disabled, this has been more so in education (Eshiwani, 1983). The extent to which these efforts have yielded fruit especially at the tertiary level of formal education has not been documented. In this study, 0.17% of the sampled students had some kind of disability. In terms of numbers, this was a very small representation of the total student population at Moi University.

Exposure of students to other districts and Nairobi in particular was also studied. The purpose of this item was to find out the extent of student's interaction level with other peoples in Kenya because one of the major goals of education is to instil the spirit of national unity into students (Republic of Kenya, 1964). While this can be achieved through many school activities, interaction between people from different regions of the country is perhaps one of the best approaches. This approach helps students to minimize their prejudices and prepares them for services in areas outside their home districts. In the study, it was revealed that 19.72% of the sampled students had never been outside their home districts before coming to Moi University, 20.76% had never been to Nairobi (Capital city of Kenya), 2.94% had been to Nairobi once and 22.8% had been to Nairobi twice or thrice while 50.7% had been to Nairobi more than four times. This means that about a half of the Moi University students have little exposure to areas outside their home areas. This may be attributed to the system of education in place today whereby the system requires 85% of the form one entrants to be retained in their home districts.

Data obtained on the schools the students attended revealed that 91% attended public schools while 6.8% attended private schools (Table 4). Public schools were further categorized into District, Provincial and National schools. It was revealed that 55.7% of the schools were from Provincial schools, 27.7% district schools and 15.6% were from National schools (Table 5). as regards the kind of schools attended by students up to form four, results showed that 74.2% of the sampled students were in boarding secondary schools, 12.8% in day secondary schools and 12.7% in day and boarding secondary schools (Table 6). This trend may be attributed to the nature of boarding schools, that is, most of them have a better learning environment and facilities compared to day schools where students also constitute the family labour. A further categorization of students into male and female revealed that most of the female students were drawn from boarding schools representing 84.49% compared to 69.85% for male students. Fewer female students (6.42%) were in day schools compared to male students (15.98%) in Table 4.5. most of the female students who came to Moi university were in girls' schools only (83.78%) whereas male students in Boys schools were 68.82%. thirty one percent of the make students were in mixed schools while only 16.22% of the female students studied in these schools (Table 4.6).

The last school categorization was on the basis of number of streams and class size in schools. Data obtained indicated that 31.7% of the sampled students were drawn from three-streamed schools, 23.2% from four-streamed schools, 21.6% from two-streamed schools while the rest 23.5% were drawn from single streamed schools. The method used in classifying the streams was unclear to most respondents because 86% of the respondents indicated that they were unaware of the method used.

Category of School	Male N=381	Female N=184
Private	7.08 (27)	6.52 (12)
Public	92.92 (354)	93.48 (172)

*Table 4: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students by Category of Secondary School Attended
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Category of School	Male N=386	Female N=186
District	33.68 (130)	16.13 (30)
Provincial	53.10 (205)	62.90 (117)
National	13.22 (51)	20.97 (39)

*Table 5: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students by Category of Public School Attended
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Nature of School	Male N=388	Female N=187
Day school	15.98 (62)	6.42 (12)
Boarding school	69.85 (271)	84.49 (158)
Day and Boarding school	14.17 (55)	9.09 (17)

*Table 6: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students by Nature of Secondary School Attended
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

However, 8.6% of the sampled students indicate that performance in class was used to stream students. Responses on class size indicated that most students were drawn from schools with class sizes of 30-40 and 40-50 students per class and these were indicated by 38.1% and 42.4% respectively.

Information on the students use of English as a medium of communication at home indicated that a very small fraction of students use English in their homes. This was shown by 16.71% and 22.34% for male and female students respectively. This, therefore, means that less male students use English as a medium of communication at home than their female counterparts. English is the official language in Kenya. When the use of this language is extended to the households then it means that both parents are educated or are working in places where English is commonly used. This information, therefore, implies that most female students are drawn from better educated backgrounds than their male counterparts. This section also sought information on tuition at home by either parents or hired tutors. This is usually a phenomenon that is associated with urban set up or parents who are enlightened about the value of education. It was interesting to note that female students were offered this service in large numbers compared to their male counterparts. This is evidenced by 26.06% and 12.34% for female and male students respectively (Table 10).

Information obtained on student's attendance at private nursery schools indicated that more female students (19.1%) attended private nursery schools compared to their male counterparts who were represented by 13.11% only.

Nature of School	Male N=356	Female N=185
Boys school	68.82 (245)	- -
Girls school	- -	83.78 (155)
Mixed school 31.18	(111)	16.22 (30)

*Table 7: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students by Nature of Secondary School Attended
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Average Class Size	Male N=389	Female N=188
Below 20	5.66 (22)	5.85 (11)
20-30	5.40 (21)	1.60 (3)
30-40	37.53 (146)	39.36 (74)
40-50	40.87 (159)	45.75 (86)
50-60	5.14 (20)	3.19 (6)
Above 60	5.4 (21)	4.25 (8)

*Table 8: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students by Average Class Size in Secondary Schools Attended
Note: Figures in Parentheses Are the Frequencies*

Use of English at home	Male N=389	Female N=188
Yes	16.71 (55)	22.34 (42)
No	82.26 (320)	77.13 (145)
No responses	1.03 (4)	0.53 (1)

*Table 9: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students Use of English as a Medium of Communication at Home
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Responses	Male N=389	Female N=188
Yes	12.34 (48)	26.056 (49)
No	87.40 (340)	73.41 (138)
No response	0.26 (1)	0.53 (1)

*Table 10: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students Who Got Tuition by Parents or Hired Tutors
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Responses	Male N=389	Female N=188
Yes	13.11 (51)	19.15 (36)
No	85.35 (332)	80.32 (151)
No response	1.54 (6)	0.53 (1)

*Table 11: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students Attendance at Private Nursery Schools
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Private nursery schools are mainly associated with the financially able people in society. This implies that more of the female students were drawn from well-off family backgrounds than their male counterparts (Table 11). Percentages of Moi university students who were bought textbooks and educational toys when young indicated that 60.64% females as compared to 37.79% for males were bought educational toys and textbooks (Table 12). This is a high range which is in favor of female students. Psacharopoulous and Woodhall (1985) observe that textbooks are very important if the students are to do well in their studies. This informational reveal two important things, one, that female students came from a background that was favourable for their further studies and that textbooks and educational toys are important components in pursuit of higher education.

5.1. Information on Students Socio-Economic Background

This information on student's socio-economic status was extracted from the second part of the student questionnaire. This information includes the educational background of the parents, occupation of the parents and source of income for the family.

The first item in this section sought information on the mortality of parents. Most of the student's fathers were found to be alive and this was represented by 92.2% and 95.65% for male and female students respectively (Table 13). A further analysis of this data showed that the percentage of mothers alive was lower than that of fathers (Table 4.13). Female students had a higher percentage of mothers alive (91.26%) compared to their male counterparts (84.9%).

Responses	Male N=389	Female N=188
Yes	37.79 (147)	60.64 (114)
No	61.44 (239)	38.30 (72)
No response	0.77 (3)	1.06 (2)

*Table 12: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students Who Were Bought Textbooks and Educational Toys When Young
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Parent's educational background gave figures with a close range of frequencies. As can be seen from Table 14, female students had 28.92% representing fathers who have senior secondary school secondary school (form 3-4) education. This percentage is higher than that of 15.73% for male students. Male students had the highest number of fathers without formal schooling compared to their female counterparts. This was also the case for mothers without any formal schooling (Table 15). Female students had the highest number of literate mothers compared to male students. This was represented by 22.3% of female students' mothers with senior secondary school (form 3-4) compared to male students' mothers with 9.4% at the same level of education. This information indicates that most of the female students at Moi University have more literate parents than male students.

Another indicator of socio-economic status of Moi university students was their parent's occupation. Under this item, the study sought to find out the type of job performed by both parents of the student. The frequently named job category was that of peasant farmers. Male students indicated that 73.5% of their mothers were peasants while female students indicated that 50.35% of their mothers were peasants. About 12% of the mothers of male students were civil servants compared to 4% of the mothers of male students (Table 16). The fathers of Moi university students, in Table 17, indicate that 57.4% and 49.21% for male and female students' fathers respectively, are peasant farmers while fathers who are civil servants are (17.94%) for males and (11.11%) for females.

Another item that sought information on the student's socio-economic status was the student's total family income per month. The information obtained here showed that most students were drawn from a middle level income that is, earning between kshs. 2,000 and Kshs. 8,000/=.

Father	Male N=384	Female N=184
Alive	92.97 (357)	95.65 (176)
Dead	7.03 (27)	4.35 (8)

*Table 13: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students Fathers
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Mother	Male N=384	Female N=184
Alive	84.90 (326)	91.26 (167)
Dead	15.10 (58)	8.74 (16)

*Table 14: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students Mothers
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Educational Background	Male N=356	Female N=166
No Schooling	23.60 (84)	15.66 (26)
Lower primary std 1-4	20.79 (74)	14.46 (24)
Upper primary std 5-8	17.41 (62)	12.05 (20)
Junior Sec. School Form 1-2	9.83 (35)	10.84 (18)
Senior Sec. School Form 3-4	15.73 (56)	28.92 (48)
High School Form 5-6	5.06 (18)	7.83 (13)
Undergraduate at University	3.93 (14)	7.83 (13)
Postgraduate at University	3.65 (13)	2.41 (4)

*Table 15: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students Fathers Educational Background
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Educational Background	Male N=362	Female N=188
No Schooling	38.67 (140)	22.87 (43)
Lower primary std 1-4	18.51 (67)	16.49 (31)
Upper primary std 5-8	19.89 (72)	12.23 (23)
Junior Sec. School Form 1-2	8.84 (32)	4.79 (9)
Senior Sec. School Form 3-4	9.40 (34)	22.34 (42)
High School Form 5-6	2.49 (9)	9.57 (18)
Undergraduate at University	1.38 (5)	2.13 (4)
Postgraduate at University	0.82 (3)	9.58 (18)

*Table 16: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Students Mothers Educational Background
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Occupations	Male N=356	Female N=166
Peasant farmer	73.50 (208)	50.35 (72)
School teacher	12.72 (36)	18.88 (27)
Clerical officer, industrial worker, shopkeeper, small-scale businessman	8.13 (23)	16.78 (24)
Large scale businessman, entrepreneur	1.41 (4)	2.10 (3)
Civil servant	4.24 (12)	11.89 (17)

*Table 17: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Student's Mothers Occupations
Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies*

Occupations	Male N=263	Female N=126
Peasant farmer	57.4 (151)	49.21 (62)
School teacher	11.03 (29)	19.84 (25)
Clerical officer, industrial worker, shopkeeper, small-scale businessman	18.25 (48)	12.70 (16)
Large scale businessman, entrepreneur	0.38 (1)	7.14 (9)
Civil servant	12.94 (34)	11.11 (14)

Table 18: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Student's Fathers Occupations

Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies

This was represented by 41.79% and 48.88% for male and female students respectively (Table 19). This was followed by category three of earnings exceeding Kshs. 8,000 where 38.61% and 31.46% represented male and female students respectively. Category one of those earning less than Kshs. 2,000 had the fewest representation of 19.6% and 19.66% for male and female students respectively.

On the other hand, student opinion sought on their socio-economic stratus revealed that male students were from a low social-economic group (66.2%) while the majority of female students were from middle socio-economic group (62.5%) as seen in Table 20. this revelation confirms other assessments of socio-economic strata as opposed to their female counterparts (Jayaram (1987), Hughes (1986) and Njenga (1986). Table 19 presents contradictory data on total family monthly income. This data suggests that less than 20% of the students are from families earning less than Kshs. 2,000 while 44% and 36.19% are drawn from families earning Kshs. 2,000, Kshs 8,000 and over Kshs. 8,000 per month respectively. This therefore means that most students are drawn from middle socio-economic groups. On the other hand, Table 20 presents data on student's personal opinion of the social group under which they fall. Male students (60.21%) indicate that they are from lower social group while 62.5% of the female students indicate that they are drawn from middle social group.

From the data presented herein, it can be concluded that since Tables 4.14, 4.15, 4.16 and 4.17 present similar information that both male and female students are drawn from the lower socio-economic group then it can be said that Table 19 on total family income is misleading and the true position is that most male students are drawn from a lower Socio-economic groups while female students are drawn from middle socio-economic groups.

Monthly Income bracket (Kshs)	Male N=356	Female N=166	Total (N = 525)
0 – 2,000	19.60 (68)	19.66 (35)	19.62 (103)
2,001 – 8,000	41.79 (145)	48.88 (87)	44.19 (232)
8,0001 and above	38.61 (134)	31.46 (56)	36.19 (190)

Table 19: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Student's Total Family Income per Month in Kenya Shillings

Note: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies

Social Group	Male N=377	Female N=184	Total (N = 561)
Upper	3.18 (12)	7.07 (13)	4.45 (25)
Middle	36.61 (138)	62.50 (115)	45.10 (253)
Lower	60.21 (227)	30.43 (56)	50.45 (283)

Table 20: Percentages and Frequencies of Moi University Student's Opinion on Their Socio-Economic Group

NOTE: Figures in Parentheses are the Frequencies

6. Discussion

Results of father's educational background showed that male students were drawn from fathers who had lower educational level than their female counterparts. Results of mothers' educational background indicated that male students

have a higher number of mothers without formal schooling, unlike their female counterparts and female students have a better representation in mothers' education particularly at higher levels of education. Generally, this data shows that parents of female students have better education than male students' parents.

Data on students mothers occupations show that most of the student's mothers are peasant farmers. However, males students showed a higher representation here than their female counterparts. Female students have more numbers of mothers who are school teachers, small scale businesswomen and civil servants while male students have little representation in these occupations. This shows that about three quarter of male student's mothers are peasant farmers while female student's mothers are only half and the other half is scattered in other professions. This means that mothers have a strong influence on the girl Child's education. The educated mother increases the girl child aspirations for further education. This can be done by a mother being a role model for the child. Data on the father's occupations shows that male students have more fathers doing peasant farming than their female counterparts and female students have more mothers who are teachers than the male students. In general, it can be observed that female student's mothers have better representation in formal jobs than their male counterparts.

The classification of data on student's total family income per month was extracted from the 1995 economic survey (Republic of Kenya, 1995). The data presented here shows that both male and female students are mainly drawn from middle and upper income groups in our society. Data on the student's opinion on their socio-economic group indicated that more than 60% and less than 30% of males and female students respectively fall under lower income group while the rest are in the middle and upper income groups.

7. Conclusion

On the socio-economic group representation at Moi University, there is also an under-presentation of low social groups. Although the measuring of socio-economic groups in low developing countries is hard, the researcher used parent's occupation, education and monthly income to gauge the socio-economic group. The level of monthly income, occupation and educational background are also deceptive because some parents have the university education but do not have the wealth and resources that go with it. On the other hand, some people may have basic education or no schooling at all but have the resources and prestige that go with it. This pushes them to the upper strata of the social groupings. This is particularly true in the private sector. The Government of Kenya (1995), has put it that anyone earning less than Kshs. 2,000 to Kshs. 8,000 and over Kshs. 8,000 is in the middle and lower socio-economic group respectively. Using this approach then it means that no schooling, lower primary, upper primary and junior secondary all fall under the low socio-economic group because their salary is below Kshs. 2,000. This makes up 71.63% and 53.01% for male and female students fathers educational background respectively while the rest falls in the middle and upper groups. The other finding on mother's educational background shows that 85.91% and 56.38% of the male and female students respectively come from the low socio-economic group while the rest form the middle and upper socio-economic groups. On the parent's occupation, it is the peasant farmer who falls under the low socio-economic group. Over 70% and 50% for male and female students mothers respectively are involved in peasant farming. The other occupations provide more than Kshs. 2,000 per month and therefore fall under middle and upper socio-economic groups. In fathers' occupations 57.4% and 49.21% represent male and female students respectively.

This shows that almost 50% of the students are drawn from peasant background. The available information from this study, therefore, indicates that most male students are drawn from a lower socio-economic group while female students are drawn from middle socio-economic groups. Socio-economic groups while female students are drawn from middle socio-economic groups.

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