



Relationship between School Attendance and Academic Performance of Primary School Students from TASAF III's Targeted Households in Lushoto District Tanzania

Emmanuel P. Mzingula¹ and Donald Mziray²

Author Details

1. Researcher; Department of Community Development; Lushoto District Council Tanzania; Email: mzingula@yahoo.com
2. TASAF Monitoring Officer; Tanzania Social Action Fund; Email: donaldmziray12@gmail.com

Abstract

TASAF III programme supporting poverty reduction strategies in Tanzania incorporates conditional and unconditional cash transfers as among the Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) interventions to help poor households to attain sustainable livelihood. The study examined the efficacy of unconditional cash transfers by assessing relationship between attendance of primary school students from poor households complying with unconditional cash transfers for education services and examination performance in Lushoto District Tanzania. A cross-sectional study was used to collect quantitative data from student registers in seven selected primary schools. Purposive sampling was used to select 36 students from four schools located in rural villages and three schools located in urban villages. Structured questionnaire was used to fill information of standard VII students who sat for leaving examinations in October 2020 and their results released in December 2020. Descriptive analysis and Chi-square was used in analysis of data collected from questionnaire by using SPSS version 16. Results showed that 52.8% of students had good attendance while 47.2% had poor attendance. Other results showed that 61.1% of students passed examinations while 38.9% of students failed. The study revealed that there was significant relationship ($\chi^2=5.386$, $p=0.02$) between attendance and performance in examinations among the PSSN targeted primary school students at 5% significance level. This study recommends that TASAF management should more enhance strategies of educational compliance particularly by conducting regular monitoring and evaluation to targeted poor households in order to make sure that all students from poor households attend school and perform better in examinations.

Keywords: student, attendance, performance, compliance, conditional cash transfer

1. Introduction

Social protection programmes are playing important role in supporting economic development through different investments (Morel et al., 2012). In low and middle income countries, social protection investments serve the large population of poor people who live in vulnerability since they are mostly exposed to several shocks such as socio-economic, political and climate related shocks (Vinci, 2018). Social protection interventions aim to fight poverty, reduce inequality, improve consumption, manage risk, and increase in income generation (Gassmann, 2011). Social protection programmes are divided in main two categories which named as contributory and non-contributory. Social protection is contributory when people contribute to insurance schemes so as to have access to insurance based benefits such as health insurance services. Non-contributory

social protection included social transfers that are financed by the public budget and development partners. In Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs, cash payments are provided to targeted households on the condition that beneficiaries are required to invest in the human capital of children. For instance, healthy and nutrition conditions put forward by TASAF III require targeted households to comply with these conditions by attending antenatal clinics for medical checkup, treatment and vaccinations for under-five year children, and continuing with regular antenatal care visits to make sure that a child grows in healthy conditions. Compliance with schooling conditions usually require program beneficiaries to enroll their children to school and ensure that children attend classes continuously and get good academic performance (Fiszbein et al., 2009).

In general, non-contributory schemes demonstrated effectiveness in the enhancement of social protection outcomes as well as making sure that beneficiaries are adequately protected (Cichon et al., 2011). Specifically, non-contributory social transfer helps directly the poor to raise income and increase consumption. Social protection through income generated enhances the capacity of households to invest in health, education and productive activities for livelihood improvement. Cash transfers increase disposable income in households and as a result promote educational investments which enhance human capital (Mideros, 2017). There are different social protection interventions from different countries depending on community development needs and priorities. For instance, since 2013, TASAF has been implementing Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) which incorporates cash transfers and other livelihood enhancement packages to support poor households to increase income, promote access to education and health services, enhance food security and improve living conditions as a whole. In Kenya there has been a social protection programme known as The Kenya Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP). The HSNP is an unconditional cash transfer helping in addressing malnutrition, alleviating poverty, combating food insecurity and promote asset retention and accumulation. The programme was implemented in arid regions including Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir County of North Kenya which are vulnerable to drought (Dietrich and Schmerzeck, 2020). The CCT programmes were implemented in Chile and Turkey, where they narrowly focused on socially excluded and extremely poor people. In Bangladesh and Cambodia, CCT programmes were implemented in order to reduce gender disparities in education (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009).

Social protection programmes through CCT interventions have demonstrated several achievements in different countries where they are implemented. In Lesotho, Children Grant Programme (CGP) resulted in a 5% increase in school enrolment. In Zambia, CGP increased by 7% and 5% in enrollment and attendance of children in primary schools respectively. The CGP and school feeding programmes in Zambia were further impacted positively the education sector by enhancing school retention, grade retention and reduced dropout rates. Through CGP, parents and guardians have ability to support children with school materials such as uniforms, shoes and books (Gassmann, 2018). The Cambodia National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) for the poor and vulnerable people which started in 2011 was an initiative to the rehabilitation and stabilization of the economy especially the enhancement of human capital. The NSPS was considered as a social protection mechanism which was supporting the protection of people against socio-economic risks and uproot the poor from poverty. Four vulnerable groups supported by NSPS were infants and children, girls and women of reproductive age, food insecure and unemployed households, and special vulnerable groups. One of areas of interventions under NPSP is the Social Safety Net (SSN) programme which comprised of public work programmes (PWP), social transfers and targeted subsidies (Mideros, 2017).

In 2013, TASAF phase III launched the PSSN phase I to implement productive social safety net interventions by supporting poor households to reduce poverty in Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar. The overall objective of the PSSN was to help poor households increase income and consumption, at the same time enhance the ability to cope with shocks while enhancing and protecting the human capital of their children (Pinzon-Caicedo et al., 2016). The PSSN I which started in 2014 and ended in 2019, was supporting income enhancement and development of human capital through provision of conditional and unconditional cash transfers to the poor households. The PSSN interventions are financed by the government of Tanzania in collaboration with donor organization including the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) (URT, 2013).

The PSSN incorporates transfers linked to participation in public works and compliance with conditions put forward by TASAF III in education and health services. The combination of three transfers protects vulnerable population from extreme poverty by enabling households to have access to food, pay for medical care and enhance student retention in primary and secondary schools by spending the cash for buying uniforms, shoes, books and school feeding particularly in the event of shocks such as drought. Through PSSN I, targeted households have opportunities to receive basic unconditional cash transfers. Apart from basic unconditional cash transfers, PSSN I provides conditional cash transfers to poor household's children who are under five years of age and children who attend school. Beneficiaries of conditional cash transfers are required to comply with conditions stipulated by TASAF III in health and education services. In complying with health conditions, targeted poor households are required to make sure that children who are below the age of five years attend to health care facilities for antenatal care. Children who are above five years are required to be enrolled and continuously attend to primary schools and those in secondary schools are supposed to attend classes as per school time tables. The conditional cash transfer will continue be provided to targeted poor households if children attend either antenatal care centres or schools.

Lushoto District Council is among the councils which are implementing the PSSN I as a component of TASAF III since 2014. The targeted poor households in this district council have been benefiting from conditional and unconditional cash transfers. In order to continue receiving unconditional cash transfers, poor households are required to comply with education conditions stipulated by TASAF III so as enhance student attendance and academic performance. However, the performance of students in national primary school leaving examinations showed that in 2020 and other three previous years, Lushoto District Council positioned in the list of 10 least performed primary schools in Tanzania. The existing shocking situation raised a need of assessing the efficacy of conditional cash transfers of PSSN I by examining the relationship between student attendance and education performance among primary school students who are beneficiaries of conditional cash transfers. Since 2013, TASAF III through implementation of PSSN I has been regularly monitoring attendance of students in primary and secondary schools so as to enhance educational compliance.

In spite of conditional cash transfer interventions being implemented since 2014, there is uncertainty about relationship between PSSN beneficiaries' compliance with education services and student academic performance in Lushoto District Tanzania. However, little has been covered by researchers in studying educational outcomes of conditional transfers. For instance, Kapama (2019) examined educational outcomes of TASAF III focusing on enrollment and attendance of students from targeted households in Kanazi ward Ngara District Tanzania. The

study conducted by Saavedra and Garcia (2012) evaluated the impact of CCTs on enrolment, attendance and dropout in developing countries. In Colombia, Baez and Camacho (2011) examined long-term effects of CCTs on attendance of students in high schools. This study sought to assess the relationship between school attendance and academic performance of students who are PSSN beneficiaries of conditional cash transfers from poor households in Lushoto District. The study outputs may help TASAF to review its plans and implementation strategies so as to improve programme efficiency and achieve its objectives.

2. Literature review

2.1 Marxian theory of poverty

This study used Marxian theory of poverty to explain poverty as a concept and how people can escape from poverty. Being poor is a result of many factors which adversely affect the production system and eventually makes people unable to access basic needs such as food, health and education services, clean water and good housing. Karl Marx asserts that the entrepreneurial practices of the owners of means of production keep on advancing from labour to intensive investment of means of production in order to increase production and profits which ultimately result to unemployment and poverty intensification. Gordon et al. (1982) cited in Manjoro (2017) point out that an increase in the number of the poor is a result of structural failures including racial and gender discrimination and nepotism. Structural failures are outcomes of undermining of certain groups of people from access to employment, education and social support. This study assumed that structural failures such as gender discrimination particularly the ownership of means of production such as land, cash crops and livestock which favours men over women, and nepotism due to the fact that rural areas are given low priority by policy makers in education infrastructure development accelerated household poverty in the study area.

In alleviating poverty, Marxian theory put forward recommendation which is based on skills development and improvement in structures of production. The theory assert that in order to alleviate poverty, structures of production should be improved, access to education should be increased to all people and trainings must be provided so that people can apply advanced technologies to make them adapt change of environment. Also, education can help retrenched persons to adapt the situation by opting alternative employment (Winch, 1987 cited in Manjoro, 2017). The theory also suggests some kinds of government welfare programme to help people who are unable to adapt change in development by proving education so that they can access basic requirement to enhance their survival. Through training people can apply advanced technology in production sectors such as agriculture and livestock keeping for livelihood enhancement (Manjoro, 2017).

TASAF III programme through PSSN I has been implementing cash transfers in form of conditional and unconditional. Unconditional cash transfers are provided to all targeted poor households while conditional cash transfers are added to the households which have under-five aged children and students who are in primary and secondary schools to enhance human capital. Congruent to Marxian theory of poverty, TASAF III programme are supporting poor people who lack education and production assets such as possession of agricultural land and livestock. One of its interventions is enhancement in access to education among children from poor households. TASAF III used conditional cash transfer to empower economically the poor households to afford material support to school children such as spending the cash provided to buy books and school uniforms. Like what is recommended by this theory, PSSN I of TASAF III programme intended to provide access to education to the poor so that they can adapt to technological changes by investing in production either through wage employment or self-employment. Therefore, this study used Marxian theory to assess relationship between school attendance and

academic performance among primary school students benefiting from conditional cash transfers under TASAF III programme in Lushoto District Tanzania.

2.2 Empirical literature review

Li et al. (2015) examined the impact of conditional cash transfer on the matriculation of junior high school students into rural China's high schools. The study adopted a randomized trial design to collect data from a sample of 1418 students who are economically poor in rural China. Results show that conditional cash transfer has no effect on performance in matriculation among the average disadvantaged students while it increases matriculation performance of the extremely poor.

Saavedra and Garcia (2012) assessed impacts of conditional cash transfer programmes on education outcomes in developing countries. The study adapted meta-analysis for enrollment, attendance and dropout effect estimates. Forty two references of conditional cash transfer program evaluations from 15 developing countries were used. Results revealed that average effect sizes for enrolment, attendance and dropout for secondary school students are larger than those for students who are in primary schools. Moreover, results show that the more generous transfers the larger the effects on enrolment in primary and secondary schools. Pay transfers which take a monthly frequency or less, exhibit larger enrolment and attendance effects.

Baez and Camacho (2011) determined long-term effects of conditional transfers on human capital, using evidence from Colombia. The study used household surveys as method of data collection. The data analysis was done by using regression discontinuity design. Moreover, census of the poor and administrative records was used as sources of information. Results show that participant children demonstrated average of 4 to 8 percentage points more chances to complete school than nonparticipant children especially in rural areas. Also, program recipient children had similar performance to non-program recipients in high school.

Garcia and Saavedra (2017) used meta-analysis to assess the impact and cost-effectiveness using 94 studies from 47 conditional cash transfers (CCT) programs in low-and-middle-income countries worldwide. The study focused on educational outcomes including enrollment, attendance, dropout and school completion. The findings revealed that for schooling outcomes (enrollment, attendance, dropout and school completion), there was heterogeneity support on impact, transfer-effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness estimates.

Kapama (2019) examined impact of TASAF III in poverty reduction at Kanazi Ward in Ngara District, in Kagera Region. In specific, the study assessed the education outcomes including school enrollment and attendance for children aged 7-15 due to implementation of unconditional cash transfer of TASAF III. The study used qualitative and quantitative approaches whereby interview guides and questionnaire were used as instruments of data collection. Simple random sampling was used to select 90 respondents. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16 was applied for analysis of quantitative data while content analysis was done for qualitative data. Results show that conditional cash transfer programme has increased student attendance in primary schools from 56.7% before program to 74.4% during implementation of the programme.

3. Materials and methods

This study was conducted in Lushoto District within Lushoto District Council program area authority of TASAF III where Productive Social Safety Net phase 1 (PSSN I) was implemented for five years from 2014 to March 2020. A cross-sectional survey was used to collect

information in form of secondary data from students' progress and examination records available in primary school. Seven (7) primary schools where TASAF III target students are studying while complying with conditional cash transfers were selected by using purposive sampling. Among the seven primary schools selected, four (4) schools including Kikumbi, Kingugwi, Makanya and Mategho are located in rural villages and three (3) schools including Kitopeni, Mbula and Ubiri are found in urban villages. From seven selected schools, the study used purposive sampling to select all 36 primary school students who sat for standard seven leaving examinations in October 2020 where their examination results released in December 2020. Structured questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection whereby information regarding sampled students was filled in by data collectors. Data analysis was done by using SPSS version 16 to generate frequencies, percentages, cross-tabulations and Chi-square.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Sex and parental care of students from PSSN targeted households

The targeted primary school students who are beneficiaries of conditional cash transfers provided by TASAF III through PSSN I interventions comprised of males and females. In this study, most of students surveyed were females (69.4%) while males constituted 30.6% of participants (Table 1). In assessing parental care and support to students, the study found that 47.2% of students live and being supported by two parents, 36.1% live and being supported by single parent who is a woman and 16.7% cared and supported by other relatives (Table 1). When both parents are still alive, they are required to fulfill their responsibilities in taking care and supporting child growth and development by providing protection and supporting basic necessities such as food, clothes, shelter and social services (quality education and health services).

Table 1: Distribution of PSSN targeted students based on sex and parental care

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Sex:		
Male	11	30.6%
Female	25	69.4%
Total	36	100%
Parental care and support:		
Two parents	17	47.2%
Single parent	13	36.1%
Other relative(s)	6	16.7%
Total	36	100%

4.1 PSSN students' attendance in primary schools

The study intended to assess if poor households supported by TASAF III comply with conditional cash transfers for education services. According to TASAF III, in order for a household to continue receiving conditional cash transfer for education services, primary and secondary school students from that household are required to demonstrate good school attendance of at least 80% of total school days in every month. The study revealed that 52.8% of primary school students have complied with TASAF III since they managed to maintain the good attendance (Figure 1). Other students (47.2%) had poor attendance since they attended to school for less than 80% of the total school days in every month. Moreover, the study found that there was no association between sex of TASAF III (i.e. PSSN I) targeted students and class attendance at 5% significance level ($\chi^2=0.749$, $p=0.387$). Also, at 5% level of significance, student attendance was not associated with category of care givers (1.783, $p=0.410$).

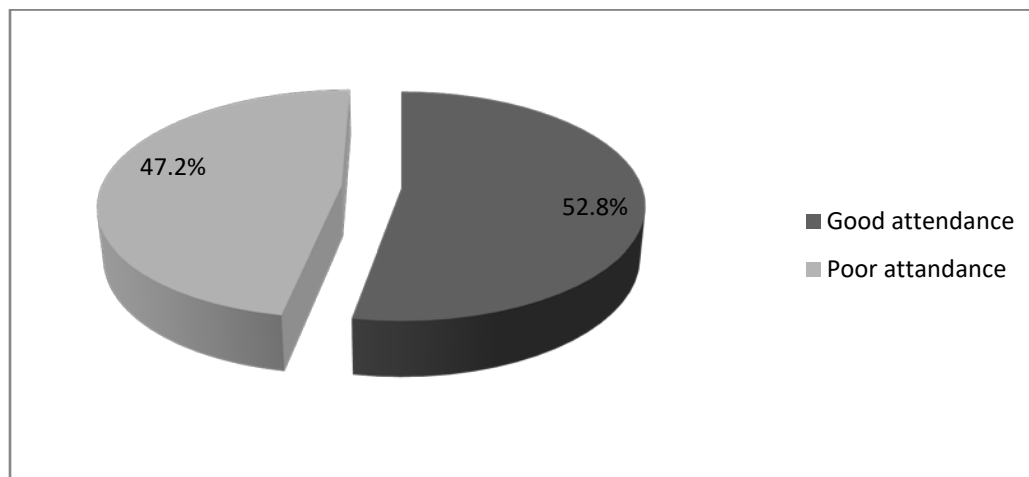


Figure 1: Distribution of PSSN targeted students based on at least 80% school attendance compliance (n=36)

4.2 PSSN targeted students' academic performance in primary schools

The study determined the examination performance of primary school students from poor households benefiting from conditional cash transfers. The results were based on national standard VII leaving examination results released in December 2020 which categorized examination performance in five grades including A (pass), B (pass), C(pass), D(fail) and E(fail). The study revealed that 13.9% of surveyed students scored B, 47.2% scored C and 38.9% scored D(Table 2). According to these results, in overall, 61.1% of students passed examination while 38.9% failed. Students who passed standard VII leaving examination have qualified to be enrolled in government secondary schools to start form I. In examining relationship between sex of students and care givers, the study revealed that sex of student ($\chi^2 = 2.858$, 0.091) had no significant association with type of care givers ($\chi^2 = 1.725$, 0.422) at 5% level of significance.

Table 2: Distribution of PSSN targeted students based on standard VII leaving examination results of 2020

Grade	Status	Number of students	Percent
B	Pass	5	13.9%
C	pass	17	47.2%
D	Fail	14	38.9%
Total		36	100%

4.3 Relationship between student retention and academic performance

The relationship between student compliance to school attendance and examination performance was examined by using cross-tabulation and Chi-square. The results showed among the 22 students surveyed who passed examinations, 15 students (68.2%) had good school attendance. Furthermore, among the 14 surveyed students who failed examinations, only four (4) students (28.6%) had good school attendance. The association between student attendance and examination performance was significant ($\chi^2 = 5.386$, $p = 0.02$) at 5% level of significance (Table 3). The results justified that PSSN targeted students who have good school attendance, also have good performance in standard VII leaving examinations.

Table 3: Chi square test showing association between PSSN targeted student attendance and standard VII leaving examination performance

Statement		Student compliance of at least 80% of total school days		Total	χ^2	p value
Status of examination performance among standard VII students		Number of students with poor attendance	Number of students with good attendance			
	Pass	7	15	22	5.386*	0.02
	Fail	10	4	14		
Total		17	19	36		

*Significant at $P < 0.05$

5. Conclusion

Conditional cash transfers which are implemented by TASAF III through PSSN is among the interventions aimed at reducing poverty at household level within Lushoto District and Tanzania as a whole. This kind of cash transfer is provided to the poor households already receiving unconditional cash transfers but having school children and/or under-five aged children required to attend antenatal clinics. Poor households are required to comply with educational conditions particularly by making sure that primary and secondary school students attend classes for not less than 80% of total schools days in order for TASAF III to continue support targeted poor households. The cash of money which is provided to each poor household helps beneficiaries to meet basic expenditures for education such as buying school uniforms, shoes, books and afford school feeding. Since TASAF III launched in 2014 in Lushoto District, there is a commendable performance among primary school students who are PSSN beneficiaries although there are some of them who are still performing poorly. The performance of students is being contributed by school attendance. For instance, majority of students who were attending in more than 80% of total school days passed standard VII leaving examinations in 2020 while poorly attended students failed examinations. The study recommends that TASAF in collaboration with Lushoto District Authority should continue promoting educational compliance in line with conducting regular monitoring and evaluation to targeted households to ensure that all students who benefit from conditional cash transfers have good attendance at school and good examination results after addressing existing challenges constraining school attendance.

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