

School Persistence and Dropout Amidst Displacement:
The Experiences of Children and Youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp

by

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Abstract

Due to the protracted nature of forced displacement, a majority of refugees spend their entire academic cycles in exile (Milner & Loescher, 2011). While some successfully navigate their educational trajectories, others are unable to complete basic education. Despite the important role education plays in emergency, displacement, and resettlement, refugee education remains under-researched. There is a dearth of research that has investigated what factor(s) at individual, family, and school levels contribute to children and youth's school persistence and dropout amidst displacement. This study aimed to fill this substantial gap in the literature by taking a balanced, comprehensive approach to investigate the experiences of children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya.

Using a sequential mixed-methods design, this study examined the different factors that influenced the schooling of children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp. This study found that family poverty, inability to afford school uniforms and supplies, school uniform policy, living without parents/guardians, and family responsibilities were some of the major reasons that contributed to school dropout. By contrast, different types of support—financial, emotional, or academic—received from family members, teachers, and peers mainly influenced students' persistence, despite persistent barriers in schooling. This study finds that ensuring educational access and persistence was not the role of a single stakeholder in education—i.e., a family member (parent), a head teacher, a teacher, or a student. Instead, different actors in children and youth's sociocultural environments could play a role in influencing their decisions to (dis)continue education.

The findings from this study not only contribute to expanding the knowledge base of education in emergencies, but they also support educators and practitioners who are providing

and improving education for displaced populations, as well as policymakers within the Ministry of Education working to strengthen education systems and to foster access to quality education. My research findings may also prove meaningful in understanding the school persistence of school-aged children and youth in other refugee-hosting countries around the world, including the United States, and other mobile and marginalized populations in non-conflict settings.

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Kenya and Kakuma Refugee Camp

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Dedication

To all the children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp, the source of my inspiration.

To my grandma, my mom, and the Sim Family, the source of my joy.

To God the Father in Heaven, the source of my strength.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Chapter I. INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

The world is witnessing the highest level of forced displacement since World War II. In December 2019, the forcibly displaced population reached 79.5 million, slightly less than the entire population of Germany, Iran, and Turkey. Among them, 26 million are refugees who have crossed international borders to flee from well-founded fear of persecution. More than half of these refugees are children and youth under the age of 18, and about one-third of these school-aged refugees are out of school (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020a). Reports have shown that some children fail to enroll in school at all; others have been schooled at some point but have never completed their basic education cycle due to crises (Al-Hroub, 2014; Ananga, 2011; Hunt, 2008; Lewin, 2009; Momo et al., 2019).

Despite global commitments to attend to those left behind, millions of school-aged children and youth in displacement have left schools—temporarily or permanently, voluntarily or forcibly (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). While global and national reports provide one part of the story regarding trends in refugee education, there is a dearth of research that has investigated what factor(s) at individual, family, and school levels contribute to children and youth's school persistence and dropout amidst displacement. Why do some children persist in schooling while others drop out in refugee camps? What influences students' decisions to (dis)continue schooling? Amidst a confluence of factors that contribute to school persistence or dropout, how do children and youth respond to the situations in which they have been placed? These are some of the questions I addressed in this study.

For the past decade, much of the research on refugee education has largely focused on uncovering barriers that prevent children and youth from accessing quality education (Dryden-

Peterson, 2015; Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Lindley, 2011; McBrien, 2005). Existing literature is largely centered on failures of systems and the lack of opportunities that children and youth encounter in schooling in refugee camps. The insurmountable challenges that discourage them from pursuing education include overcrowding, poor infrastructure, lack of teaching and learning materials, irrelevant curriculum, and language of instruction that does not align with their mother tongue, to mention a few (Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Mendenhall et al., 2015).

Notwithstanding dire circumstances and unpredictability amidst displacement, “locally and globally situated resources” such as individuals, families, schools, and communities, and those trying to support them strive to advocate for their education (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017). More recent studies have explored the stories of children and youth who, confronted with an ‘unknowable future,’ have successfully navigated pathways to educational success in refugee camps (Bellino & Kakuma Youth Research Group, 2018; Cha, 2020; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017). Investigating different factors that positively influence children and youth’s persistence in camp schools is equally important, not only to support at-risk students from dropping out of school but also to foster students’ academic motivation, engagement, and performance in exile.

Therefore, identifying both the opportunities and challenges of schooling is critical and can inform key education stakeholders on how to address factors that contribute to school dropout while providing safe, inclusive environments that promote children and youth’s academic and socioemotional development amidst displacement (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003; Riggs & Davison, 2016). Therefore, I take a more balanced and comprehensive approach to examining children’s and youth’s schooling experiences and the different factors that contribute to their school persistence or dropout in refugee camps.

Purpose and Research Questions

The question of what influences one's school persistence or dropout has been central to education across multiple disciplines. Scholars, especially in the fields of education psychology and sociology, have closely examined the associations between children's school persistence or dropout and the different factors in their ecological systems including families, communities, and schools (Abuya et al., 2013; Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Ananga, 2011a; Hanushek et al., 2008; Hunt, 2008; Levin, 2009; Momo et al., 2019). While there is a plethora of research on the factors that inhibit schooling for these extremely marginalized populations, little has been understood about the factors that enable school persistence and performance of these displaced populations.

Among the limited research that has explored this topic in developing contexts, most of the studies heavily relied on quantitative methods that discussed the direction and magnitude of relationships between and among these predictors or used official statistics from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) to investigate the dropout rate (Ananga, 2011a; Ampiah & Abu-Yeboah, 2009; Lewin, 2009). Few studies have taken qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to explore and understand the schooling experiences of forcibly displaced children and youth within their sociocultural environment. Furthermore, little evidence has been gathered from the perspectives of children and youth who dropped out of or persisted in school amidst displacement (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017; Kirk & Winthrop, 2007).

Consequently, there is a substantial gap in the literature on the topic as well as methodological limitations for understanding children and youth's school persistence and dropout in exile.

With an aim to fill this gap, I used an integrated sequential mixed-methods design to explore different factors that contributed to the school persistence or dropout of refugees in

Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. In three phases, I collected qualitative (focus group discussions and interviews) and quantitative data (surveys) to explore both the opportunities and challenges that children and youth face in the camp—all of which influenced their decisions to stay in or drop out of primary school. To that end, I addressed the following research questions:

1. What influences school dropout of children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp?
 - a. How do children and youth understand and respond to different factors that inhibit their school persistence?
2. What influences the school persistence of children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp?
 - a. How do children and youth understand and respond to different factors that promote their school persistence?

Significance of the Study

As global forced displacement hits a record high, it is imperative that researchers and practitioners explore and learn from the schooling experiences of displaced populations, especially those who spend their entire academic careers in exile. While it is crucial to take comprehensive approaches to study refugee education, most existing literature—both empirical studies and gray literature—has focused on enrollment and achievement, indicators that are relatively “easy to measure” (Burde et al., 2017). If the focus is not on their achievement (e.g., scores on high-stakes exams or standardized tests), much of the literature has studied the challenges that children and youth encounter when they are schooled in displacement or resettlement (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2005).

Education could be considered “a means for social, spatial, and economic mobility” for those living in refugee camps or informal settlements (Bellino, 2018). For children and youth affected by conflicts and crises, a school could be a physical and an emotional space that provides safety/protection, an opportunity to achieve future goals and/or build skills and knowledge for nation-building, among other things (Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). Even when faced with exclusion physically, socially, and systematically, children and youth can seek educational opportunities to “affirm their self-worth,” “claim an identity beyond refugee” (Bellino, 2018, p. 10), and/or build certainty in their lives through education (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Besides resettlement, education could be “a rare and coveted pathway up and out of the camp” (Bellino, 2018, p. 3). For these reasons, children and youth not only persist in schooling, but are highly motivated to learn and perform well, despite unfavorable conditions and unpredictable futures in exile (Cha, 2020; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017).

It is important to recognize that both opportunities and challenges co-exist for children and youth’s schooling in exile. Educational pursuit among forcibly displaced populations continues—in the form of enrollment, persistence, learning, achievement, and completion—despite being confronted with an ‘unknowable future’—a state in which the future seems unpredictable when faced with multiple overlapping liminalities in protracted displacement (Bellino, 2018; Dryden-Peterson, 2017). This study attempted to take a balanced approach to understand the sociocultural environment that children and youth encounter in exile, and how different factors influence their schooling experiences (Cha, 2020; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017).

Despite the important role education plays in emergency, displacement, and resettlement, ‘refugee education’ remains under-researched (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). While

extant literature has discussed school persistence and dropout, most studies have been conducted in Western contexts or educational settings not affected by conflict. The existing research on persistence primarily stems from work in formal education systems—mostly secondary and higher education—within the United States, Canada, and other relatively stable national contexts. Moreover, the few studies that have explored the educational experiences of displaced populations were primarily centered on those who have been resettled to developed contexts (Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2005; Wilkinson, 2002; Wilkinson et al., 2017). Literature on school persistence or dropout *in exile* is almost non-existent (emphasis added). It is important to examine the schooling experiences of children and youth in conflict and crisis-affected contexts not only to recognize the multiple, overlapping challenges they face, but also to highlight their capabilities in educational pursuit.

With the aim to expand the knowledge base of the education in emergencies field, this study examined the schooling experiences of children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, one of the world's largest refugee-hosting countries. I focus on this context since the case of Kakuma Refugee Camp allows us to explore the patterns and processes of school persistence and dropout within the context of protracted displacement (e.g. 29 years in exile). As the majority of the population in Kakuma spend their entire academic careers in exile, it is crucial to explore a wide range of factors at the individual, family, and school levels that influence schooling in the camp (Milner & Loescher, 2011). While I drew on some concepts on school persistence and dropout that were defined by scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in the Global North and other developing contexts, I took a bottom-up, emic approach in order to elevate the voices of children and youth in (re)describing these concepts and presenting a conceptual framework based on their experiences and perceptions in the local contexts.

While this research investigated the case of children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp, it also contributes to understanding school persistence and dropout of school-aged children and youth in other refugee-hosting countries around the world, including the United States. The findings may also prove meaningful for other mobile and marginalized populations in non-conflict settings. Moreover, this study may contribute to educators and practitioners who are providing ongoing development and support to education as well as policymakers within the Ministry of Education who are working toward the goal of strengthening education systems to foster school persistence among forcibly displaced children and youth.

In this study, I tried to refrain from using the expression ‘*refugee* children and youth,’ with an intention to detach the ‘refugee label’ from the participants and to view them as ‘children and youth,’ ‘young people,’ ‘students,’ or ‘participants’ living in refugee camps. While there are some chapters and sections in which I unavoidably use these phrases such as ‘refugee education’ or ‘refugees,’ especially when citing policy frameworks, existing studies, reports, and other sources, it was my goal to avoid employing the ‘labeling’ lens, which assumes displaced populations as indelibly vulnerable (Luna, 2009). Instead, I took into consideration the emphasis placed by Humpage et al. (2019) and other scholars on “the importance of the context—including institutional practices, societal norms, and existing power relations—that renders someone more or less vulnerable” (p. 1). In this attempt, I moved away from taking merely a deficit approach, emphasizing the vulnerability and helplessness of children and youth in displacement, but rather assumed a balanced approach to examine the opportunities and challenges that exist in one’s sociocultural environment that influence children and youth’s decision to (dis)continue education amidst displacement (UNHCR, 2016).

Overview of Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into nine chapters: **Chapter One (Introduction)** provides the opening for this study, and **Chapter Two (Background and Context)** reviews the current trends in forced displacement and refugee education. In particular, I closely examine the current state of refugee education in Kenya with a specific focus on Kakuma Refugee Camp.

In **Chapter Three (Literature Review)**, I provide a comprehensive review of literature on school persistence and dropout. First, I provide the background of persistence/dropout theory developed by scholars in Western contexts, and then review selected studies that have examined different determinants of school dropout in developing countries. In this chapter, I also provide the conceptual framework I used to explore the research problem. In **Chapter Four (Data and Methods)**, I describe the methodology, including research design and methods. I provide detailed descriptions of each method, participants and sampling framework, validity/reliability, researcher positionality, and limitations.

In **Chapter Five (Introduction to Findings)**, I provide an introductory chapter to the findings to discuss briefly life and schooling in Kakuma Refugee Camp. In **Chapter Six (Out-of-School Children and Youth)**, I present the profiles of out-of-school children and youth, and the factors that influenced their school dropout. In **Chapter Seven (In-School Children and Youth)**, I turn to the in-school children and youth, and the reasons behind their school persistence amidst displacement. While these two chapters discuss the samples separately, in **Chapter Eight (Comparisons)**, I compare and contrast the characteristics of out-of-school and in-school children and youth, and their experiences of schooling in the camp.

I conclude this dissertation with **Chapter Nine (Discussions and Conclusions)** by presenting the key findings, recommendations, and conclusion. I also revisit some of the limitations and directions for future research.

Chapter II. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Forced Migration and Refugee Education

Millions of people have left their home countries, driven by a well-founded fear of persecution because of one's race/ethnicity, religion, and nationality (UNHCR, 1951). Under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, these forcibly displaced populations ('refugees') are not only granted rights to seek asylum, but they are also promised 'the same treatment' as nationals in the provision of social services, including education. In reality, these rights are far from being realized in most, if any, of the host country contexts. Many refugee-hosting countries work within their own national legal and policy frameworks, which often favor nationals and restrict non-citizens' rights to employment and education, thereby limiting their social, spatial, and economic mobility (Bellino, 2018).

Such constraints are further exacerbated by the protracted crises. These forcibly displaced populations spend their lives engulfed in prolonged conflict or "a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo" (UNHCR, 2004, p. 1). Protracted refugees are those who have lived in exile for five or more years (UNHCR, 2009a). Millions of refugees spend their lives in prolonged crises; the average length of displacement is 20-25 years (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017). Uprooted from all that is familiar, they live in refugee camps, informal tented settlements, and urban spaces, where their basic human rights are denied and their futures are under 'radical uncertainty' (Horst & Grabska, 2015, as cited in Dryden-Peterson, 2017, p. 15). One of many rights that has been denied for refugees is the freedom of movement. When refugees are deemed 'a potential threat' or 'burden' and/or present a 'competition' for resources, refugees are typically isolated in camps in remote areas (Milner, 2014).

Their mobility is highly restricted; with few exceptions are refugees allowed to visit cities and other regions (Hyndman & Giles, 2011). Encampment symbolizes the host countries' efforts to provide short-term residence, not permanence (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). According to many scholars, the reinforcement of containment policies has deprived refugees of the right to seek employment and the right to be educated outside the camp (Bellino, 2018; Dryden-Peterson, 2015). The deprivation of basic rights, as Milner and Loescher (2011) argued, "further compounds refugees' vulnerability, as they become dependent on subsistence-level assistance or less and lead lives of poverty, frustration and unrealized potential" (p. 4).

Thousands of refugees are born in camps—South Sudanese and Somali refugees in Kenya, Karen refugees in Thailand, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon—in seemingly interminable, protracted displacement. Some of them have spent close to three decades in exile; second and third generations of refugees are born, the majority of whom spend their entire academic careers in camp-based schools operated by NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) in partnership with UNHCR (Lindley, 2011; Milner, 2014). With the rapidly increased demand, little to no secondary and tertiary education programs are offered in camps. Unable to transition to the next level of education, camp-based children and youth often end up 'sitting in community' (Al-Hroub, 2014; Bellino, 2018). Only few are granted scholarship opportunities to pursue further education in or outside the camp or informal tented settlements. The majority of school-age children and youth remain out of school, and are unable to fulfill their educational and life aspirations, due to multiple restrictions or liminality encountered in displacement.

In response to the aforementioned trends in global displacement, the international community has sought 'durable' solutions to seemingly interminable refugee crises (UNHCR,

2003). In the past, a majority of refugee-hosting countries considered refugees as “temporary guests in a state of emergency who will soon return to their home countries” (Shuayb, 2014, p. 1). Due to protracted crises, the global discourse on the refugee crisis has gradually shifted since 2011 from repatriation, resettlement, and segregation to local integration (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018). Aligned with the global commitment to achieve universal access to education in the Education for All Declaration and Sustainable Development Goals, UNHCR’s Global Education Strategy in 2012 emphasized “integration [hereby inclusion] of refugee learners within national systems, where possible and appropriate” (UNHCR, 2012, pp. 31-33). Inclusion of refugees into national systems is aimed at solving issues of access and quality as well as budgetary concerns of refugee education (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018).

In their analysis of different countries’ refugee policies, Dryden-Peterson et al. (2018) found two different types of integration: structural and relational integration. For refugee education, structural integration refers to refugee-hosting countries’ willingness to provide access to educational institutions for refugees. Relational integration, on the other hand, fosters a sense of membership or connectedness for refugees and/or social cohesion among refugees and nationals (Korać, 2003; Strang & Ager, 2010). Since 2012, UNHCR has established formal relationships with the national governments in their countries of operation to negotiate access to refugees, secure lands for refugee camps, etc. It is during this time that the focus on refugee education has become more prominent, emphasizing the need to include refugees into national education systems (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Such shifts in policy and practice are the international community’s attempt to reduce the unpredictable, uncertain futures of the refugee population. However, focus is still limited to accessing schools, national exams, and

certification. In many refugee-hosting countries, the goal of including refugees into national education systems—whether in the form of structural or relational integration—remains far from being reached (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018).

For decades, dominant global discourse on education development has centered on ensuring access to quality education for the most marginalized populations, who include children and youth living in fragile states. Despite the construction and promotion of global education agendas such as Education for All (EFA) goals and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the international community’s commitments to achieve universal education for all children and youth, access to education for all continues to be an insurmountable goal. Especially for children and youth affected by crisis and conflict, the majority of them are out of school—either they never accessed education or dropped out before school completion—due to persistent barriers they face in education (Al-Hroub, 2011; Burde et al., 2015, 2017; Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Oh & Van der Stouwe, 2008).

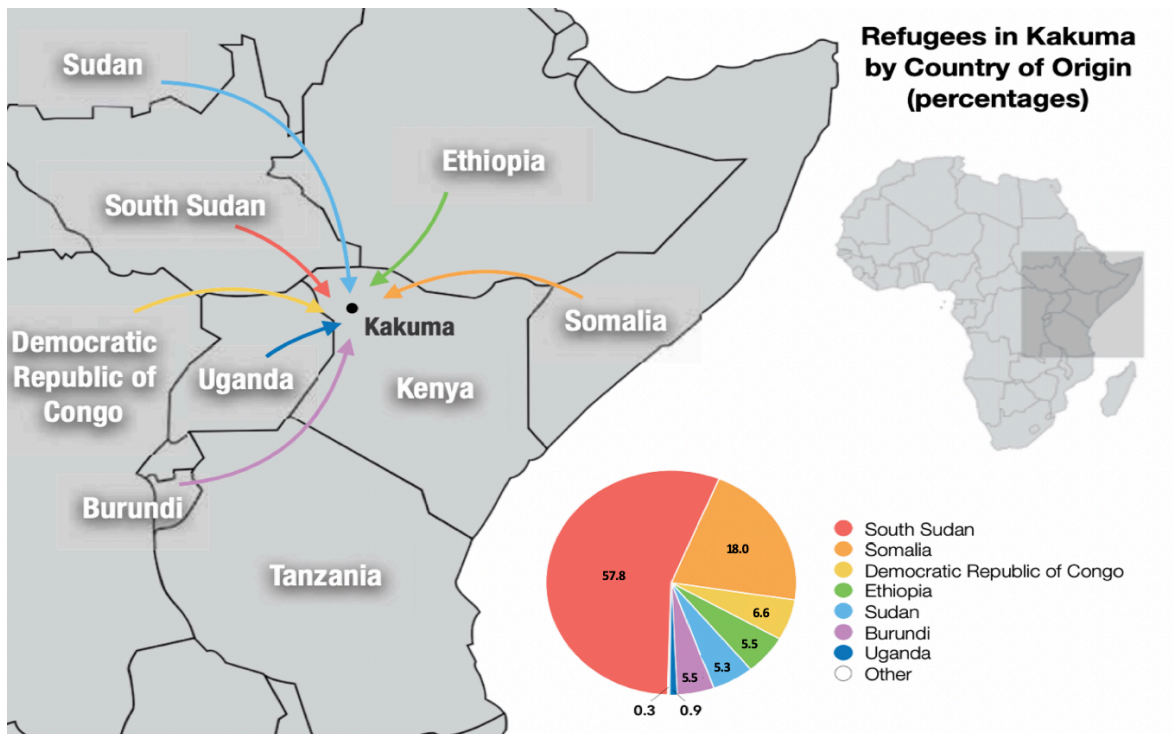
Education for Refugees in Kenya

Kenya hosts one of the largest concentrations of refugees in the world. For well over a quarter of a century, protracted crises in the neighboring countries in the region fueled by political instability, genocide, and civil war have led hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children to seek refuge in the country. Refugees in Kenya come primarily from Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, and other countries in East and Central Africa (see Figure 1 below). There are approximately 498,422 refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya, of which more than half are under the age of 18. Among them, about 84% of the total refugees in Kenya live in camp settings, of which 40% live in Kakuma Refugee Camp. Another 44% live in Dadaab Refugee Camp, which is located

in the northeastern part of Kenya near the Somali border. For the purpose of my study, I focused only on Kakuma Refugee Camp, its population, and the current state of education.

Figure 1

Refugees in Kakuma by Country of Origin (Percentages)



Source: Mendenhall. (2017). Strengthening teacher professional development: Local and global communities of practice in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Promising Practice in Refugee education. Retrieved from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/583af1fb414fb5b3977b6f89/t/59bdbadc8419c21c1bd35570/1505606367450/11_PromisingPractices_Teachers+for+Teachers_WEB.pdf

UNHCR. (2019). Statistical summary of refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya (May 31 2019). Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/ke/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/Kenya-Statistics-Package-31-May-2019.pdf>

Located in the northwestern part of Kenya in Turkana County, Kakuma Refugee Camp (hereafter ‘Kakuma’) was founded in 1992 to accommodate millions of refugees fleeing from conflicts in Sudan. At first, Kakuma was originally intended to host refugees for a short period of time; however, due to protracted crises in several neighboring countries, the camp has been operating for 29 years. Currently, Kakuma is home to about 190, 181 refugees, all of whom have fled their countries of origin including Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and

Uganda (UNHCR, 2019). Due to the ongoing political and social instability in South Sudan, Kakuma encounters thousands of new arrivals who seek refuge in the camp. The UNHCR and its implementing partners provide food, shelter, education, protection, and other necessities to Kakuma residents.

More than half of Kakuma's population are children and youth under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2020c). There are a total of 11 early childhood centers, 21 primary schools, five secondary schools, and one vocational training center to accommodate 66,022 school-aged children and youth (5-17 years) in the camp—almost 42% of the entire population in Kakuma (UNHCR, 2020a, 2020b). With only few tertiary education provided in camps—except for a few diploma programs and online certificate programs—most secondary graduates find jobs in the camp (Bellino, 2018; Bellino & Hure, 2018; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017). Most of the educational centers are operated by its partnering NGOs, and a few are community-based nonformal education centers.

Overcrowded classrooms, inadequate facilities and resources, shortage of teachers, lack of teacher professional development, and high teacher turnover rate are considered some of the many factors that affect the quality of education in the camp (Mendenhall, 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2015). Ongoing conflicts in South Sudan and the resulting influx of refugees to the camp, coupled with the relocated refugees from Dadaab Refugee Camp,¹ have aggravated the already overpopulated, under-resourced schools in the camps. Therefore, conducive learning environments and safe, child-friendly spaces are not guaranteed in Kakuma.

¹ In May 2016, the Kenyan government announced plans to 'speed up' the 'voluntary' repatriation of Somali refugees and to close the Dadaab Refugee Camp, which is located in the northeastern part of Kenya close to Somali border. Since then, Kakuma has received hundreds of relocated, non-Somali refugees from Dadaab.

Moreover, the majority of teachers in the camp schools are unqualified, untrained teachers. Over 80% of teachers are refugees (‘incentive’ or volunteer teachers) and less than 40% of the teaching force has received training, often in the form of one-off workshops or short-term courses (Burns & Lawrie, 2015; Mendenhall, 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2018). As a result, most teachers in Kakuma heavily rely on lectures and factual questions, with minimal student engagement and interaction (Mendenhall et al., 2015). Rote learning (or teach-to-test practices) is commonly practiced across all 21 primary schools in Kakuma. Furthermore, overcrowded classrooms, poor resources, lack of teacher professional development, and high teacher turnover rates are considered some of the most pervasive issues experienced in Kakuma (Mendenhall, 2017).

While Kenya is a signatory to international conventions, including the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, refugees’ rights to mobility, employment, and access to social services are still restricted. A series of terrorist attacks by the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab group prompted the Government of Kenya (GoK) to impose an encampment policy in 2014, which requires all refugees to reside in camps. Refugees who lived in urban areas were forced to return to camps. In May 2016, the GoK decided to close Dadaab Refugee Camp and disband the Department of Refugee Affairs; security, environmental degradation, and economic burdens were cited as the reasons for such a decision. Since then, thousands of Somali refugees have (in)voluntarily repatriated and to their still war-torn, fragile country. Non-Somali refugees in Dadaab were relocated to Kalobeyei Settlement² near Kakuma Refugee Camp (Burns, 2010; Campbell, 2006; Dryden-Peterson et

² In 2015, UNHCR and the Kenyan Government has agreed to develop a settlement near Kakuma Refugee Camp (situated about 40 km northwest of Kakuma) “to promote the self-reliance of refugees and host communities by providing them with better livelihood opportunities and enhance service delivery.” In December 2018, the Kalobeyei Integrated Social Economic Development Programme (KISEDPP) was officially launched (UNHCR,

al., 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Pavanello et al., 2011). Ironically, despite such strict policies, the GoK joined its neighboring countries to sign the Djibouti Declaration in December 2017, which aimed to “integrate education for refugees and returnees into National Education Sector Plans by 2020” (IGAD Member States, 2017, p. 3, as cited in Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017). Despite such policy fluctuations (‘contradictory policies on refugees’) and uncertainties, the educational pursuit of children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp continues.

n.d.). The goal of this 14-year project is to benefit both refugee and host communities from accessing social services and increased income-generating opportunities.

Chapter III. LITERATURE REVIEW

For decades, scholars in education have studied a wide range of factors that have given rise to individuals' decisions to persist in or drop out from school in both developed and developing countries (Abuya et al., 2013; Ampiah & Abu-Yeboah, 2009; Ananga, 2011; Hunt, 2008, among others). As there is a dearth of literature on factors that contribute to persistence and dropout of children and youth in displacement, I drew from relevant studies conducted in both 'stable' (i.e., not affected by armed conflicts) and low- and middle-income countries in the Global South. First, I present the initial work of scholars and their concepts, models, and theories on persistence and dropout, mainly in the field of higher education in the United States. Then, I review studies conducted in low- and middle-income countries (hereafter 'developing countries'), especially those from Sub-Saharan African contexts. At the end of this chapter, I present a conceptual framework that I developed to analyze the factors that contribute to school persistence and dropout amidst displacement.

School Persistence and Dropout in Developed Countries

Initially, most studies on student persistence and dropout, and the factors that influence students' decisions to drop out, stemmed from higher education in the United States, including theoretical models on persistence (or 'attrition') (Astin, 1975; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975). In their reviews and theoretical syntheses of literature on dropouts, Tinto and Cullen (1973) posited that a student's decision to depart from college is affected by different factors including but are not limited to the following: pre-entry attributes (e.g., family background); goals/commitment (student aspirations); institutional experiences (interactions with faculty and peers); and academic and social integration (Metz, 2004).

Tinto's (1975) work has been foundational to the scholarship on student persistence and dropout. In his initial work, he explored the causes and effects of certain behaviors that contribute to student persistence. He found that academic and social integration—in which a student is “immersed in the many dynamics of college life”—became the main argument for his later research on student persistence and dropout (Tinto, 1993, 1997). Tinto's studies have been of great influence not only within the field of education but also in other disciplines, serving as a reference for other scholars who examine persistence or dropout/withdrawal from an institution or a program.

Applying employee attrition to the context of postsecondary education, Bean (1981) examined the interaction between an individual student and institution (school), as well as the external factors that influence a student's dropping out of school. In his study, Bean synthesized Spady's (1970) social integration process model and Tinto's (1975) goal commitment model, and concluded that student dropout is mainly affected by the following factors: student's background; interaction within the institution; environmental influences (mainly family support; finances); perceived quality and self-satisfaction with the institution; and student intention.

Furthermore, Bean (1981) included academic variables into the model, such as intent, goals, expectations, and external and internal environmental factors (Metz, 2004). In his collaboration with Metzner, Bean further added psychological variables such as satisfaction, family acceptance, and stress (Metzner & Bean, 1987). Building on the previous models on school persistence, Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) investigated student persistence from their interaction with teachers and peers. They found that the amount of time spent with teachers (faculty members) strongly influenced students' school persistence. In addition to interaction

with the teaching force, scholars such as Cabrera et al. (1992) asserted the need to examine external factors such as parental involvement, peers, and finances that influence student persistence. Cabrera et al. (1992) particularly stressed the complex and dynamic interactions between internal and external variables that affect persistence.

Other scholars (Nora, 1990; Porter, 1991) examined external factors such as financial aid and its impact on persistence. According to these scholars, students—especially those who attended two-year colleges—are most affected by financial restraints. They highlighted the lack of financial aid as the most influential on dropout than other factors such as academic performance and social integration. In the early 1990s, the scholarship gradually shifted its attention to nontraditional students, as an increasing number of researchers acknowledged the importance of recognizing the differences among student groups and their experiences in persistence and dropout. They criticized previous models (e.g., Tinto) for having neglected the differences in institutions and students' demographic backgrounds such as their major, gender, and race/ethnicity in studying student persistence, all of which are important variables that affect schooling experiences of students in terms of performance and attainment (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Studies on student persistence continue to incorporate new variables, reflecting the changing dynamics of higher education in the United States.

Several theoretical and conceptual models have also examined the push/pull factors and typologies of dropouts, which have all contributed to understanding the complexities of dropout among high school students in the United States. Some scholars used 'the push and pull perspectives' in understanding the different factors that contribute to dropout (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011; Stearns & Glennie, 2006). On the one hand, push factors are associated with school-related factors (e.g. school policies, disciplinary practices, etc.), which could discourage

students from continuing education. In such cases, school structure and stakeholders (e.g. school leaders, teachers, administrators) may interact with additional challenges students are facing in pushing students out of school (Stearns & Glennie, 2006). On the other hand, pull factors are associated with family characteristics (e.g. family responsibilities, lack of prioritization, etc.) that interfere with students' commitment to complete education (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011). Financial constraints and the responsibilities to take care of family members could compete with academic work/engagement. Pull factors are related to the socioeconomic status (SES) of the family, as students from low SES family are more likely to be pulled out of school (Alexander et al., 2001). These theoretical perspectives have been used to better understand the complexities of dropout, especially recognizing the agency in school dropout in which some students may 'voluntarily' leave school, while others may be 'involuntarily discharged' (Rhiel, 1999, as cited in Bowers, in press).

Scholars also examined different profiles of experiences or the 'typologies' of dropouts. For instance, Bowers and Sprott (2012) argue that a student's decision to quit school is "much more individualized and specific to certain subgroups within the dropout category" (p. 177). According to these authors, dropouts could be divided into four types: 1) students who are disrupting school (low grades and behavioral problems), 2) students who are struggling (low academic achievement), 3) students who are bored with the process of schooling (disengagement and low commitment), and 4) students who are 'quiet dropouts' (no necessary support systems). Using a nonlinear hierarchical modeling technique (growth mixture modeling) on a nationally representative dataset by the US National Center for Education Statistics, Bowers and Sprott (2012) found that "dropout involves multiple and distinct groups that can be identified using noncumulative GPA" (p. 190). Dropout typologies, as the authors

argued, could be used in detecting early indicators of dropout risk and designing appropriate interventions.

Conducting a study of dropouts in Croatian high schools, Ogresta et al. (2020) corroborated Bowers and Sprott's (2012) argument that there are different subgroups ('heterogenous population') of dropouts. Through semi-structured interviews with 20 young people, they identified the four types of dropouts: the poor academic achievers (e.g. low grades, repetition, and lack of motivation), the quiet achievers (e.g. internalizing problems such as depression), the maladjusted dropouts (externalizing problems such as violence), and the stressed dropouts (e.g. disrupted family relations, discrimination, etc.). In particular, they emphasized that stressful life events could potentially cause depression and internalizing behaviors, all of which could lead to dropout. Hence, this study confirmed the existing literature that viewed dropout as a continuous process (throughout the life course) in which multiple stressors affect students schooling experiences (Dupéré et al., 2018; Dupéré et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2018).

Factors Affecting School Persistence and Dropout in Developing Countries

School dropout has been a pervasive yet unresolved problem for many developing countries. For decades, researchers have sought to identify factors that influence a student's decision to stay in or leave school. This study draws from empirical studies conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and other developing countries that examined the associations between individual characteristics, families and communities, and schools, and students' decision to (dis)continue primary education. While the focus of my study was school persistence/dropout in primary education in refugee camps, I reviewed several studies conducted at the secondary education level and mostly in non-conflict settings. Although only very few studies were

conducted in crisis-affected contexts, this existing body of literature illustrates patterns and themes that are relevant to this study.

Individual Characteristics

Studies have shown that demographic factors are highly correlated with the propensity to drop out of school. This study reviewed a number of studies that focused on the associations between school persistence/dropout and demographic characteristics: age and gender.

Age. Research has shown that overage learners have the propensity to drop out of school (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Biddlecom et al., 2008; Buchmann, 2000; Farid-ul-Hasnain & Krantz, 2011; Fawcett et al., 2010; Flisher et al., 2010; Lloyd et al., 2000; Korinek & Punpuing, 2012, Sabates et al., 2013, Siddhu, 2011; Smith & Huisman, 2013; Yi et al., 2012; Zuilkowski et al., 2016). According to Lewin's (2009) review of literature on dropout in Africa, the 'age-in-grade inappropriateness' is prevalent in low-income and fragile states are likely to "disadvantage the already disadvantaged (e.g. poor, girls, learners with disabilities) and lead to dropout" (p. 171). Many school-going children in sub-Saharan Africa are not in the appropriate grade for their age; the ranges of students' ages within grades remain wide (Lewin, 2009). In Malawi, older age was the most reliable predictor of poor achievement and dropout among primary students (Zuilkowski et al., 2016). Being overage could result from grade repetition, late school entry, or interrupted schooling (Hunt, 2008; Zuilkowski et al., 2016).

In a quantitative study conducted with 7,800 students from 46 middle schools in poor, rural provinces of China, Yi et. al. (2012) revealed that the dropout rate of older students (over 14 years old) had a higher dropout rate than younger peers, the difference of which was about 28 percentage points. The reason behind the gap between the overage and average students was that older students were easily pulled into low-wage, low-skilled work to contribute to

household income. This example also highlighted the interactions among factors such as age, poverty, and the neighborhood (rural area) that led students to drop out.

Similarly, in their longitudinal, mixed-methods study of 387 war-affected children and youth in Sierra Leone from 2002 through 2008, Zuilkowski and Betancourt (2014) found that age was one of the major factors that was positively associated with school dropout. The findings indicated that “every additional year of age increased the fitted odds of dropout by 14 percent” (p. 459). This finding confirmed Flisher et al.’s (2010) argument that dropout of overage children and youth could be due to social and cultural pressures for adolescents, such as employment, marriage, and other family responsibilities. Other scholars have argued that overage students’ dropout is attributable to sociocultural pressure or ‘social discomfort’ for marriage and employment and/or (in)voluntary alienation from younger classmates (Flisher et al., 2010; Siddhu, 2011).

Gender. Gender is another contributing factor to school dropout. Many scholars have highlighted how female children and youth are at a greater risk of dropping out of school compared to their male peers in many developing countries (Colclough et al., 2000; Hunt, 2008; Lloyd & Blanc, 1996; Lloyd et al., 2000; Siddhu, 2011; Sabates et al., 2013; Smits & Huisman, 2013). In some contexts, dropout rates among girls could be twice as high or higher than males, especially those in adolescents (Lloyd et al., 2000; Zuilkowski & Betancourt, 2014). In societies and cultures with strong gender roles, girls are discouraged from being educated as they grow older. In their qualitative study of 20 adolescent girls residing in slums in Nairobi, Kenya, Abuya et al. (2012, 2014) found that myriad factors pushed girls out of school, one of which was the gender discrimination toward schooling and heavy domestic

work performed for parents/guardians, siblings, and relatives before or after school. In general, parents prioritized educational expenses for boys while girls were encouraged to stay home.

Especially in low-income households, girls were expected to, and thereby felt obligated to, assist with domestic work, including fetching water, cooking water, cleaning house, and taking care of younger siblings (Chege & Sifuna, 2006; Glick & Sahn, 2000; Shahidul & Karim, 2015; Tansel, 2002). Furthermore, parents did not believe in the benefits of educating girls and thus prioritized boys over girls when it came to school-related expenses. Besides school fees and other supplies, lack of sanitary pads during menstruation could lead to school absenteeism and dropout (Grant et al., 2013). As a result of gendered roles and discrimination in education, some girls had to drop out of school (Abuya et al., 2012; Warrington & Kiragu, 2012).

In Kenya, Abuya et al. (2014) stressed the role of girls as ‘socially constructed by others,’ meaning that girls have the likelihood of assuming roles that society defines *for* them and not *by* them (p. 387). For instance, girls were more likely to yield educational opportunities for other siblings, mainly their brothers, although their decisions were heavily influenced by parental expectations/perceptions of sons as the ‘future’ of the family. Abuya et al. found that “[...G]irls were disadvantaged because of the way their parents perceived them, looked down on their education, and encouraged their brothers to go to school at their expense” (p. 391). Some parents even considered investing in girls’ education as a ‘loss’ or ‘pointless,’ as their daughters would eventually be married and become part of another family, or in some cultures, people commonly perceived that it is challenging for an educated girl to find a husband (Chege & Sifuna, 2006; Colclough et al., 2000; Warrington & Kiragu, 2012). Such social norms and

cultural practices have largely influenced the way girls interact with others—not only family but also (male) peers and teachers—and contributed to school dropout.

Early marriage is also rampant in sub-Saharan African countries, which makes it a major factor for pulling girls away from school (Hunt, 2008; Lewin, 2009; Lewin & Akyeampong, 2009; Warrington & Kiragu, 2012). Early, often forced, marriage of young girls stems from cultural practice, poverty, and parental fear of early pregnancy. As previous studies have alluded to the relationship between poverty and marriage, parents in many developing contexts often perceive marriage as a means of reducing financial burdens. In particular, poor families encourage girls to get married at a young age, so that they can receive a dowry (e.g., money or livestock) to support family or to have one less mouth to feed (Abuya et al., 2014; Kadzamira & Rose, 2003; Zuilkowski et al., 2016). Therefore, gender and family poverty are closely intertwined factors that interact to keep girls out of school—a point which is further discussed in the following section on household resources.

In other cases, parents choose early marriage for girls as soon as they reach the age of puberty to avoid cultural shame caused by the pregnancy of unmarried daughters. In fact, early pregnancy is also one of the overriding causes of dropout for girls in many African countries (Colclough et al., 2000; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Hunter & May, 2003). Young girls could become pregnant as a result of their engagement in (un)intended sexual relationships with males in the family, communities, and schools, some of which are caused by sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (Biddlecom et al., 2008; Leach & Humphreys, 2007).

In a society with strong stigma and shame against teen pregnancy, parents tend to marry off their daughters at an early age. In their detailed case study exploring the relationship among poverty, gender, and schooling in Ethiopia and Guinea, Colcough et al. (2000) found that girls

as early as the age of eight years old were forced into marriage in Ethiopia, as some parents feared that their daughters may face an unwanted pregnancy and cause harm to the family's honor. Forced early marriage was also commonly practiced in Guinea. As such, most literature on school dropout in Sub-Saharan Africa has shown that most girls still face myriad barriers in completing primary education due to socially constructed gendered norms, including discrimination, heavy domestic work, and the practice of early marriage (Hunt, 2008).

Household Characteristics

A second group of factors is household characteristics. Many scholars have examined the role of family, particularly parents, in children's school persistence and dropout. Existing literature supports the argument that household resources (e.g., income, parental education, occupation, etc.), household structure (e.g., head of household, number of siblings, birth order), and family culture or religion are considered key factors that contribute to children's school persistence (Abuya et al., 2013; Al Smarrai & Peasgood, 1998; Glick & Sahn, 2000; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Smits & Huisman, 2013).

Household resources. Household resources could be in the form of income, parental education, and parental employment status, to mention a few. Among them, household income could be one of the most primary factors in school persistence, what Lewin (2009) described as the most "powerful determinant of grade progression" (p. 172). In many families, financial resources determine whether parents can afford the recurring costs of schooling. Direct or more 'upfront' costs include school tuition fees, while indirect or 'hidden' costs include fees for transportation, uniforms, bags, and other materials needed (Hunt, 2008). In addition to school-related fees, girls from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds often cannot afford sanitary pads, which makes them miss classes for at least one week. Accumulated absences

could affect their performance, which could demotivate them or deter them from continuing education (Abuya et al., 2013; Grant et al., 2013).

Compared to students from wealthier families, those from low socioeconomic status (SES) are more susceptible to dropout; they either cannot afford to pay the (in)direct costs of schooling or are pulled into child labor, or both (Colcough et al., 2000; Filmer & Pritchett, 1999; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Lewin, 2009). School fees, levies, and other school-related costs can give poor families a great distress (Huisman & Smits, 2015). Given the inability and/or unwillingness to pay for the costs of schooling for all children, some parents decide to support the education of one or few children—most of whom are boys. For instance, through interviews with 28 out-of-school youth (aged 13-20) in Indonesia, Zuilkowski et al. (2017) found that the primary reason for their dropout was that education “require[d] a lot of money” (p. 7). Most parents struggled to pay school fees and purchase uniforms, shoes, textbooks, and notebooks, and some would have to choose to send one or more children to school while the rest stay at home.

In Ghana, despite the introduction of the free education policy in 1995, parents were still responsible for levies to support schooling, which were burdensome for those from poorest households. On top of the variety of levies to support school activities, parents sometimes had to pay for district levies, which “provided a backdoor for reinstating fees” (Akyeampong, 2009, p. 192). Using two household surveys conducted in Ghana in 1998/9 and 2004/5, Akyeampong (2009) discovered that children from the poorest households could not access or continue their education due to financial constraints in paying levies. Due to late enrollment or grade repetition, children from poor families, on average, had an age-grade delay of more than three years, a factor that could affect academic motivation, performance, and persistence.

These studies exemplified the instances where household income and school-related costs directly influence access to and persistence in education.

Moreover, children from economically disadvantaged families are also pulled out of school to the family income (Alexander et al., 2001; Bradley & Renzulli, 2011). Child labor does not only refer to income-generating activities, but also to domestic work (Hunt, 2008). Especially in rural areas, children often leave schools—either temporarily or permanently—to partake of farming and other family businesses, which are often the duties of adolescent boys. Girls, on the other hand, stay home to attend to their younger siblings and other household chores (Ananga, 2011a). As Abuya et al. (2013) mentioned, poverty permeates an individual's different ecological levels—including family and community—as they navigate their educational trajectories. In Latin America, Post (2001) examined the relationship between child labor and schooling in Chile, Mexico, and Peru. Analyzing two household surveys from each of these countries (Chile, 1990-96; Mexico, 1992-96; and Peru, 1985-97), he found that children's age, gender, and previous educational experiences were associated with school attendance in all three countries. Older children and youth, girls, and those with fewer years of formal education were more likely to be engaged in child labor—at home or in the market. Post (2001) also found that while household income could play a role in school dropout, “its effect is more cumulative than instantaneous” and that poor parents could also desire educational pursuits for their children (p. 172).

Research has shown that parental education and occupation largely explain children's school persistence (Abuya et al., 2013; Biddlecom et al., 2008; Cemalcilar & Goksen, 2014; Huisman & Smits, 2009, 2015; Hunt, 2008). More specifically, children whose parents are ‘better educated’ or have a non-manual occupation may pursue further education (Huisman &

Smits, 2009). Scholars explain that parents with limited schooling experiences or who are self-employed may be: incapable of supporting children with school-related work; less active in school functions (e.g., Parent-Teacher Associations [PTAs]); and/or undervalue the benefits of schooling (Huisman & Smits, 2009; Liu, 2004; Pryor & Ampiah, 2003; Tansel, 2002). By contrast, educated parents in salaried (non-manual) employment have high educational expectations for their children; these parents are more likely to be engaged in school functions and may provide support for schoolwork. These parents want their children to enjoy similar educational and professional pursuits, and they may be more willing to invest time and energy in their children's education (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997; Tansel, 2002).

According to a multilevel discrete-time event-history analysis with 130,000 children in 30 developing countries, Huisman and Smits (2015) found that, on average, children with educated parents tend to continue and complete education, compared to those with under-educated parents. Mothers' educational backgrounds, in particular, played an important role, especially for girls (Emerson & Souza, 2007; Fuller et al., 1995). Huisman and Smits' (2015) study illustrated that "the odds of staying in school increases by 77 percent for daughters and by 40 percent for sons if the mother is in the higher educational category. The result indicated that mothers with more knowledge are in a better position to keep their children in school" (p. 12). This confirmed existing research that mother's education level is more influential than that of father's, especially for girls (Al Samarrai & Peasgood, 1998; Emerson & Souza, 2007; Fuller et al., 1995).

Household structure and family size. Research has shown that household composition or family size substantially contributes to children's withdrawal from school (Emerson & Souza, 2007; Fafchamps & Wahba, 2006; Glick & Sahn, 2000; Rumberger,

1987). Household structure includes the head of the household, the number of siblings, and birth order. Heads of households, often parents, play an important role in children's academic and socioemotional growth (Rumberger, 1987, 1995).

Children who experience 'family dissolution' (Abuya et al., 2013) or 'bereavement and orphanhood' (Hunt, 2008) are at greater risk of dropping out. In a longitudinal, multi-methodological approach to studying classroom and school experiences of students in Malawi, Harris and Schubert (2001) found a significant association between parental death and school dropout. Children of parents who were both deceased were twice as likely to drop out (17.1%), compared to those with one parent dead (9.1%) and both parents living (9.5%). Those who lost their parent(s) also had higher repetition rates and absenteeism (those who lost their mothers). Similarly, through a panel household survey from the northwestern part of Tanzania, Ainsworth et al. (2005) observed that school hours for children, especially girls, were significantly reduced immediately after the death of a parent. Scholars have suggested that this may be as a result of psychological influences (Zuilkowski & Betancourt, 2014) or increased responsibilities at home (Abuya et al., 2013).

In the same vein, studies have shown that single parenthood—living with a single parent who is either divorced or widowed—is negatively associated with school persistence (Seltzer, 1994; Smiths & Huisman, 2013). According to a survey conducted by Smiths and Huisman (2013) in six Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen) on determinants of education participation, children from single-parent households had a higher dropout rate compared to peers who resided with both parents. Hunt (2008) argued that this may be a result of the additional burden placed on children in supporting families, through financial and nonfinancial support. However, research has shown that when the household is

headed by a single mother, the case is less detrimental (or sometimes even beneficial) for children's education (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996).

Other forms of family compositions such as living with non-biological parent(s) or extended households (e.g., relatives) may also influence children's educational access (Huisman & Smits, 2015). Research has shown that parents are more likely to favor their biological children over adopted or foster children, which could influence their education-related decisions such as expenditures (Fafchamps & Wahba, 2006, as cited in Huisman & Smits, 2015, p. 4). In some situations, children under the care of foster parent(s) or non-biological parent(s) who suffer from discrimination and physical/verbal abuse may decide to drop out of school (Glick & Sahn, 2000; Hunt, 2008). In such cases, Huisman and Smits (2015) argued that children living with extended households (relatives and grandparents) reduce the risk of children's dropout, as they contribute to the household income or household chores.

In Kenya, Abuya et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative, interview-based study with 40 children (aged 6-13) who were away from school for at least one year. The purpose of the study was to investigate why children quit schooling when the education was 'free.' They found that, among many factors, children attributed their school persistence to "a positive environment cultivated within a home in which the child resides" (p. 756). In other words, children with certain family characteristics were more likely to drop out of school, including but not limited to poverty and family dissolution. Other factors such as incapacitation of parents and/or illness of household member(s) were associated with school dropout (Abuya et al., 2013).

Number of siblings and birth order. In developing countries, the number of siblings can be negatively correlated with school persistence (Huisman & Smits, 2015; Pong, 1997). In their study of 30 developing countries, Huisman and Smits (2015) found that children with more siblings were significantly less likely to stay in school. This was particularly true among low-income families, as parents lacked financial resources as well as time to attend to the needs of individual children. The case may be more prevalent among those who have siblings of age of five and below (Glick & Sahn, 2000). Families with large numbers of offspring may discourage some children, mostly older ones, from going to school (Siddhu, 2011; Smith & Huisman, 2013). Rather, they are encouraged to contribute to family income or household chores (Buchmann & Hannum, 2001; Emerson & Souza, 2007).

Conversely, some scholars have found that an additional increase in the number of siblings is more likely to reduce the work burden on individual children, thereby potentially increasing the chances of attending schools (Huisman & Smits, 2015; Hunt, 2008). In such cases, younger siblings—within a large family—may be given the educational opportunity, while older siblings take care of household chores (Smits & Huisman, 2013). Regardless of their birth order, however, girls were more likely to stay at home and help parents with home responsibilities in most developing countries (Hunt, 2008).

Household resources, structure, and culture interact with other factors such as gender to influence children's school persistence and dropout (Nekatibeb, 2002). Huisman and Smits (2015) argued that household-level factors (including socioeconomic resources and household structure) explained about 72% of the variability in school dropout in 30 developing countries. Confirming the existing literature, their findings suggested that children who were born earlier

(older), fostered (non-biological parents), or living with a single parent exhibited greater propensity for dropping out of school (Huisman & Smits, 2015).

School-level factors. Some scholars have argued that school persistence and dropout are most influenced by school-level factors (Birdsall et al., 2005; Boyle et al., 2002; Brock & Cammish, 1997; Fuller & Clarke, 1994; Heyneman & Loxley, 1983). School characteristics such as quality of resources and facilities, teaching and learning, academic performance, and experiences (or relationships with teachers and peers) were considered the main predictors of school dropout (Rumberger, 1987, 2001).

School Characteristics

School dropout is strongly associated with school characteristics (e.g., school infrastructure, quality of teaching force, school fees, etc.). Congestion is a common issue faced by developing countries, including Kenya, where a large number of students are crammed into one classroom. Abuya et al. (2013) found that overcrowding was of particular concern for parents. When parents realize that their child's individual academic needs are unattended in over-populated classrooms, they are less likely to support continued schooling.

High student-teacher ratios could be a demotivating factor for students as well, as they may feel unsupported by teachers. This could be commonly experienced in conflict-affected settings, where there is a shortage of schools, classrooms, and/or teachers, not to mention insufficient teaching and learning resources (Mendenhall et al., 2015). In Burmese refugee camps in Thailand, Oh and van der Stouwe (2008) found that schools had no infrastructure—not enough classrooms. Students were often crammed into classrooms with hundreds of classmates. The teacher-student ratio could be as high as 1:150 or more, with few female

teachers to serve as ‘role models’ for girls (Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017; Mendenhall et al., 2015).

Availability of school or distance to school is also important in many cases, affecting children’s decisions to stay in or drop out of school. In rural areas, lack of schools in the neighborhood may contribute to school dropout (Siddhu, 2011). The farther the children live from school, the more likely they will drop out from school (Abuya et al., 2013; Colclough et al., 2000; Tansel, 2002). In refugee camps and informal tented settlements, the long distance to school is particularly sensitive to girls and children with physical disabilities, as they may be exposed to violence and threats, which is a concern for parents and caretakers (Burde & Linden, 2009, 2013; Kirk, 2009). In Afghanistan, Burde and Linden’s (2013) study found a sharp decrease in girls’ attendance based on distance; for every mile increase in distance to/from school, the attendance decreased by 19 percentage points. Due to sexual assaults and abductions, they found parents were unwilling to send their daughters to schools. Similarly, distance to school is a key obstacle for children with physical disabilities (Filmer, 2005).

In some cases, lack of ‘quality education’—which encompasses competent and well-trained teachers, participatory and meaningful learning processes, and culturally-relevant curriculum—could contribute to school dropout (Inter-agency Network for Education Emergencies [INEE], 2010). Without access to quality education, some families may decide to suspend schooling for their children (Al-Hroub, 2014; Dryden-Peterson, 2010). Among myriad challenges, the most commonly discussed barriers in the literature were the relevance of curriculum, language of instruction, and teaching practices (Dryden-Peterson, 2015; McBrien, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2015; Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008).

Language barriers also pose a huge challenge for many displaced populations (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Learning in a language(s) that is not their mother tongue may have negative consequences not only for academic performance but also for relationships with peers and teachers. For instance, Congolese refugees in Uganda, Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Karen refugees on the Thai-Burmese border, and Somali and South Sudanese refugees in Kenya must learn new languages to follow the curriculum of the host country, as well as to communicate with teachers and peers (Buckner et al., 2017; Dryden-Peterson, 2006, 2015; Mendenhall et al., 2015; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008; Shuayb, 2014). As a vast majority of them have no language support, refugee children are placed in lower-level classes due to lack of proficiency in the host country's language (Dryden-Peterson, 2015).

Furthermore, children and youth in exile often learn curricula that emphasize the history, geography, and culture of the host country. While, in a few cases, teachers adapt the curriculum to make the content more relevant to children's experiences and backgrounds, most teachers often 'stick to' the curriculum (Bellino & Dryden-Peterson, 2014). In her survey of 404 Palestinian refugees enrolled in five secondary schools in Lebanon, Shuayb (2014) found that Palestinian refugee students experienced a 'forced' inclusion, having to learn the Lebanese curriculum. Textbooks, especially civics and social studies textbooks, did not recognize or even address the rights of refugees and were heavily focused on Lebanese nationalism. She further argued that irrelevant curriculum, coupled with rigid instruction and rote learning, may reduce students' motivation and enjoyment of learning, thereby impacting their performance and persistence (Shuayb, 2014).

Despite the significance of quality education, there are limited studies on educational content and languages of instruction, and their influences on children and youth's schooling in

exile (Burde et al., 2017; Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Nicolai & Hine, 2015). Most existing studies address issues pertaining to access (e.g., enrollment) rather than educational content and practices. Very few studies have closely examined different aspects of quality education that interact to influence enrollment, attendance, and performance of children in conflict-affected settings (Mendenhall et al., 2015). Therefore, more empirical research must be done to explore how quality of education (e.g., pedagogy, curriculum, and language of instruction) contributes to school persistence and dropout in exile.

Schooling experiences. Scholars have also argued that children’s schooling experiences—both academic and social—determine school persistence or dropout. Academically, low achievement, failure in exams, and grade repetition all increase the risk of dropout (Dumas et al., 2004; Kane, 2004; Zuilkowski et al., 2016). When students perform poorly at school, they not only feel disheartened and humiliated, but they develop negative feelings toward school (Zuilkowski et al., 2016). In a longitudinal mixed-methods study with fifth graders (2,666 in randomized control trial and 41 in interviews) in rural Kenya, Zuilkowski et al. (2016) found that students’ risk of dropout mainly begins with poor performance in school. They argued that low achievement in exams is “translated into disengagement from school, peers, and teachers, and subsequently led youth to activities that put them at risk for dropout such as chronic absenteeism, paid work, and sexual relationships” (p. 106). Other issues closely associated with underperformance are lack of quality teaching and grade repetition.

In the same study, Zuilkowski et al. (2016) also stressed the perceived relationships with teachers and peers that can contribute to school persistence or dropout. Harsh disciplinary practices (e.g., corporal punishment, verbal abuse, humiliation, etc.) and discriminatory

practices by teachers affect children's decision to quit schooling (Hunt, 2008; Kirk & Winthrop, 2007; Zuilkowski et al., 2016). Discriminatory policies and practices against specific groups of refugees—ethnic, linguistic, and/or religious minorities, and married/pregnant girls—could also deter schooling (Lewin, 2009; Lloyd et al., 2005). Although corporal punishment is banned in many countries including Kenya, some teachers are reported to practice it as a form of discipline 'to correct the wrong' (Mendenhall et al., 2020).

Being physically abused, verbally harassed, and humiliated by teachers, students may decide to give up on education (Abuya et al., 2013; Zuilkowski et al., 2016). In South Africa, Ananga (2011) found that discriminatory practices at school prompted girls to drop out of school. In particular, married and pregnant girls faced pressures to drop out of school (Hunt, 2008). In many developing countries, girls were susceptible to discrimination and gender-based violence by teachers and/or peers (Dunne et al., 2006; Leach, 2003; Leach & Humphrey, 2007).

On the other hand, many studies have found that pedagogical caring (warmth, affection, and support) is perceived by students as a crucial factor in their active engagement, motivation, and achievement in school (Furrer et al., 2014). While important for all children, it is particularly significant for children and youth in displaced contexts, especially unaccompanied minors. Without parents or guardians, these students' attachment figures could be a teacher who replaces the role of caregiver (Kirk & Winthrop, 2007; Mendenhall, 2017; Winthrop & Kirk, 2005). For instance, in interviews with 21 Somali refugees who completed secondary school in Daddab Refugee Camp in Kenya, Dryden-Peterson et al. (2017) found that students' relationships with teachers was one of the key resources in supporting school persistence of refugees.

Steinberg et al. (1992) stressed the role of peers as “*the most potent influence* on their day-to-day behaviors in school (e.g., how much time they spend on homework, if they enjoy coming to school each day, and how they behave in the classroom)” (p. 727, emphasis added). Hymel et al. (1996), in their study on school withdrawal, proposed four distinct ways in which peers influence one’s school-going behaviors: prior social acceptance and rejection, social isolation versus involvement, the negative influence of peers, and aggression and antisocial behavior—all of which academically and socially affect students’ drop out (pp. 320-332). Moreover, studies have found that peer influence is particularly critical during adolescence, as it is a period when students value peer acceptance (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Goodenow & Grady, 1993).

While positive peer relationships may help students pursue schooling, discrimination, stereotypes, and bullying from peers are considered major barriers to schooling (Abuya et al., 2013; Zuilkowski & Betancourt, 2014). Being ‘laughed at [and] mocked’ by peers is reported to be most upsetting for youth in Sierra Leone, which may cause dropout (Zuilkowski et al., 2016). When children feel rejected and bullied in school, they may suspend schooling. On the other hand, perceived social and emotional support from peers, in the form of warmth, trust, and respect, is positively associated with one’s decision to stay in school (DuBois et al., 1992; Wentzel, 1998). Therefore, issues such as physical and verbal abuse, discrimination, xenophobia, stigmatization, and bullying negatively influence children and youth’s schooling, since such experiences harm not only their academic performance but also their physical, psychological, and social well-being (Mendenhall et al., 2017; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008).

In conflict-affected contexts, Winthrop and Kirk (2008) argued that children and youth place value on ‘social learning’ (e.g., learning social norms and values) and social interactions

fostered by schools. Their study confirmed the existing literature on how supportive relationships at schools foster school performance and persistence in displacement (Fortin et al., 2013; Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004; Furrer & Skinner, 2003). All of these studies showed how school-level factors—school characteristics and experiences/relationships—could either preclude or promote education for children and youth in displacement contexts.

Community Characteristics

Another small body of literature has demonstrated that communities and their cultural and religious practices contribute to children and youth’s schooling (Abuya et al., 2013; Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990). Cultural practices and expectations in patriarchal societies often discourage women from engaging in education and employment, and encourage them to get married early (Smits & Huisman, 2013). In Guinea and Ethiopia, Colclough et al. (2000) found that cultural practices favor men but impede the school attendance of girls in both contexts. Girls were encouraged to stay at home with mothers so as to ‘prepare’ well for the traditionally expected roles of a wife: cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and taking care of children. In some countries, strict religious practices could also prevent parents from sending their daughters to ‘secular’ schools, especially to co-educational institutions, to avoid any contact with male peers or teachers (Al Samarrai & Peasgood, 1998; Birdsall et al., 2005; Siddhu, 2011).

According to some scholars, institutions outside school (e.g., church, sports activities) play an important role in fostering students’ academic engagement and achievement (Barrett, 2010; Wilkinson et al., 2017). These scholars examined how refugee and migrant populations are academically motivated by church groups or sports clubs existing in the community—which was their social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973). In Australia, Wilkinson et al.

(2017) conducted in-depth, ethnographic case studies of eight Sudanese refugee youth and their interaction with their environment. Through this ethnographic work with refugee children (aged 12-17) attending Australian secondary schools, they found that students' engagement with church and youth groups worked as a "form of pedagogic work that can shape refugee youth's habitus in ways that predispose them to educational engagement. Thus, it can provide an alternative trajectory to cycles of disadvantage" (p. 217).

Especially for children profoundly affected by their exposure to violence, support from the community is considered a key protective factor in their resilience or overall well-being (Werner, 2013). Suffering from traumatic experiences, including violence and loss of the beloved, "youth in these regions are likely to have smaller social networks and reduced levels of social support" (Hill & Langholtz, 2003, as cited in Zuilkowski & Betancourt, 2014, p. 461). In a longitudinal, mixed-methods study with 339 war-affected youth in Sierra Leone, Zuilkowski and Betancourt (2014) found that greater perceived social support is positively associated with school persistence, lowering the risk of school dropout. As such, communities can work as a supportive network for conflict-affected children that elevate their motivation to stay in school.

While there is a burgeoning literature on student persistence and dropout, the focus has been heavily centered on non-crisis contexts. Only a limited number of empirical studies have investigated the persistence and dropout of students in displacement. While countries and development agencies produce reports with statistics showing the enrollment, completion, and dropout, there is dearth of empirical studies on school persistence and dropout of refugee children and youth. Also, less is known are the profiles of who is in or out of school. Thus, my

dissertation research took a comprehensive approach to explore the different factors that interact to influence refugee children's school persistence and dropout in displacement.

Conceptual Framework

In seeking to understand children's schooling experiences in camp settings, I drew from Dryden-Peterson et al.'s (2017) refugees' ecological systems framework, which was grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory, to create my own conceptual framework for this study. In his ecological model of human development, Bronfenbrenner postulated that individuals operate within nested systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

The microsystem refers to "a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations" with family members, peers, and teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1992, p. 227). The mesosystem comprises interrelationships between one's microsystems; for children, it involves relationships with family, school, and community. The exosystem involves institutions and practices that affect the individual; for children, this refers to circumstances over which they have no control such as parental occupation. The macrosystem encompasses norms, values, and beliefs espoused by children's society and culture. The chronosystem is historical and environmental transitions and time (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017, p. 1017). Bronfenbrenner argued that all of these ecological systems must be examined to understand the growth of an individual child. Adapting this ecological model, Dryden-Peterson et al. (2017) further explained how refugee children's ecological systems may be transformed to encompass different characteristics compared to those in stable settings.

Uprooted from all that is familiar, most conflict-affected individuals experience disruptions in their entire ecosystem. Boothby (2008) called this "an ecological shock of

destabilization” (p. 502). During conflict, many children and youth become separated—temporarily or permanently—from family member(s), peers, teachers, and community members. As a result, their microsystems largely transform in displacement. Those living in camp settings may establish new relationships with other camp residents—those who are from their country of origin and/or other countries. Moreover, most children and youth in displacement are schooled in unfamiliar educational systems. This involves studying with curriculum and languages of instruction that are foreign to them (meso-systems). Similarly, their exosystems change, as they are subject to the institutions and policies of their host country. Refugees must abide by national and local policies regarding not only education but also employment and even movement. While they struggle to maintain their own belief systems even in exile, refugees are also influenced by the social and cultural norms of the host country. This causes changes in their macrosystems. Displacement in general affects the displaced populations’ chronosystem, as all of them experience transition of environment, especially the policy shifts (e.g. changes in refugee/education policies in the host country) over time (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017, pp. 1016-1019).

Recognizing the important role that conflict and displacement play in shifting one’s ecological systems, I adapted Dryden-Peterson et al.’s (2017) refugees’ ecological systems framework to create my conceptual framework, with particular focus on factors at the individual, family, and school levels (see Figure 2).

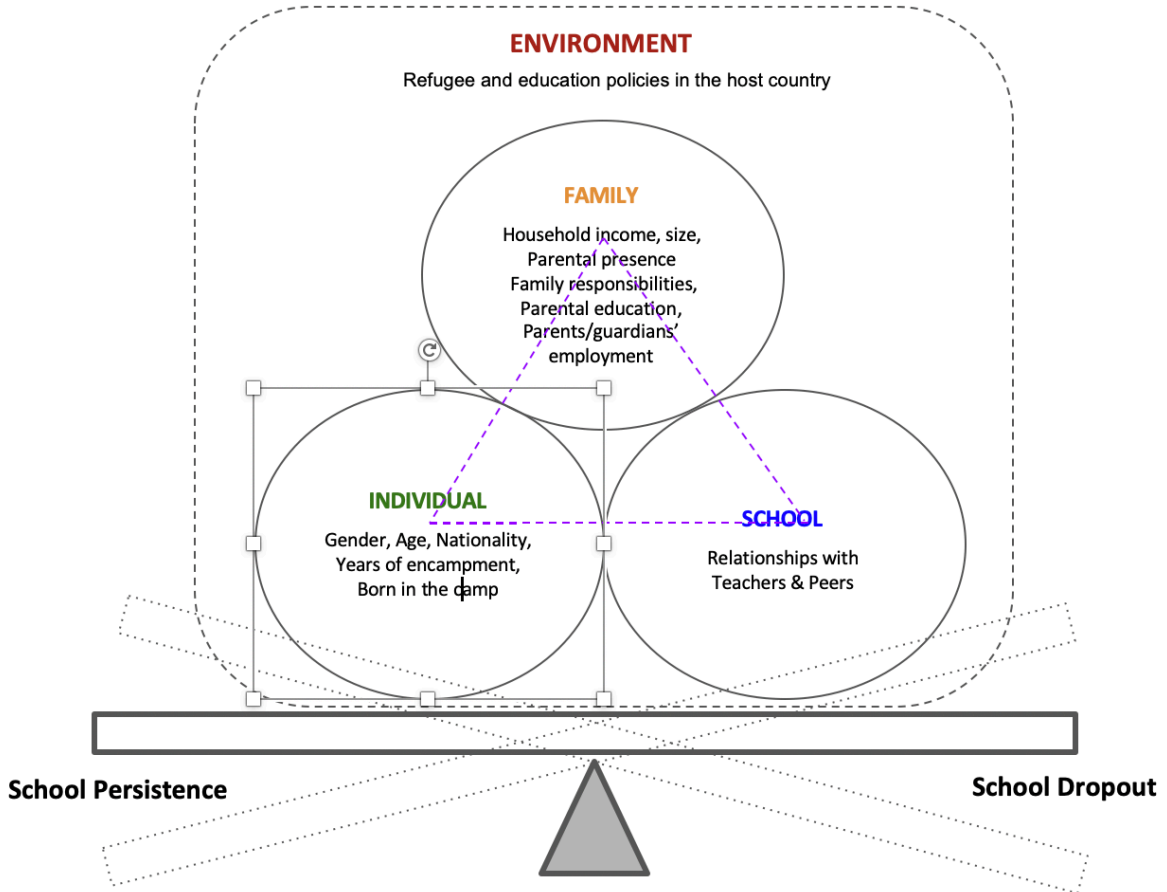
The three circles in the middle—and the dotted triangle lines—illustrate the dynamic interrelationships among individual child or youth’s characteristics, families, and school. The individual-level factors include gender, age, nationality, years of encampment, and birthplace (born in camp or elsewhere). The family-level factors include household income,

size/members, parental presence, family responsibilities, parental education, and parents/guardians' employment. The school-level factors mainly include relationships with teachers and peers, whether positive or negative. I also included the larger environmental factors (e.g. refugee and education policies) that could influence the schooling of children and youth. Consistent with existing literature, these factors could interact with one another to affect refugee children's schooling experiences, resulting in either school persistence or dropout (Hunt, 2008). The two dotted crossed rectangles indicate the seesaw effect by which these factors could eventually lead to either school persistence or dropout.

Using this analytical framework, I examined the individual, family, and school-level factors that either promoted or hindered school persistence in Kakuma Refugee Camp. While I acknowledge the influential role of macro-level factors (e.g. national and local policies) in children and youth's schooling in the camp, this study is primarily centered on the factors at the micro levels. While the policy influences in school persistence and dropout are beyond the scope of this paper, I include some of the policy implications in Chapter IX, Discussion and Conclusion. In each findings chapter, I discuss the extent to which these factors were associated with primary school persistence and dropout in the camp (Chapter VI. School Dropout; Chapter VII. School Persistence). Moreover, I present the revised conceptual framework (Chapter IX. Discussion and Conclusion), aiming to fill the substantial gap in the literature on the issue of school persistence for conflict-affected and displaced populations. Furthermore, this could also prove relevant and meaningful for examining the educational experiences of other mobile and marginalized children and youth in non-conflict settings.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework on Different Factors That Contribute to Children and Youth's School Persistence or Dropout in Exile



Chapter IV. DATA AND METHODS

Research Design and Methods

I used an integrated sequential mixed-methods research design in this study, combining qualitative and quantitative methods into a single study to examine school persistence and dropout experiences in Kakuma Refugee Camp (Creswell, 2014). The rationale for using a mixed-methods design was that it allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This study was also designed to involve participants especially at the exploratory phase (Phase 1. Focus Group Discussions) in which children and youths were consulted in an effort to help me fully “understand the detailed nuances of the problem [dropout/persistence]” and to incorporate their perspectives in data collection tools (Creswell & Clark, 2018, p. 11).

Table 1

Overview of Data Collection

Data Sources	Description of Data	Quantity	Location
Phase 1. Focus Group Discussions (late February/mid-March, 2019)	Focus groups using participative ranking methodology (PRM) with both in-school and out-of-school children and youth	4 in-school FGDs 3 out-of-school FGDs A total of 7 focus groups (with 33 participants)	Youth centers; community centers; villages/houses; and primary school classrooms
Phase 2. Surveys (late-March/early May, 2019)	Student surveys focused on demographic backgrounds of students	685 out-of-school participants 729 in-school participants	Communities/villages; primary school classrooms
Phase 3. Individual Interviews (early May-late June, 2019)	In-depth interviews with in-school and out-of-school participants (teachers and stakeholders)	33 in-school participants 43 out-of-school participants 15 teachers/staff	Youth centers; community centers; villages/houses; and primary school classrooms

Through triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, which complement one another, I compared and contrasted the results, strengthening the analysis and interpretation (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Data collection took place in three phases, using three different methods over the course of six months, to generate both context-rich qualitative data and generalizable quantitative data (Creswell, 2014). Detailed descriptions of the sequence, methods, and sampling are provided below.

Phase 1. Focus Group Discussions

During the first phase, I conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) with children and youth to explore the major reasons that contributed to their school persistence and dropout. In particular, I employed participative ranking methodology (PRM) in which “a group of knowledgeable participants are guided in generating responses to specific questions” (Ager et al., 2010, p. 1). This methodology acknowledges children and youth’s capacity to express their perspectives on an issue relevant to them (Stark et al., 2009, p. 6). Recognizing the importance of adapting tools to be culturally relevant in data collection, I chose this methodology in the exploratory phase to elicit culturally-relevant indicators from children and youth to include in the next phase.

For both in-school and out-of-school children and youth, I used both convenience sampling and purposive sampling to recruit children and youth of diverse backgrounds (e.g., gender, nationality, age, etc.). For in-school children and youth, I recruited those enrolled in Standard 8. For out-of-school children, I recruited children and youth aged between 10 and older who dropped out of primary school. Acknowledging the limitations in identifying out-of-school children and youth, I also used snowball sampling, whereby I sought advice from community mobilizers, NGO staff, and former teachers, all of whom helped me locate the

areas in the camp with a higher density of out-of-school populations and recruit out-of-school children and youth. I conducted a total of seven focus groups (N = 33)—four FGDs with in-school and three FGDs with out-of-school children and youth. Based on the pilot study, I recognized that gender of the members in FGDs could influence the group dynamics; thus, I facilitated all-girls and all-boys FGDs separately.

All of the in-school focus groups were conducted in empty school classrooms without the presence of others (teachers or classmates). For FGDs with out-of-school participants, I met with students in youth centers or a quiet space in the community. As some of the out-of-school children and youth felt more comfortable expressing their opinions in their mother tongue, I was supported by two research assistants (RAs) (female, male) who spoke Kiswahili, Arabic, and Dinka to help translate participants’ answers. The female RA supported the all-girls FGDs, while the male RA assisted with the all-boys FGDs. See Table 2 below for an overview of FGD participants.

Table 2

Overview of Focus Group Discussions (Phase 1; N = 33)

	Label	Number of Participants	Gender	Nationality	Language	Location
1	In-school	5	All Girls	Mixed	English	School 1
2	In-school	6	All Boys	Mixed	English	School 1
3	In-school	6	All Boys	Mixed	English	School 2
4	In-school	5	All Girls	Mixed	English	School 3
5	Out-of-school	4	All Girls	Mixed	English, Kiswahili	Youth Center
6	Out-of-school	3	All Boys	South Sudanese Only	Kiswahili	Youth Center
7	Out-of-school	4	All Girls	Mixed	Kiswahili	Community

Phase 2. Student Surveys

Based on the preliminary analysis from the FGDs with students (Phase 1), I designed and distributed two survey instruments—one for in-school and one for out-of-school children (see Appendices B and C for Surveys). To ensure that the instrument was relevant to the context, I consulted five colleagues (four male and one female) I met through teacher training and previous research activities), all of whom either completed their own schooling at the primary level in the camp or had experienced teaching in the camp. After they completed the survey, we came together for group cognitive interviews, whereby the participants who took the survey shared any confusion (e.g., unfamiliar words) they experienced while taking the survey that needed further clarification. After consultations with these colleagues, I made minor modifications to some of the items to make them more contextually-relevant and appropriate to the children and youth in the camp.

I used convenience sampling to select two schools per camp (Kakuma I-IV; See Appendix D for a detailed layout map of Kakuma). . Given the large size of one of the camps, I selected one additional school for Kakuma I. A total of nine schools were selected for the study. In each school, students in one out of two or three classes (hereafter ‘streams’) in Standard 8 received the surveys during the long break (11:00-11:45 a.m.) or in the afternoon (2:00-3:00 p.m.). Upon obtaining permission from the head teacher, the class teacher, or the subject teacher, I visited classrooms where I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the study, the survey instrument, and the assent form (which was attached to the beginning of the survey). I emphasized that their participation was voluntary, and that whoever wished to opt out would not have any consequences. Students were allowed to leave the classroom for the break or stay in the classroom and not submit the survey.

The survey form was available in both English and Kiswahili, the languages of instruction for primary education in Kenya. Almost all students chose the English version, while some asked for the Kiswahili version to better understand the questions. Moreover, students who selected the English version were also allowed to answer the open-ended questions in Kiswahili. Each school had about 56 to 116 students who participated in the survey; some schools had students who were not present during the school visit due to different reasons, as further elaborated in the limitations section. A total of 729 children and youth from nine schools participated in the survey.

For out-of-school children and youth, I used purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants across four camps in Kakuma (see Appendix D). Initially, I planned to recruit children and youth aged 10-18 for out-of-school participants; however, after a few rounds of discussions with community mobilizers and participants, I decided to expand the age range to include anyone aged 19 and above, who dropped out of school before the completion of primary education (Standard 8). With support from community mobilizers, who helped me to obtain permissions from the ‘zone leaders and block leaders’ in each camp, and to identify the location of out-of-school children and youth. We visited blocks and zones across four camps (Kakuma I-IV) and recruited participants who were not registered in school as of April/May 2019. Some of the out-of-school children and youth did not feel comfortable filling out the form in English or Kiswahili. For them, community mobilizers who spoke the same language translated and wrote down the answers on behalf of the participants (details about this role provided below). For both in-school and out-of-school surveys, participants are asked to write their names and residences to select and locate some of them for follow-up interviews. Their

actual names were only used in this process, and I used pseudonyms for data analysis, write-up, and presentation to protect the identities of the participants.

Table 3

Overview of Student Surveys (Phase 2; N = 1,414)

Participants	Location	Schools or Zones ¹	Quantity
In-school children and youth registered in Standard 8 (ages 10 to 45)	Kakuma I	Schools 5, 6, & 9	135
	Kakuma II	Schools 3 & 4	195
	Kakuma III	Schools 1 & 7	158
	Kakuma IV	Schools 2 & 8	133
		School 1	69
		School 2	71
		School 3	104
		School 4	91
		School 5	60
		School 6	56
		School 7	89
		School 8	116
		School 9	73
Out-of-school children and youth ² (aged 10-45)	Kakuma I	Zones 1-4	315
	Kakuma II	Zones 1-2	109
	Kakuma III	Zones 1-4	194
	Kakuma IV	Zones 1-3	61

¹ Note: The selection of schools and camp (zones) took place during the first two weeks of fieldwork upon consultation with organizations, teachers, and community members (mobilizers). The distribution of surveys reflected the number of blocks and the number of households in each zone, information that was made available by the UNHCR Sub-Office in Kakuma.

² Note: Originally, the age range was 10-18; however, it was expanded to include older students (aged 19 and above) who dropped out of school and did not complete primary education after the focus group discussions with students and consultations from community members and teachers.

Before the data collection, I led two orientation meetings with 16 community mobilizers to explain the purpose of the study, go through the data collection tools (survey), discuss the ethical considerations in conducting research with children and youth, and to sign the confidentiality agreement form. While all of them had experiences working with NGOs in the camp as community mobilizers and had received different types of training, I facilitated a mini-workshop to ensure that the community mobilizers understood the importance of respect for the children and youth participating in the study as well as their rights as participants to

continue or withdraw from the study. A total of 685 out-of-school children and youth participated in the study. Slightly less than half of the participants came from Kakuma I, which is the largest in size. See Table 3 for more details on the survey. Specific details of the demographics of both in-school and out-of-school participants are discussed in the findings section.

Phase 3. Individual Student Interviews

The semi-structured interviews mainly focused on questions about children and youth's schooling experiences, particularly the reasons that contributed to their school persistence or dropout. The interview protocol consisted of 10 descriptive interview questions for both in-school and out-of-school children and youth (Spradley, 1979) (see Appendices F and G for Interview Protocols). Among those who took the survey, I purposely selected 80 participants (based on gender, age, and nationality) and invited 40 in-school and 40 out-of-school children and youth for follow-up interviews. Taking a constructivist paradigm (inductive approach), I sought to understand children and youth's views about the complex process of school persistence and dropout (Maxwell, 2013).

When selecting participants, I considered their age, gender, nationality, and status (unaccompanied or not) to ensure that diverse voices were represented. While I provided the class teachers or head teachers with the names of students I wished to speak to and the date of the interview, some of them were not available. A total of 33 in-school students participated in the interview. Similarly, out-of-school youth and participants were notified of the date and location of the interview through the community mobilizers, and 46 of them showed up for the individual interviews (see Appendix H for a complete list of interview participants; pseudonyms are used throughout the study to protect the identities of the participants). For in-

school participants, each interview took place either in an empty classroom or in the school compound. For out-of-school participants, the interviews took place in a quiet room in the youth centers. The interviews with both in-school and out-of-school children and youth lasted about 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the need for translation.

Additional interviews with teachers and I/NGO staff. After the interviews with children and youth, I recruited and interviewed teachers in the camp (N = 10) and International NGO and Local NGO staff (N = 5) to gain a deeper understanding of the children and youth's schooling experiences and their decisions to drop out of school. The questions both probed the key education stakeholders' perspectives on children and youth's school persistence and dropout, and allowed me to triangulate their perceptions with those of children and youth (Maxwell, 2013). See Table 4 below for an overview of interview participants—in-school and out-of-school children and youth, the teachers, and the I/NGO staff. For a complete list of participants and their demographic backgrounds, see Appendix G for Teacher Interview Protocol.

While I obtained verbal assents from all of the participants, I had the parental informed consent form waived by the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the following reasons: Based on the pilot study, I found that: 1) given their status fleeing from their country of origin, refugees often may not feel comfortable writing their name or signature in a paper; 2) many children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp lived with guardians (e.g. stepparents, neighbors, relatives or foster parents) who may not be very supportive; and 3) the head of households often *under-reported* the number of children who are out-of-school, which resulted in difficulties in accurately portraying the situation in the camp (UNHCR, 2014). Therefore, getting consent forms from parents or guardians would make it extremely difficult

to collect data. Following the Federal regulations and guidelines 46.16 General requirements for informed consent, I ensured that “(1) the research involves no more than minimal risk to the subjects; (2) the waiver...will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects; and (3) the research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver.”

Table 4

Overview of Individual Interviews (N = 94)

Participants	Quantity	Duration	Location
In-school students	33	30-60 minutes	Classrooms or School Compound
Out-of-school children	46	30-60 minutes	Youth Centers or Village (Under the Tree)
Teachers and I/NGO staff	15	30 minutes	Staff room

Variables

The survey items were heavily informed by the FGD in Phase 1, where I elicited culturally relevant indicators. Table 5 shows a set of constructs I included based on the literature and FGD with the children and youth. The dependent variable LABEL represented the in-school and out-of-school youth in Kakuma. If a student was registered in a primary school (Standard 8), the dependent variable was coded as 0. If a student dropped out of school and was not enrolled at the time of the survey (March-June 2019), the dependent variable was coded as 1.

Independent variables in the analysis were categorized into three groups: individual characteristics, family characteristics, and school experiences. **Individual variables** mainly included demographic information such as gender, age, nationality, and year of arrival (hereafter “encampment years”) in Kakuma. **Family-related variables** included items on the number of household members, the family composition (living with a parent or not), head of

the household, firstborn or not, level of mother’s education, level of father’s education, parental employment status (employed or not), and home responsibilities (number of hours doing chores daily).

Table 5

List of Variables Included in the Analysis and Their Metrics

Categories	Independent Variables	Metrics
Individual Characteristics	<p>Gender</p> <p>Age Age category</p> <p>Nationality</p> <p>Encampment years Born in the camp</p>	<p>1 = Female; 0 = Male</p> <p>Continuous variable 1 = Ages 10-13; 2 = Ages 14-16; 3 = Ages 17-19; 4 = Ages 20-25; 5 = Ages 26 and above</p> <p>1 = South Sudanese 2 = Sudanese 3 = Somali 4 = Congolese 5 = Other Nationalities (Burundian, Rwanda, Ugandan, Tanzania, Kenyan, etc.)</p> <p>Continuous variable 1 = Yes; 0 = No</p>
Family Characteristics	<p>Number of household members</p> <p>Number of hours doing household chores</p> <p>Live with parent(s)</p> <p>Head of household</p> <p>Firstborn child</p> <p>Parental education background (Mothers and fathers separately)</p> <p>Parental Employment Status</p>	<p>Continuous variable</p> <p>Continuous variable 1 = Yes; 0 = No</p> <p>1 = Yes; 0 = No</p> <p>1 = Yes; 0 = No</p> <p>1 = No Education 2 = Primary Education 3 = Secondary or Higher Education 4 = Vocational Training</p> <p>1 = Yes; 0 = No</p>
School Characteristics	<p>School location (by camp)</p>	<p>1 = Kakuma I 2 = Kakuma II 3 = Kakuma III 4 = Kakuma IV</p>

Data Analysis and Interpretation

For the qualitative data analysis, I transcribed all the interviews. For the interviews conducted in languages other than English, two research assistants supported the transcriptions and translations. After a round of quality control of transcriptions, during which I listened to the audio recordings and compared them with transcriptions and field notes, I coded the data using a standardized coding protocol developed through an iterative process of defining and refining codes (Miles et al., 2014). In-vivo and open coding were used to capture emerging themes and patterns in the data (Saldaña, 2015). Then, all open codes were consolidated into a codebook. An open codebook was developed with code categories or “family codes” such as background, general life in the camp, and reasons for school persistence or dropout (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) (see Appendix I for the list of codes generated for both in-school and out-of-school participants). For the second round of coding, I used NVivo, a qualitative coding software to code the interviews. Throughout the data analysis process, I wrote thematic memos to support my analysis.

As part of this sequential mixed-methods design, I analyzed data collected in each phase to inform the next phase. For instance, I did a preliminary analysis of focus group discussions and came up with a list of ‘most commonly mentioned’ answers from the participants to include in the survey, particularly on the question “What were the major reasons for your school persistence/dropout?”

For the quantitative data analysis, I conducted descriptive statistics—t-tests, chi-squared tests for independence—using the statistical software Stata to examine both the profiles of the participants (demographic characteristics) and their reasons for school persistence or dropout. Moreover, I also conducted a binary logistic regression analysis to

examine the odds of dropout for students in Kakuma Refugee Camp. The final interpretation and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data were done simultaneously upon completion of the fieldwork.

Validity and Reliability

To address the validity and reliability of the mixed-methods research, I employed different strategies to address potential issues in collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell & Clark, 2011). I followed Creswell and Clark's (2011) strategy to draw on both quantitative and qualitative samples from the same population to make data comparable. In particular, all, if not most, of the participants in focus groups (Phase 1) took the survey (Phase 2). Moreover, I asked the same questions in all of the data collection phases (e.g., focus groups, surveys, and interviews) to minimize validity threats (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 240). During the data analysis process, I maintained validity through triangulation of multiple data sources to answer the research questions. In the findings chapter, I jointly display statistical results with key quotes/themes from qualitative data.

Furthermore, some issues on internal validity were addressed through my pilot study. During my study in January 2018, I piloted surveys with 764 primary students enrolled in Kakuma Refugee Camp. Data collection instruments in the present study were informed by this pilot study that measured constructs on academic motivation of primary school students in refugee camps, which is relevant to this study. The pilot study helped me to address some issues of internal reliability.

Before the distribution of the survey, I sought assistance from two refugee students in the camp who carefully reviewed the pilot study questionnaire to point out any confusing words or statements, all of which were modified for distribution. Moreover, five research

assistants and 20 community mobilizers supported the data collection and initial data analysis; their insights/perspectives of the survey instruments were helpful in designing contextually relevant research tools, as is further discussed in the following sections on researcher positionality and limitations.

Researcher Positionality

In conducting this research, I resonated with Milner's (2007) claim that researchers must take enough time to reflect on their racial and cultural introspection before, during, and after conducting research. Hence, rather than attempting to pretend that subjectivities can be avoided, I tried to recognize my own ideologies, beliefs, epistemologies, and practices throughout the dissertation project, from research design to data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and write-up (Milner, 2007; Peshkin, 1988). Some of the self-reflection questions suggested by Milner helped me to reflect on my racial and cultural backgrounds throughout the research: "What do I believe about culture and people in crisis-affected settings, and how do I attend to my own convictions and beliefs about those issues in my research?"

Born in South Korea and raised in the Philippines, France, and the United States, I believe the lines between space, diverse cultures, race/ethnicity, languages, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds have also been a part of my lived experience. Specifically, my experiences and reflections regarding similarities and differences across cultures were an invitation to explore and discover the complexities of human identity, motivation, persistence, and sense of belonging, all of which have spawned and shaped my research activities in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

For the past few years, I traveled to Kakuma Refugee Camp several times for teacher training and research activities. Through these opportunities, I was able to form relationships

with teachers, some of whom became my research assistants. The pre-existing network built with the I/NGO staff in the camp also helped me to identify and recruit community mobilizers who supported my study.

Despite several visits to the camp, I always reminded myself that I was an ‘outsider’ who had limited knowledge of the context and people. Regardless of my efforts to take *boda bodas* (a term used to describe a motorcycle in Kiswahili) to schools (instead of taking a UN vehicle with a huge blue logo on it), meet children and youth in communities, and enjoy lunch at an Ethiopian restaurant in the camp—all of which were attempts to build rapport with the participants—I was a researcher full of assumptions and biases. All of my questions, reactions, frustrations, “discomforts,” and (un)learning throughout the research were recorded in my research journals (McWilliam et al., 2008; Milner, 2007; Peshkin, 1988). Indeed, self-reflexive exercises enabled me not only to question my biases, assumptions, and expectations in my work but also to be aware of the privilege, and even the unseen superiority rooted in my identity, as a non-refugee researcher (Block et al., 2013; Reagan, 2002).

Acknowledging my identity and limitation as a non-refugee (‘*mzungu*’ or foreign) researcher, I aimed at taking a bottom-up, emic approach using the words of the participants as the starting point in every phase, discussing ‘with’ the participants about the inequities and opportunities in education rather than imposing my ideas, values, and research objectives or evaluating specific issues from my points of view (Siddle Walker, 1999). In doing so, I worked closely with five research assistants from the local community and 20 community mobilizers, all of whom were ‘refugees’ who have resided in the camp for over a decade or two; some of them were born, raised, and educated in the camp.

Through the active involvement of these local experts in data collection and analysis, I was able not only to design data collection instruments that were culturally appropriate and relevant but also overcome some of the difficult circumstances (e.g., weather conditions, unexpected protests, language and cultural differences/barriers, etc.) in conducting fieldwork. It was all thanks to the support received from friends and colleagues in Kakuma that I had the ‘privilege’ to listen to the voices of children and youth in Kakuma—their stories of losses and gains, failures and successes, and hopelessness and aspirations—which was the main purpose of this study.

Limitations

This research is one of the first empirical studies to examine school dropout and persistence in Kakuma Refugee Camp, and as such, it has several limitations. In this section, I address some of the major challenges I encountered with participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis, all of which should be fully recognized and addressed for future research.

First of all, recruiting out-of-school participants as well as following up with them in the camp were challenging. Some of the boys and girls felt shy, embarrassed, or uncomfortable sharing their experiences (perhaps due to the social stigma attached to ‘dropouts’). Moreover, due to their myriad responsibilities at home (e.g., domestic work), some participants were not able to participate. In such cases, it was difficult to follow up with them because they did not have mobile phones or other means of communications. Therefore, the number of participants for the FGD with out-of-school children and youth totaled 11 (as compared to 22 in-school participants), and the majority of them were girls who were from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan, and Sudan.

For in-school participants, it was easier to locate them since most of the data collection took place at schools (during the break time or after class dismissal time). For survey participants, however, not everyone in Standard 8 classes was able to take the survey, as some of them went to collect monthly rations (food and firewood), especially those who were heads of household or who lived alone. While I tried to recognize the absences and avoid visiting schools during the first two weeks of the month, some participants unavoidably were excluded from the study. I addressed this issue by recruiting students from diverse backgrounds (gender, nationality/ethnicity, age, marital status, household composition, etc.) for individual interviews to ensure that their voices were included in the study. However, this point should be carefully considered in the future when scheduling school visits/data collection.

Furthermore, language was also an issue in data collection. I found that while the participative ranking methodology (PRM) used for the FGDs worked well with in-school participants in generating the list of reasons for school persistence/dropout, it was challenging to adopt the same methodology with out-of-school participants, given the varying levels of literacy among participants. To avoid embarrassment among group members, I had to revise the methodology and make it a verbal conversation rather than a written exercise. I had one research assistant translate and write down participants' answers during the focus groups. This activity made me to consider an alternative approach in working with out-of-school children and youth, one of which could be the use of drawings/paintings.

In all phases of data collection, participants were given options to choose a language (English, Kiswahili, mother tongue, etc.), especially during interviews and focus group discussions. For the survey, I had prepared two versions—one in English and one in Kiswahili. Again, considering the literacy level of the out-of-school participants, I hired five research

assistants (five male, one female) to support my communication with participants. While I acknowledged some of the disadvantages of using a translator, the existence of whom could potentially influence the participants' answers, I had to rely on them to communicate.

I decided to recruit translators of the same gender and national/ethnic background for the data collection, especially those who were older than the participants and worked as incentive workers in the camp. In some cases, where the female translator was unavailable, the male translator had to join the interviews with female participants upon their consent. At first, I tried to recruit 'young' translators (e.g., same gender, age, nationality/ethnicity) who could support the interviews. However, this proved unfeasible not only because it was hard to identify and recruit potential translators with this profile, but also because I learned through the pilot study that this could be considered even more uncomfortable for the out-of-school participants. Some of them used to be in the same class/level, and it was 'painful' or 'embarrassing' to see their peers proceed to the next grade level while they dropped out of school. Thus, I had to change the strategy and had to recruit research assistants/translators. Despite the multiple rounds of orientations, I acknowledge that (in)visible power dynamics may have existed between the community mobilizers and research assistants (e.g. gender, age, position in the community, etc.), all of which may have influenced the conversations.

In-school students were also asked to select their preferred language for interviews. While some of them chose English, I found that not everyone was comfortable with expressing their ideas. However, I respected their choice and conducted interviews in English; as a result, some interviews were shorter than others with translators.

One of the biggest limitations of this study was the retrospective nature of the study, especially for out-of-school participants. In focus groups, surveys, and interviews, I asked

participants to reflect on their previous schooling experiences. I agree with Drezner and Pizmony-Levy's (2020) argument that:

Retrospection, where we rely on respondents' memory about the past, is a common limitation within survey research. When dealing with events that happened in the past, respondents may not adequately remember their own emotions or motivations [or their experiences]; in some cases, respondents' memory of such events may have evolved with time (p. 21; also see Groves et al., 2011; Smith, 1984).

To avoid this issue, I would like to conduct longitudinal research in the future to follow a cohort of students (Standard 1 through Standard 8), and track their progress, completion, and transition to secondary education in order to fully capture their experiences of schooling and the processes of dropout in real-time in refugee camps.

Chapter V. INTRODUCTION TO THE FINDINGS

As a result of political insecurity, conflict, and persecution, children and youth from neighboring countries in East Africa sought refuge in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Some arrived as early as 1992 when the conflict erupted in Sudan, while others are recent arrivals. Whether the purpose of coming to Kakuma was for survival, for education, or for other reasons, they faced similar opportunities and challenges upon arrival and settlement in the camp. Besides peace, participants showed appreciation for the provision of food, shelter, health facilities, and, most importantly, free education in the camp, all of which were not widely available in their countries of origin.

This chapter introduces the profiles of the children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp, both in school and out of school. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to better understand the backgrounds of children and youth in Kakuma. First, I provide the demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, nationality, years of encampment, born in the camp) and family characteristics (size of the household, head of the household, living with a parent, firstborn child, parental education, and parental employment status). I also present the stories of these children and youth—their lived experiences in the camp. In this chapter, I present the two samples (in-school and out-of-school) separately, as the contrast and comparison between these two populations will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter IX (Discussion and Conclusion). While different images of camp life are portrayed in the literature as well as the media, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce the profiles of children and youth, and to share their stories as they described their own lived experiences in the camp, including both the challenges and opportunities.

Out-of-school Children and Youth: Profiles

Among 685 out-of-school children and youth surveyed, 53.4% were female and 46.6% were male. While this was a sample of out-of-school participants—recruited through snowball sampling—across four camps in Kakuma, the percentage is consistent with the existing data; a UNHCR household survey conducted in 2014 reported that there was a higher proportion of out-of-school girls than boys by 14 percentage points (UNHCR, 2014). The average age of these out-of-school children and youth was 18.7 years ($SD = 3.5$), ranging from 10 to 29 years old.

More than half of the out-of-school children and youth were from South Sudan (50%), followed by those from Somalia (22.5%), DRC (12.6%), Sudan (7.9%), Ethiopia (2.6%), and other neighboring countries (4.5%). This is reflective of the overall refugee population in Kakuma as of 2019 (UNHCR, 2020a). Most of these youth were born in their countries of origin, and less than 10% were born in Kakuma. The average number of years of encampment for the out-of-school children and youth was 8 years ($SD = 5.42$). Slightly less than half of them arrived in Kakuma over the past five years, with the highest number between 2012 and 2014.

On average, out-of-school children and youth reported that they lived with about seven family members in the camp ($SD = 3.7$). About 56% of these youth lived with at least one parent—either biological or stepparent. Given that many lost their fathers or stepfathers in the war, more than half lived with a mother or a stepmother (51.5%), as compared to 16.9% who lived with a father or a stepfather. Over 82.2% of them lived with a head of household in the camp, whether a parent, a guardian, a sibling, or a friend. The rest of them (17.8%) answered that they acted as the head of household who were responsible to take care of the family. While

the information on the exact birth order (the order a child is born in the family) was difficult to gather, 30.2% noted that they were the firstborn child in the family. Among out-of-school children and youth, less than one-fifth of them were married (18.0%), as compared to 78.7% who were single. Only 3.4% identified themselves as either divorced or widowed. About one-fifth of them noted that they lived with their own child(ren) (19.7%).

Out-of-school children and youth also provided information on their parents' education, whether they had graduated from primary or higher level of education, or had 'no education at all,' which meant that the parents could not either access any level or type of education at all or did not graduate from primary school. About 78.4% of the mothers did not receive education, followed by those who completed primary education (13.4%), secondary education (6.6%), or other types of vocational training (1.6%). The percentages were similar for the father's educational level: 74.5% answered that their fathers had no educational background, 11.7% had primary education, and less than 1% received vocational training. The percentage of fathers with secondary education was twice that of mothers (13.0%). Given the lack of employment opportunities in the camp, 86.0% of the parents of these out-of-school children and youth had no occupation. Only 14.0% had some type of incentive jobs in the camp as teachers, pastors/priests, security guards, and NGO staff, among others.

In-school Children and Youth: Profiles

In-school refugee children and youth had a noticeable difference in terms of gender composition. Among 660 students registered in Standard 8, less than one-third of them were female (28.9%), as compared to 71.1% male peers. In general, female refugee children and youth seemed less likely to reach the last grade of primary education, as compared to their male counterparts (UNHCR, 2014). The average age of students was 18.3 years old ($SD = 2.9$),

and age ranged from 12 to 45 years old. Compared to their Kenyan peers whose average ages were between 10 and 13 years old in Standard 8, only six out of 729 students in Kakuma were in that age range; others were at least three or more years older than their Kenyan peers, primarily due to the several years of interrupted schooling they experienced due to conflict and displacement in their countries of origin.

It is also interesting to note that less than 2% of the students were adults aged 26 and above, some of whom were pursuing education in their 30s and even 40s. Since 2016, schools in Kakuma opened accelerated learning programs to provide overage learners with opportunities to study with an accelerated curriculum. Accelerated learning programs (also known as accelerated education programs [AEPs]) is a “flexible, age-appropriate program run in an accelerated time frame,” which provides the overage, out-of-school children and youth with access to education (Accelerated Education Working Group [AEWG], 2017). During the time of this study, there were only two levels—Level 1 (Standards 1-4) and Level 2 (Standards 5-6) AEP classes offered in some of the schools in Kakuma. Students who completed Level 2 still had to progress to Standard 7, and then to Standard 8 in order to sit for the Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) and obtain a primary education degree, which could explain the presence of overage, adult learners in Standard 8.

Similar to the out-of-school children and youth, the majority of the in-school students came from South Sudan (67.9%), which is the largest refugee population in Kakuma. One-fifth of the in-school population were from Sudan (20.6%), followed by those from DRC (5.4%). A noticeably smaller percentage of students were from Somalia (3.2%), Ethiopia (1.2%), and other neighboring countries (1.8%) in Standard 8. Interestingly, most of the in-school children and youth were born in their country of origin (95.9%) and arrived in Kakuma when they were

younger, as compared to those who were born in the camp (4.1%). On average, they lived in the camp for 6.2 years ($SD = 3.2$).

In-school children and youth also lived with about seven household members in Kakuma ($SD = 4.3$), though less than half of them (47.2%) lived with at least one parent—either a biological or step-parent. The rest lived with either guardians (relatives), siblings, and friends/neighbors, or alone. Less than 20% of the in-school participants claimed to be the head of household; they lived in a household headed by a parent, a sibling, a relative, or others. More than 86.9% of the in-school children and youth were single, as compared to 11.0% who were married. The rest identified themselves as either divorced or widowed (2.2%). Only 3.2% of those who attend school lived with their child(ren).

The majority of in-school children and youth's parents also had limited or no educational experiences. Approximately 70% of students said their mother had no educational background. Among mothers who received education, 15.8% attained primary education, 10% completed secondary or higher education, and only 4% received vocational training in or outside the camp; most of the fathers of in-school children and youth also had limited education (62.6%), with just 10% having obtained a primary education diploma. A higher percentage of fathers received secondary or higher education (about 20%), as compared to the mothers. About 4% of the fathers received vocational training.

Life in Kakuma Refugee Camp

Kakuma means “nowhere” in Swahili. As its name suggests, Kakuma Refugee Camp is located in a dry-arid land often swept by dust storms. With one of the harshest climate conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa, the residents in Kakuma suffer from persistent drought; almost nothing but thorny bushes grow in the region.

While Turkana people keep livestock for a living, refugees mainly rely on foreign aid. Given the limited employment and livelihood opportunities in the camp, most people relied heavily on aid such as food rations, firewood, and *bamba chakula* (food vouchers) provided by humanitarian aid organizations. The food ration refers to a fixed allowance of food that residents in the camp receive (based on family size); it is a form of humanitarian aid distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP). Despite the distribution of such aid, there was often not enough food and supplies to sustain families for the time allotted. Reductions of monthly food rations were also commonly experienced in refugee camps due to shortages of international aid.

“In Tanzania, people farm, but here in Kakuma that is not possible because people depend on ration[s],” said Darifa (age 17, Burundian, male), a Burundian refugee, born and raised in a refugee camp in Tanzania. Darifa; his family came to Kakuma in 2013 when all the refugees in Tanzania were asked to either go back to their country of origin or relocate to other neighboring countries. According to Darifa, the number of food rations has noticeably decreased in recent years. For most refugee families, food rations last somewhere between 18 to 20 days, even if they only eat one to two time(s) per day. “I am struggling because there is not enough food,” said Assad (age 16, Somali, male). Lack of food is mostly affecting a “Size 1 refugee” [‘Size’ refers to family size in Kakuma, and Size 1 means those who live alone]. Deng (age 16, South Sudanese, male), who came to the camp by himself, said “Being a Size 1, the ration I receive from UNHCR is not enough. I always worry what to eat in the evening after school. Life is very tough here [in the camp].”

Water shortages have been one of the most pressing, yet unresolved, issues in the camp since its establishment. Over the years, NGOs have built wells and water taps across four

camps¹ in Kakuma Refugee Camp; however, the water taps are too limited to meet the needs of hundreds of thousands of residents. Making matters worse, water could often be cut for days, or even weeks, unannounced. For an unaccompanied youth like Peter (age 27, South Sudanese, male), one of his major concerns in the camp is water. Without anyone who could fetch water in the morning or during the day, he was always worried that the water would be ‘out’ by the time he was dismissed from school. He said, “We come to school at this time [in the morning] and you go home at four. Maybe you go home and you don’t get water. Now you have to go and look for water. Maybe the water would not come for two or three days. That is a big problem.” The lack of water could be the result of damage in water pipelines; this often requires students to walk long distances—sometimes over an hour—just to get water. For someone like Bashiir (age 17, Somalia, male), he would sometimes miss classes to fetch water, not only for his family but also for other people. “Sometimes, I usually fetch water for people, and they would pay me something. Life is so difficult,” said Bashiir.

Schooling Experiences in the Camp

Despite the poor infrastructure, harsh climate, water shortages and food insecurity, Kakuma still receives newly arrived refugees from neighboring countries. Many of them have come to the camp searching for educational opportunities. Families either voluntarily ‘migrated’ to the camp, or parents would send their offspring to Kakuma alone to pursue education. Lack of schools and/or school tuition fees in their home countries were some of the major reasons behind relocation. For example, Peter (age 27, South Sudanese, male) left his family in Waat, South Sudan, in 2012, and came to Kakuma to pursue education. “I just came here to be educated. My uncle told me that since there’s a war in South Sudan, we can go to

¹ Kakuma is divided into four camps—Kakuma I, Kakuma II, Kakuma III, and Kakuma IV, with Kakuma I being the oldest camp, established in 1992. See Chapter II, Background and Context, and Appendix D for details.

Kakuma [because] maybe it is safe[r].” It took Peter and his cousins, the uncle’s children, about three months to reach Kakuma, where they started school upon arrival in the camp. Similarly, Kareem’s (age 18, Sudanese, male) parents persuaded him to pursue education in Kenya. “My parents told me to go to Kakuma to learn because when I finish school, I will help them. They sold their cattle so that I can get transport [fees] to Kenya,” said Kareem. In January 2018, Kareem arrived in the camp by himself, registered in a school, and started learning in Standard 7.

Just like Kareem and Peter, many children and youth arrive in Kakuma, desiring to be educated. Free tuition in primary schools in the camp is what allured them the most, the major reason behind their migration to the camp. Majok (age 16, South Sudanese, male) claimed he is ‘taking advantage’ of learning for free in the camp. He said, “I come to school every day and work hard because there is no other place where I can get a free education like here. My parents are poor and they cannot afford to pay for my fees. Learning here [for free] is an opportunity.” Some students also appreciated the quality of teachers in the camp, comparing it to education in their home country. Remembering his schooling experience in South Sudan, Atem (age 18, South Sudanese, male) mentioned:

Here, teachers are qualified and they teach us well compared to South Sudan. I am very motivated to learn here because of my teachers. The main opportunity is the good teachers we have. I am always here to gain knowledge from them and learn new things every day.

According to the students, free education or ‘relatively’ better quality education as compared to their home countries is the only means to ‘change life’ or ‘have a good life’ in the future. Aspiring to achieve ‘success’ in life through education, these highly motivated children and youth have experienced and still continue to encounter obstacles to schooling in the camp.

Several participants also complained that the climate in Kakuma is ‘unbearable’ to an extent that affected their schooling; not only the heat and dust, but also the rainy season could be a roadblock for their learning. Achol (age 19, South Sudanese, female) pointed out:

It is always hot and dusty here. Attending classes in the afternoon is unbearable. Sometimes, I lack a uniform and my mother is old. She is not working to earn money to provide the required learning materials. It [is] always a struggle. I always try to balance between school and the work at home getting shoes or even clothes to wear is another challenge.

Other factors that influenced children and youth’s schooling the most were the inability to afford school uniforms, learning materials, and ‘hidden fees’ such as exam fees; these are discussed in detail in the following chapter on school dropout. Besides school-related items, some students pointed out that the lack of food (hunger) and classroom congestion also impeded their concentration and performance. Many students would often go to school without having breakfast; they had to satisfy their hunger with a small cup of porridge distributed at school during the break time. During lunch, some students returned home for a meal. Others, however, often skipped lunch and stayed in school, as they did not have anyone to prepare meals for them. “Sometimes there is no food and we come to school with an empty stomach. Concentration in class becomes a problem,” said Rebecca (age 23, South Sudanese, female).

Overcrowding, according to Assad (age 16, Somali, male), was one of the factors that mainly affected his academic performance. He said, “There are many of us in our school and sitting space is highly congested. All these have negative bearing on our performance. I know our teachers are trying their best [to teach], but they overstretch themselves as well.” In fact, some ‘diligent’ candidates (Standard 8 students) would arrive in school as early as 6 a.m. to reserve the front seats (UNHCR, 2017). In fact, it is not uncommon to see four to five students

squeezed onto one little bench, which is made for two; in extreme cases of overcrowding, some students have to listen to the lecture from outside the classroom window.

The language barrier could also be a concern for newly arrived students, especially for those who were schooled in French or Arabic, or those who did not have access to schools in pre-displacement contexts. In their transition to a new setting, they struggled to learn subjects in English and Kiswahili, the languages of instruction in Kenya. However, despite the languages of instruction not being aligned with their mother tongues, most in-school students explained that they somehow managed to ‘catch up’ successfully with classes and overcome the challenges over time with the help of their peers and teachers.

Unaccompanied children and youth are particularly affected as these students lack psychological or emotional support from parents or family members. Nafisa (age 16, Sudanese, female) expressed her deep solitude in the camp. In 2015, Nafisa lost her father in the war, and she was separated from her biological mother in South Sudan. She ran away to Kakuma with random people she met on the road. “Here in the camp, when I see around, I just feel lonely because [I have] no parent or relative.” At a young age, she taught herself how to survive on her own; although she made new friends in the camp, she feels the emptiness and yearns to return to her home country ‘someday.’

Living with a relative is not uncommon among many families in Kakuma. However, some children and youth reported that they suffered from maltreatment or abuse, whether physical or verbal, or both. Others spoke of discrimination among siblings, mainly between biological and step/non-biological children. Nyaluak (age 17, South Sudanese, female) lived with her aunt, the sister of her mother. Oftentimes, Nyaluak was the only one who was told to stay home and do all the chores. “Sometimes she told me to [be] absent [from] school when

there is difficult work at home. She would say, ‘Today, you don’t go to school and do this one [household chores].’” While the aunt’s own kids, the cousins, attended classes, Nyaluak remained at home to do chores. Besides the discrimination in doing domestic work, what was more upsetting for Nyaluak was the verbal or psychological abuse from her aunt. The aunt cursed not only Nyaluak but also Nyaluak’s mother, which was of great distress to her since she has had traumatic experiences in the past.

Even without an abusive guardian, children and youth frequently mentioned the difficulty balancing study and work, referring to the insurmountable amount of daily household chores at home. Cooking, fetching water, washing the dishes, doing laundry, and cleaning the house were some of the duties that many children and youth were responsible to do. The workload could be overwhelming particularly for those who live alone (unaccompanied), live in a child-headed household, raise a child as a teenage parent, or live as the only female or elder sister at home. As the firstborn female child, Darifa (age 17, Burundian, female) took care of most of the chores at home. “I am the firstborn in our family and it’s like I’m doing everything at home like cooking, fetching water and so on.”

While most of the housework was done by girls, some boys were responsible for collecting food rations or firewood from the distribution center. Sometimes, it could take an entire morning for them to wait in a long line and receive the monthly ration. Every month, usually during the first 2 weeks of the month, they would have to miss classes. “[Every month] I do miss school when I go for ration. After collecting the ration, I came back for afternoon classes.” Someone like Kareem (age 18, Sudanese, male) would come to school during the revision classes in the afternoon, making sure that he caught up with the lessons he missed.

Overall, these responsibilities interrupt students' learning, and many children and youth commented that 'life is hard to be a student here in Kakuma.' Rebecca (age 23, South Sudanese, female) explained, "As a student, you have to balance learning with community problems like domestic issues at home," which is why "There is a lot of work to [do] at home and this leave[s] very little time to study," a sentiment that Ayen also echoed (age 17, South Sudanese, female).

Participants also mentioned returning to their home country or moving to another province in Kenya as one of the difficulties of living as a refugee in the camp. Sickness or death of a family member also interrupted students' learning, especially those who are the eldest in the family, as they had to accompany their family members to the home country or other parts of Kenya for medical treatment. For instance, Rebecca (age 23, South Sudanese, female) had to drop out of school for a while when they were asked to move back and forth to their home country. When her younger brother got measles, Rebecca had to drop out of school so that she could take him to South Sudan for treatment, which was not available in the camp.

Another student, Gatwech (age 20, South Sudanese, male), had to travel to South Sudan when he found out that his father passed away and had to attend the funeral. It took him a few weeks to reach his village in South Sudan due to the poor infrastructure (roads and transportation). After he came back from the funeral, two months had passed; Gatwech missed most of Term 3 in Standard 7 and was not allowed to continue in his class due to his absences. Children and youth reported that the unexpected return to and from the home country or to other parts of Kenya for different reasons, mainly medical issues, could be stressful, as it could interrupt schooling.

Conclusion

Overall, attending school was extremely challenging for the majority of students in Kakuma Refugee Camp. Encountering multiple, overlapping challenges (e.g., lack of basic necessities, coupled with poverty, climate, and other relational issues), children and youth had to ‘fight for education’ every day. Notwithstanding their longing for a brighter and better future, children and youth in the camp grappled with the daily ‘tug of war’ between the push and pull factors of education at individual, family, and school levels. Tired of the everyday struggles, some students dropped out of school—voluntarily or involuntarily, temporarily or permanently—while others still continued to navigate their educational trajectories in exile. The following chapters discuss different factors that influence children and youth’s schooling experiences, the processes and patterns of school dropout and persistence in the camp, and how these young people in the camp understood and responded to these factors.

Chapter VI: SCHOOL DROPOUT AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

*“[If] these people are chasing me every day... why am I forcing myself to come to school?”
- Kanika (age 16, Congolese, female)*

The majority of out-of-school youth (over 96%) were once enrolled as students in primary schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp; only few reported that they never accessed education (3%). This finding confirmed the study conducted by Lloyd et al. (1999) in Kenya, where they found that 96% of 15-19-year-olds have experienced attending primary schools. In this chapter, I discuss some of the major factors that prevented children and youth from continuing education. First, I briefly present trends in primary school dropout (e.g., dropout class by gender), followed by the demographic information of out-of-school children and youth, mainly their individual characteristics and family characteristics. Drawing from the survey data, I present some of the major reasons that contributed to students' dropout in Kakuma. Moreover, I complement the survey data with semi-structured interviews I conducted with out-of-school children and youth to capture their stories of schooling as well as the patterns and processes through which they understood and responded to these circumstances that eventually pushed them out of school.

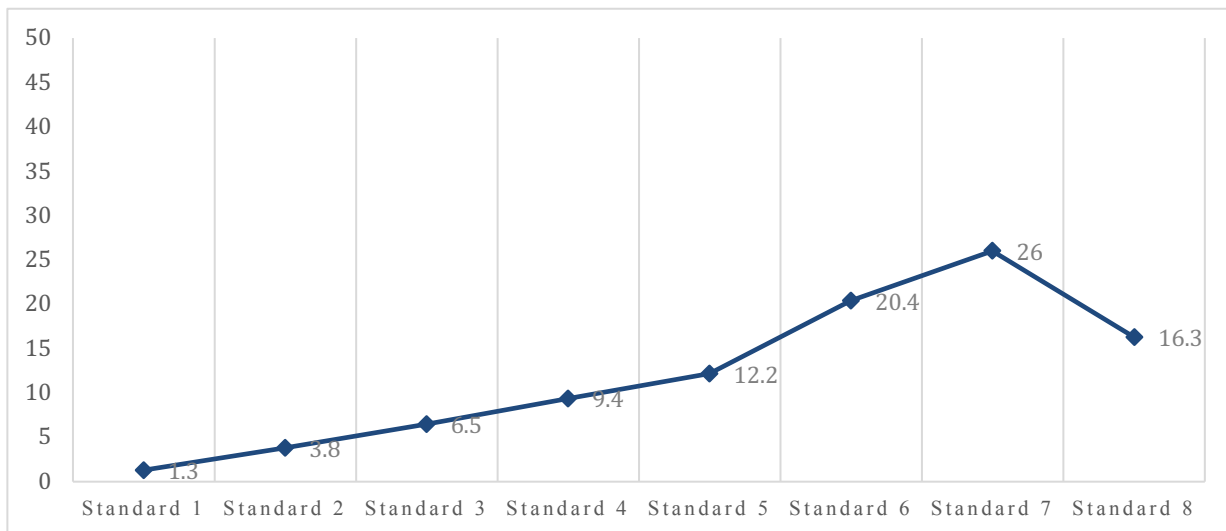
Trends in Primary School Dropout

In general, students in Kakuma increasingly dropped out of school as they proceeded to the upper primary levels. Figure 3 shows the dropout trends in Kakuma based on the survey responses. While the percentage increased steadily by about three percentage points in each grade from Standard 1 through Standard 5, it sharply increased in Standard 6 and peaked in Standard 7. This could be explained by the sociocultural pressure for adolescents to get married

or start working (Banik & Neogi, 2015; Sabates et al., 2013; Tarekegne, 2015). It could also be attributed to difficulty in the subject content, as schools in Kenya mostly begin preparations for national exams starting in Standard 7. The percentage of dropouts decreased when students reached Standard 8, whereby most of them, if not all, were officially registered as ‘candidates’ and/or given the ‘national index’—a confirmation number that allowed people to take the KCPE.

Figure 3

Dropout Trends in Kakuma Refugee Camp (by Standard)

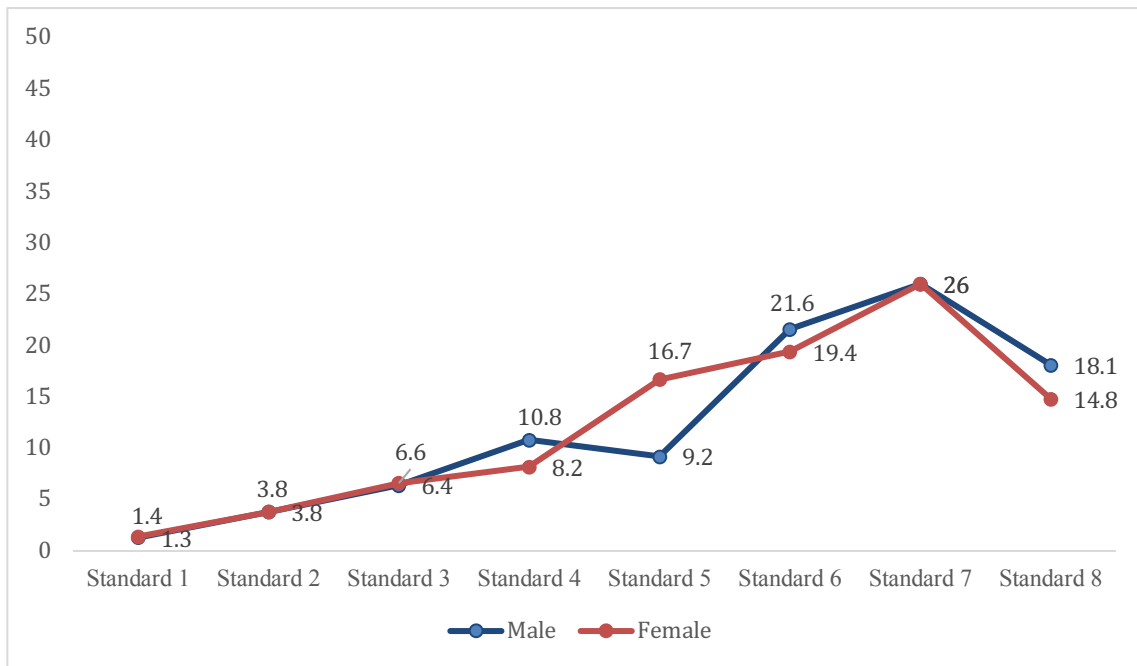


While the graph shows a similar upward trend between boys and girls (Figure 4), the stark difference was at Standard 5—the official beginning of the upper primary level in Kenyan government schools. Almost 17% of female youth reported that they dropped out in Standard 5, which is almost twice as many as their male peers (9.2%). This finding confirmed the existing literature that adolescents, as they become older, face personal and other sociocultural issues, like getting married or being expected to support family that eventually force them to leave schools (Banik & Neogi, 2015; Farid-ul-Hasnain & Krantz, 2011; Sabates

et al., 2013; Tarekegne, 2015). The next section draws on qualitative data, in which children and youth provided specific examples of challenges—responsibilities, burdens, pressures, or specific circumstances—that eventually contributed to their school dropout.

Figure 4

Standard (Grade Level) That Female and Male Students Dropped out of School (%)



Major Reasons for School Dropout

During the focus group discussions (FGD), out-of-school children and youth provided a list of reasons for why they had to leave school. Based on their input, I included a total of 13 statements on the survey (see Table 6), where participants were asked to select *all* of the options that were most relevant to their situations. They were given space, where they could provide any other factors that affected their decision to drop out.

Table 6

List of Reasons That Influenced the Decision to Drop out of School (N = 685)

	Items	Theme
1	I was forced to get married early.	Forced marriage
2	I got pregnant.	Early pregnancy
3	I need to take care of my family members.	Family responsibilities
4	I do not have parents or guardians to support my education.	Living without parents or guardians
5	My parents or guardians do not support me to go to school.	Parental lack of support for education
6	I have difficulty understanding the languages in school.	Language difficulties
7	I have special needs or disabilities.	Special needs
8	I lack school supplies (e.g., exercise books, pens, etc.).	Lack of school supplies
9	I do not have school uniforms.	Lack of school uniforms
10	I did not want to study in school.	Disliked schooling
11	I did not have good relationships with my teacher(s) at school.	Negative relationships with teachers
12	I have been bullied by other students in the school.	Bullying and discrimination
13	My friends persuaded (pressured) me to leave school.	Peer pressure

According to the out-of-school children and youth, their decision to dropout was mainly influenced by factors such as their inability to afford school uniforms and supplies, early pregnancy, lack of support for education (de-prioritization of education), absence of parents or guardians, and family responsibilities. Table 7 presents the total number of participants who selected the statement as well as the percentage. I also included gender distribution to show statistically significant differences, if any, between boys and girls in their answers. The majority of out-of-school children and youth selected the lack of school uniforms and/or school supplies as the major reason behind their dropout from primary schools (63% and 62%, respectively).

Table 7

Top-Ranked Reasons That Contributed to Girls' and Boys' School Dropout in Kakuma
(N = 685)

Rank	Reasons for Dropout	N	Percentage	Male	Female
1	School Uniform*	443	63.4	47.18	52.8
2	School Supplies***	435	62.2	48.7	51.3
3	Early Pregnancy***	162	23.6	1.8	98.2
4	Parental Lack of Support for Education*	158	22.6	49.4	50.6
5	Living without Parents***	144	20.6	64.6	35.4
6	Family Responsibilities***	75	10.7	32.0	68.0
7	Language Difficulty***	64	9.2	57.8	42.2
8	Special Needs***	55	7.9	40.0	60.0
9	Negative Relationship with Teachers	25	3.6	52.0	48.0
10	Bullying and Discrimination*	25	3.6	52.0	48.0
11	Peer Pressure***	15	2.2	73.3	26.7
12	Forced Marriage***	11	1.9	15.4	84.6
13	Disliked Schooling***	6	0.9	66.7	33.3

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

While the result was comparable between male and female students for school uniforms, there was a statistically significant difference between male and female students in terms of school supplies. Girls were more likely to be affected by lack of learning resources, though the effect size was small (ES = 0.05; $p < 0.001$). While this finding was relevant to the literature that underscored gender discrimination in the family on school-related expenditures, both boys and girls reported that they lacked parental support for education (49.4% and 50.6%,

respectively) (Din et al., 2011; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Sabates et al., 2013; Shahidul, 2013; Siddhu, 2011; Smits & Huisman, 2013; Yi et. al., 2012; Zuilkowski et al., 2016).

One fifth of the participants also marked that ‘living without parents’—who either live in child-headed households, or live with guardians or relatives, or live alone—was one of the factors that contributed to their dropout. Among those who selected ‘living without parents,’ the number of boys was twice as large as the number of girls. Family responsibilities was one of the key reasons for girls’ dropout—almost 70% answered that they dropped out of school because of responsibilities, mostly domestic work (Holmes, 2003; Husiman & Smits, 2015; Shahidul, 2013; Siddhu, 2011; Smits & Huisman, 2013).

Interestingly, semi-structured interviews with individual participants discovered that while the majority of them chose school uniforms and stationery as the principal reasons that contributed to dropout, underlying factors were also closely intertwined with these issues, including but not limited to poverty, living without parents or guardians, and family responsibilities. They reported that school practices and policies (e.g., school uniform policy), which was not discussed during FGD, greatly contributed to their school dropout.

Lack of Uniforms and School Supplies

In Kakuma, children and youth wore school uniforms at all levels, ranging from pre-primary to secondary schools. While wearing a uniform was not a requirement, schools demanded that students wear proper school attire. According to the participants, school leaders (hereafter ‘head teachers’) emphasized the importance of school uniforms as a means of identifying students, thereby strengthening school security and ensuring students’ safety in the compound. When Roda (age 15, South Sudanese, female) and her family arrived in the camp, she was registered in Standard 4. In the second week of school, when she was still getting used

to the new environment, her classroom teacher shouted at her, making her leave the classroom for not wearing a school uniform. Roda was embarrassed and shocked. The next day, Roda and her mother visited the principal's (hereafter "head teacher") office. In spite of their earnest pleading, the head teacher was adamant about the 'rule.' "The headmaster said the school uniform is very important [since] that is what they use for the identification of the students. He told my mother, 'If you can buy [uniform] for her, I can allow her to come and study at school. If not, I don't think she can study in this school,'" Roda reflected.

The regulation on school uniforms, which was not formalized but often practiced by head teachers and teachers, gradually became more stringent to the extent that students were either prevented from entering the school compound/gate or were chased away from classrooms and schools when they were caught not wearing a proper school uniform. The practice of a strict school uniform policy interfered with student learning, according to the participants. "Before I used to go to school in a non-uniform [wearing casual clothing]. But for now, they are refusing [to accept] students who do not have uniforms. What the teachers used to tell us is, 'Go home and talk to your parents to buy a uniform for you,'" said Nadia (age 13, South Sudanese, female). Roda, Nadia, and 441 other children and youth in Kakuma reported that they could not afford to buy a school uniform, which cost about 600-800 Kenyan Shillings (equivalent to about 6-8 US dollars). Mainly due to limited work and livelihood opportunities in the camp, families could not support all of their children to buy school uniforms.

When their parents or guardians could not afford to purchase a school uniform, or they valued or prioritized other expenditures over education, children had no choice but to 'stay home' or 'sit in the community,' as they called it. A few parents would find ways to provide a uniform. For Simon (age 13, South Sudanese, male), absence was frequent for him whenever

he had no exercise books to replace the old one. “Whenever I find that my exercise book is full and there’s nowhere to borrow, I only decide to stay home because staying at school without writing is the same as being at home.” If this happened, Simon’s mother would sometimes buy one exercise book from the stationery store and pay it with the *bamba chakula*, which is the food voucher provided by the WFP. According to Simon, it was a huge investment or sacrificial decision by his mother, since the rest of the family had to give up on a few meals. Last term, Simon finally had to leave school because he could no longer ask for more school supplies. Simon considered this decision to be temporary and wished to go back to school in the near future.

When a relative or neighbor graduates, repatriates, or transfers to another school, the uniform is passed down to another ‘lucky one’ in the family or neighborhood. This was the case of Adut (age 14, South Sudanese, female) who lived with her grandmother, aunts, and step-siblings. The family could not afford to purchase a school uniform, exercise books, or bag for her, which prevented her from going to school. “After some time, there was one of my neighbors who graduated from primary [school], so she gave me the uniform. The uniform was torn and I had to go and ask my grandmother to provide me with a needle to fix [repair] the uniform.” Owing to the secondhand uniform she got from her neighbor, Adut was unable to attend school until earlier this year when the uniform became completely torn and irreparable. She said:

During exams, I could not sit for the exam because the teachers told me that I was not in the school uniform while everybody else is. [The teacher said] ‘You have no exercise books. You have no pens and you have no uniforms. So how could you do [take] exams?’ So, they sent me home and I did not do exam [that day] because of that.

Even if absences during the exam period influenced her academic performance, Adut persisted in going to school. One day, when Adut's class teacher found out that she had neither a uniform nor an exercise book, he called the gatekeeper to chase her away from the classroom.

Adut reminisced:

Sometimes, [when] I have no books, I pluck a paper from one of my friends' exercise books, and I place it in the middle of my exercise book which is already filled [used]. So when I was using the paper to pretend that I am doing [writing] something. But the teacher would sometimes walk around and check our exercises. When he finds that I was using a paper to write on, he will tear that paper and call the gatekeeper and tell him to send me away from school.

Adut could not come back to school for a while until one day, she returned and found out that her name was removed from the school system (hereafter 'school register'). "[I discovered that] my name was deleted from the register because they told me, 'How could you be registered if you don't come to school?' Yet they are the ones who sent me home because of the lack of uniform and exercise books." Adut said she was very upset, but there was nothing she could do. No longer a registered student, Adut had to stay at home. Similarly, the school that Roda (age 15, South Sudanese, female) attended in the past required students to either wear a uniform or bring a notebook (hereafter 'exercise book') to be accepted as a student. "If you don't have uniforms but have exercise books, they might forgive you. But if you don't have both, they will send you away from school, which was my case," said Roda. If students did not have both a uniform and exercise books, they were considered 'not ready' to learn or 'not serious,' and sent home.

Without any alternative solution to acquire uniforms, some students would just take the courage to come back to school the next day or the week after—still without the uniform. They would 'sneak into' the classroom and stay silent at the back row or somewhere in the corner. In some cases, students could attend classes for a few days being unnoticed. When caught, they

were reprimanded and sent home; in some instances, teachers practiced caning, pinching, or other means to punish the students who did not wear uniforms. Repeated rebukes and punishments, whether physical or verbal, often discouraged students' motivation to return to school and learn. Karen (age 12, South Sudanese, female), who dropped out of school in Class 2, recollected, "If I have no uniform, and the teacher is sending me away, I feel like I'm not needed [important] in the classroom. So, one day, I just decided to stop coming to school." The sense of belonging is key to a student's academic motivation and performance, yet Karen did not feel accepted or respected in the classroom, which led to her dropout (Cha, 2020).

Some students recalled a time when school uniforms and some of the materials were being supplied by UN agencies and I/NGOs. At a time when UNHCR was distributing uniforms, Amila (age 20, South Sudanese, female) felt relieved; however, she realized that the materials were not enough. "They also gave out two exercise books and one pen per student. We needed eight exercise books [one per subject] in school. So those two exercise books will not help me [enough] to continue with school," said Amila. She eventually had to leave school in Standard 5 because of lack of school supplies. Having been one of the students with the highest grades in class, Amila was frustrated to give up on her studies. She reflected, "I used to do very well [academically]. I was even Number 1 [the top student] in Class 3 and 4. In Class 5, I ranked Number 5. But then when they started the issues of uniform, I had to drop out."

The cost of uniform and exercise books was of serious concern, particularly for those who lived without parents (43.8%) or who were unaccompanied minors (2.6%). Bol James (age 21, South Sudanese, male) came to the camp alone when he was 16 years old. As an unaccompanied minor, he had no one to rely on either financially or emotionally. He lived with

a group of friends he met in Kakuma, all of whom were also unaccompanied youth from the same country. They all registered in a school nearby. He said:

I was always disturbed by things such as lack of school uniforms, books, learning materials, and small contributions that school required (e.g., fees to fix the school fence). Sometimes, I borrow uniforms from friends whenever they are not in school.

Without having any income or family members to support them, Bol James and his friends took turns wearing a pair of uniforms and went to school every other day. This ‘strategy’ lasted for a couple of weeks: increased absences, especially during the exam periods, became a major concern for them, and Bol James eventually had to give up school.

As such, children and youth in Kakuma faced difficulties in purchasing school uniforms or school-related items due to poverty. Every once in a while, UN agencies and I/NGOs would supply schools with boxes of exercise books and pens, or sometimes uniforms. However, students could not depend on the distribution as it was often insufficient, inconsistent, and halted due to lack of funding allocated for education. As a result, lack of school uniforms and school supplies largely affected many children and youth in the camp regarding their attendance, performance, and persistence.

Poverty and Household Characteristics

Besides a lack of school uniforms and supplies, a wide range of interrelated family factors either influenced students’ decisions to drop out or complicated their re-entry into schools. Three family-related characteristics—living without parents or guardians, family responsibilities, and lack of parental support for education and family responsibilities—emerged as particularly salient issues that interfered with schooling.

Living without parents or guardians. Whether their parents died during the conflict, were separated during flight, or were lost due to severe illness in the camp, a majority of out-

of-school children and youth reported that they experienced the death of a parent. Just like Bol James (age 21, South Sudanese, male), over one-fifth of the participants (20.6%) answered that they did not have parents or guardians to support their schooling. Unaccompanied children and youth reported that to balance school with living alone is almost impossible. Benjamin (age 23, Congolese, male) had to drop out of school in Standard 4, as no one could support his education. Both of Benjamin's parents passed away during the war in DRC, and he was separated from his younger brother in displacement. In 2015, Benjamin came to Kakuma alone at the age of 18. Though he made some friends and lived with them, many of them have now repatriated to their home countries or have been resettled to another country.

At first, Benjamin enrolled himself in a school, hoping he could continue with studies.

But life in the camp was 'too challenging' for him to focus on education. He explained:

Sometimes, when you go to school and you come back [home], nobody will prepare lunch for you. Nobody is supporting you. You don't have shoes, uniforms.... I needed to work for myself so that I could meet those needs. Those are the things which made me drop out of school.

Soon after he dropped out, Benjamin found a low-wage job to make a living in the camp. He would wash motorcycles of *boda boda* drivers in his neighborhood. On occasion, he would also be called to work for a shop located in Kakuma town where he would sell solar items.

Benjamin was one of the few participants who marked in the survey that he could not see himself going back to school in the near future since he has to 'survive.'

Kofi (age 22, Ethiopian, male) was an Ethiopian who lived alone in the camp. In 2017, Kofi fled his home country when the government started arresting people, particularly university students who protested against the political leaders. Although he claimed he did not partake in the demonstration or propaganda, he had to run away when the police randomly seized people. Without saying a proper goodbye with his family members, he became

displaced. He still did not know where his parents or siblings lived (at the time of the study) and whether they were alive or not. When he arrived in Kakuma, he enrolled in school. While he was a secondary student in Ethiopia, he was registered in Standard 4 as he did not speak the languages of instruction—English and Kiswahili. Even if classes were difficult to catch up, Kofi enjoyed learning in school. However, living alone in the camp or what he called ‘life situation’ forced him to stop going to school. He said, “I don’t know anyone who can help me here in the camp. I cannot also help myself as I’m going to school. It’s very difficult [to live in the camp] unless you work.”

According to Kofi, he stopped going to school to ‘survive’ and started working as a security guard in a store during the night. Hesitant of completely giving up on education, Kofi enrolled himself in an adult learning program offered by an NGO where he attended English lessons every day from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. before going to work. While he wished to return to school in the future, Kofi was not sure exactly when his plan could be realized, if at all, given his unchanging, harsh situation in the camp.

Gyasi (age16, Ethiopian, male) was also an unaccompanied minor who sought refuge in Kakuma in June 2018. Both his parents were killed in the conflict in his home country, Ethiopia. Gyasi was first displaced to Moyale, a town situated near the border of Ethiopia and Kenya, but relocated to Kakuma a few months later due to the heightened conflict in the area. Since he was under the age of 18, Gyasi registered as a youth under ‘child protection,’ where he was supposed to receive some material support like a mattress, school supplies, and other basic items from one of the NGOs operating in the camp. However, Gyasi had never heard back from anyone. “They [The child protection officers] kept saying, ‘It’s coming. You[r] material is coming.’ It has reached one year already. I’m still waiting for them.” In the

meantime, Gyasi had to move around the camp, begging for a place to stay. While he took the courage to register himself in a school, he eventually had to drop out because of the situation.

Gyasi expressed his frustration, saying:

After I came here, I saw a lot of challenges that I cannot even think or tell...too many in my head. I'm almost becoming crazy because I see the different challenges here in the camp. I don't have family members, someone who can buy clothes. When I see kids going to school, I'm really paining [I feel bad]. I don't have anyone who can buy me bags, exercise books, [and] uniforms. When you come from school, you also need food. I don't have anyone to cook for me. I don't even have a house. There are so many guys in the community who go to school. They have father and mother who support them. Me, I don't have anyone.

Responsibilities at home. Some participants shared that they had to quit school to take on caregiving roles for their younger siblings. Samar (age 18, Sudanese, female) left school in 2017 when her mother died due to an unknown illness. By that time, her younger sister had just turned 1. As the eldest sister, she took the role of the mother to look after her siblings. “Because I was the only elder sister, I had to drop out of school to take care of the other siblings. The other sisters, they are still young and they are in school. I dropped out of school to take care of this child [youngest sibling] because there is no mother, nobody who can take care of her. Up to now, I still stay at home.” Similarly, Hasiba (age 20, Somali, female) also left school when her mother died of sickness. She described:

I stopped going to school because I helped my young sisters and brothers—five of them. I don't have a mother so I needed to help my younger siblings. When the mom died, we suffered a lot. That's the reason why I stopped going. Up to now, I'm not back in school.

Including Samar and Hasiba, about 11% of the participants answered that they dropped out of school because they had to take care of their siblings or other members in the family. Nearly 70% of them were girls, who decided to take on family responsibilities (e.g., doing household chores, taking care of younger siblings, etc.) rather than continuing education (ES = 0.1;

$p < 0.001$). Whether they were the firstborn child or not, girls were often pressured to take care of the sick or elderly family member or younger siblings at home. This was one of the major reasons that drove girls out of school (after early pregnancy and forced marriage).

For some older youth, they had to drop out of school to support family income (Zuilkowski et al., 2014). Nhial (age 22, South Sudanese, male) registered in a school for a few weeks at the beginning of the school year. However, he left school to work in a bicycle repair shop. “I dropped out [of school] and went to do the bicycle repairing. Sometimes, I can collect 20 or 40 [Shillings] so I can buy something. Whatever I get [money], I take home to buy something for the children [nieces and nephews].” Nhial was one of the few participants who anticipated *not* going back to school. As the sole breadwinner of the family, he could not imagine giving up his work for education. Although he felt somewhat frustrated that he had to give up on his studies, Nhial was proud and hopeful that at least his nephews and nieces could continue learning through his support.

Afiyaa (age 22, Ugandan, female) was another out-of-school participant who worked as a housemaid/babysitter to make a living to meet the financial needs of her family. Afiyaa once attended school and reached Term 2 of Standard 8. She was about to complete her primary education when her mother passed away and left her with six younger siblings. All of a sudden, Afiyaa became the head of the household, who was responsible for catering to the needs of her younger brothers and sisters. She could no longer attend school and decided to drop out. In addition to the daily chores at home (e.g., fetching water, cooking, washing dishes, etc.), Afiyaa visited other Somali families in the afternoon where she helped with their housework. With the little money she received from these families, she was able to buy food and other items to support her siblings.

Similar to Afiyaa, most female youth were responsible for doing household chores. With the support from her aunt, Hasiba (age 20, Somali, female) once went to a school in Nairobi. Less than a year after, Hasiba returned to Kakuma. “In 2018, I came back home to Kakuma because of my sisters and brothers. Because they were suffering. They were in a hard situation because no one is helping them at home. They are still young. [When my father called], I didn’t resist. I just came back [to the camp].” Though one of her younger sisters has become somewhat old enough to help with cooking and cleaning, Hasiba was still the one who was in charge of most of the chores at home, which contributed to her dropout. As such, family responsibilities in the form of heavy domestic work could interrupt learning and lead to school dropout (Sabates et al., 2013; Tarekegne, 2015).

At first, these out-of-school children and youth did not anticipate leaving school for a long period of time. Gatwech (age 20, South Sudanese, male) traveled to South Sudan in 2018 to attend his father’s funeral. Originally, he thought it would be a short trip, which took a few months. Gatwech missed most of Term 3 in Standard 7. When he finally came back to Kakuma, he could not return to school anymore because of his absences. Yusra (age 18, Somali, female) comes from a family with 11 children. When she found out that her mom was sick, she had to ‘temporarily’ stop going to school. She spent a few weeks looking after her mother and younger siblings and doing household chores. “[Even] when my mother recovered, I could not go back to school again. I just stayed home because we are a big family.” Although no one forcibly kept her out of school, Yusra felt responsible to help her mother with the household chores.

Early pregnancy and forced marriage. About 24% of the out-of-school participants attributed their dropout to early pregnancy; unsurprisingly, over 98% of them were female

(ES = 0.5; $p < 0.001$). Each participant had their own story about the pregnancy—why and how it happened (how they got pregnant). When the insecurity heightened in Somalia, Aarifa (age 20, Somali, female) and her sister sought refuge in Dadaab Refugee Camp, which is located in the northeastern part of Kenya near Somalia. Back then, Aarifa was only four years old. Aarifa vividly remembered that one day, when she came back from the nursery, her sister said, “You are not going to school tomorrow. We are moving to Kakuma.” In 2009, Aarifa arrived in Kakuma. A few years later, Aarifa was left alone when her sister got resettled to the United States. “She left me alone. When my sister left, I got so confused [about what to do]. And then, I stopped learning.” Shortly after, Aarifa became pregnant while she stayed home; then she married the father of the child who was from the same Somali community. Although Aarifa’s husband encouraged her to go back to school, she has never returned to school because of her young child. “When my child grows up a bit, then I can go back to school,” said Aarifa.

Upon giving birth, some teenage mothers resumed schooling, like Aisha (age 22, Ethiopian, female). Soon after giving birth to her child, Aisha immediately went back to school and left her child with her sister. Despite her earnest desire to learn and complete primary education, she felt sorry for her newborn baby. Aisha recollected:

Whenever I came back from school, I found out that my child was not fed well [by my sister]. That’s what made me worried. I was always concerned about my child whenever I was in school. Even during the exams, I always thought about the child.

When her sister finally decided to repatriate to South Sudan, Aisha’s schooling came to an end. She was close to finishing Standard 7 when she dropped out. During pregnancy, teenage mothers held on to the hope of going back to school. In reality, only very few returned and/or

completed education; for the majority of the girls, ‘temporary’ leave from school often turned into a permanent dropout, with little chance of coming back to school.

Another factor closely intertwined with pregnancy was the practice of early marriage, which was common in the camp. Over 2% of out-of-school participants—85% of whom were girls—reported that forced marriage influenced their decision to leave school. As scholars have pointed out, in developing countries, when boys and girls grew older, they were expected and encouraged, or sometimes even forced, to get married at an early age (Farid-ul-Hasnain & Krantz, 2011). The pressure was particularly strong for adolescent girls, particularly among orphans or those from impoverished families (Abuya et al., 2014; Kadzamira & Rose, 2003; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Sabates et al., 2013). The tradition of receiving dowry, a payment of property or money to the bride’s family, still exists among many tribes in different parts of Africa, and Kakuma was no exception. Hence, marriage is often seen as financially important to some families.

Lisa (age 19, Sudanese, female) lost both of her parents at a young age; since then, she was taken care of by her father’s relatives in Sudan. When she turned 14 years old, her relatives wanted to force her to get married to an older and wealthier man from the same village. Whenever she resisted, the punishment was that she was prohibited from going outside, even to the school. Lisa explained:

My father’s relatives were the ones who wanted me to get married because they see that I don’t have father and mother. When I was in school, my father’s relatives were giving me a hard time. Sometimes I was not allowed to go to school. Whenever they start talking about marriage, I will run away from home. It is just their way of [keeping the] tradition. If a girl became big she is married off, so that they [the family] can get dowry and you are taken [over] by the husband.

Due to persistent pressures, Lisa finally gave in and got married to the man of her relatives’ choice. After marriage and giving birth, however, she ran away to Kakuma alone as she was

not confident that she could spend a lifetime with a man she did not love. Although she missed her family members in the home country, she could not see herself going back to Sudan since she would be forced to live with the man, who had already paid off the dowry to the family.

Another girl, Akong (age 13, South Sudanese, female), became distressed when her parents in South Sudan wanted her to return to the village and marry an old man. Her relatives in Kakuma defended her and encouraged her to stay in the camp and continue her education. “I didn’t want to be like my mother because she is not learned [educated]. I didn’t want to be like her. I also didn’t want to get married to someone who is in the cattle camp or someone who has never stepped into a classroom. I didn’t want that [kind of life].” Akong knew that when she went back to the village, she would never be able to continue learning.

Notwithstanding her parents’ unremitting efforts to take her back, Akong decided to stay in the camp. Instead, she decided to marry her boyfriend. She said she was satisfied with her marriage and life, since she got married to a person she loved. She also planned to return to school when breastfeeding ended, as her husband was also supportive of Akong’s education. Confidently, Akong said, “Now that I have secured my marriage, I will go back to school. I can freely go back to school.” In Kakuma, adolescent girls often get married, not by choice but by force due to unfavorable life conditions, and most married women ended up dropping out of school, especially due to pregnancy and childcare.

Early marriage and pregnancy for girls were also caused by transformations in their sociocultural environment, especially family composition and/or support systems. Owing to resettlement, repatriation, or the illness/death of a family member, especially parents or caregivers, children and youth experienced the loss of their supporters (financial or emotional) and were obliged to stay home and care for family members. During those ‘temporary’ breaks

from school, some of them became pregnant or got married. Lena (age 20, Ugandan, female) and Sarah (age 16, Congolese, female) both shared that they stopped going to school when their fathers started to show symptoms of illness. When Lena's father became sick, she had to miss not only classes but also exams to take care of him. She said, "I remember that it was during the time of exams. I missed exams because I was [supposed] to support my father. I stayed with him at home until he passed away." Originally, Lena's plan was to return to school the next year after the burial. A few months after her father passed away from illness, Lena 'accidentally' got pregnant and gave birth; she never went back to school.

Similarly, Sarah's father was admitted to the hospital for several months before getting an operation. Even after he got discharged, Sarah stayed at home for a while to look after her family members, especially the younger siblings. It was during this time when she 'temporarily' left school that she got pregnant. "I stopped going to school when the father became sick and [was] admitted in the hospital. From then on, I also got pregnant by mistake, and I gave birth [and dropped out of school]," she reflected. From these two cases, it was evident that the death of a loved one and/or the responsibility to take care of family members contributed to a temporary dropout among girls, which then led to an unplanned pregnancy and permanent dropout. Hence, it is important to understand the process and patterns of dropout to better understand what the underlying factors that contribute to dropout are (Hunt, 2008). In Lena's and Sarah's cases, it was first the family illness/death, followed by the responsibilities at home, and then pregnancy (Lloyd et al., 2009; Sabates et al., 2013).

Lack of support from parents or guardians. Even when both parents were alive, most families in Kakuma still lived in extreme poverty, which made it difficult to support children's education. About 22.6% of the participants answered that they lacked support from

parents and guardians, which was one of the reasons for their dropout. Some responded that it was due to financial hardships, which made their parents *unable* to send all of the children to school. Others mentioned that the parents or guardians did not prioritize education and thus were *unwilling* to support education, especially for girls.

While both the Kenyan Immigration Act and Refugee Act support the right to work for refugees, refugees were rarely granted work permits. In Kakuma, only a few job openings were available to refugees. As ‘incentive workers’ (e.g., teachers, I/NGO staff, etc.) refugee workers received very low payments—as low as a tenth of national staff’s salaries. For instance, a refugee teacher who had five years of teaching experience was paid 7,000 Shillings per month, which is equivalent to approximately 70 US dollars. Very few refugees own small and medium-sized businesses in the camp (e.g., traders, vendors, tailors, hair designers, etc.). Sometimes, women would sell *mandazis* (a doughnut-like snack popular in East Africa) on the street, and men would work as *boda boda* (motorcycle) drivers. In general, most residents in Kakuma are unemployed and do not receive any remittances from relatives, which makes them rely on food rations, firewood, and *bamba chakula* (food vouchers) distributed by WFP and UN agencies. Limited work and livelihood opportunities explain why parents were not able to buy school uniforms and supplies for their children, as many of them did not have any source of income.

When asked about the major reason that contributed to his dropout, Matata (age 20, South Sudanese, male) mentioned ‘lack of support.’ As a single parent, Matata’s mother used to sell firewood in the camp. With the little money she earned, she could support Matata and his siblings with basic school needs such as exercise books. “[When] the business failed, she had no way of generating income, any source of income. That’s why we faced difficulties.

Lack of support...that's why I'm out of school," said Matata. In the same vein, Ahmed (age 23, Ethiopian, male) lived with his grandparents and an uncle. He said:

I do not have anyone to support me [with education] because they are all very old. They cannot support me, providing me with uniforms or exercise books. I don't have anyone behind to support me or to push me to study. You know, even my family, they don't have support. They depend only on the ration, which is very difficult.

When the uncle started working in a small shop on his own, he was able to buy Ahmed some basic requirements to start school. Ahmed added:

He [My uncle] bought me three exercise books, and uniforms—a short and a t-shirt. Then I went to school and pushed my school [continued my education]. As I continued, life became difficult. I talked to my uncle [to continue] learning but he told me he has nothing to help me. For that reason, I became hopeless and I decided to drop out.

After dropping out of school, Ahmed started working as a *boda boda* driver: "I drive a motorcycle every day to live [survive]." For both Matata and Ahmed, and many other participants, 'lack of support' meant the parents' or guardians' inability to afford education-related expenses rather than an unwillingness to support education in general.

A few participants did report, however, that their parents or caregivers did not consider education to be a valuable investment, and therefore did not support them with school supplies (Din et al., 2011; Farid-ul-Hasnain & Krantz, 2011; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Korinek & Punpuing, 2012; Sabates et al., 2013; Shahidul, 2013; Siddhu, 2011; Smits & Huisman, 2013; Yi et al., 2012). Instead, girls and boys, especially those from poor families, were often expected to get a job or to help with household chores rather than go to school. In many cases, such family expectations or pressures led to school dropout. For instance, Amila (age 20, South Sudanese, female) lived with her stepmother and her step-siblings. Although the stepmother treated her children equally, the behavior changed when it came to education. She prioritized the education of her six biological children over Amila. She explained:

My stepmother did not discriminate [against] me. When she cooked food, we all ate. But anything to do with buying uniforms, exercise books...anything to do with the school, I wasn't included in the family. I struggled. I didn't know what to do during that time. When I lacked exercise books, I just decided to stay at home.

While her step-siblings were in school, Amila stayed home and helped her stepmother with household chores.

At first, she was hopeful that she would resume schooling after a few months, which did not happen. Having stayed in the community for too long, Amila lost hope of going back. Soon after, she got pregnant with her boyfriend and became a mother of two children. For these reasons, family-related characteristics could contribute to children and youth's decisions to drop out of school. Dropout could happen as a result of family poverty and the inability to support school materials such as uniforms, supplies, or exam fees. In other cases, the death or illness of a family member forces children and youth to stay at home and support family responsibilities. These temporary dropouts could lead to prolonged or permanent school dropout, especially for adolescent girls, who are forced into getting married or experience an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy while staying at home.

School-related Push Factors

Many participants claimed that a wide range of school-level factors were closely associated with their dropout, some of which were school policies and practices and negative relationships with teachers or peers. This section draws mainly from the qualitative data (focus groups and interviews) where participants reflected on their schooling experiences in the past and pointed to the specific factors that pushed them out of school.

School policies and practices. Like many other Sub-Saharan African countries, primary education is 'free' in Kakuma Refugee Camp, which means students do not need to pay tuition fees (Abuya et al., 2013). While children and youth can access education at no cost,

it is ‘not completely free,’ as there are other school-related ‘hidden fees.’ As mentioned in the previous section, the school requirement to have school uniforms and school supplies—which was never an official policy by the overseeing NGO, UNHCR, or the Kenyan government—and the common practice of chasing students away from the classrooms were considered major roadblocks to continuing education. Moreover, some participants mentioned they were asked to pay these extra fees or levies, including but not limited to fees for registration, exams, report cards, fences, cement, and so on. These fees are often illegal or non-mandated, but families are highly pressured to make these ‘small contributions.’

After several months of being out of school, Ahmed’s (age 23, Ethiopian, male) uncle was able to find money to buy three exercise books and a set of uniforms for him. Though inadequate in number, Ahmed was excited to be back in school. However, he encountered another unanticipated issue—the registration fee. “Head master asked us [to pay] 500 Kenyan shillings to register. They asked for a registration fee. Where would I get another 500? Then I lost hope, and went back home. I stayed in the community since then.” In the middle of the term, Miremba (age 22, Ugandan, female) also received an announcement note from the school administration that students were required to make a small donation to the school for reconstruction. “[The school said] each and every child must buy cement. You must come with it. If you don't have [one], you have to eliminate yourself [from the school].” Whenever the school demanded extra fees in the past, a female teacher there would be willing to pay for Miremba and other children.

From Class 1 to 6 [I was able to stay in school] due to this one teacher who was there for us, the vulnerable children. She would buy school requirements [for us]. She came to know more about me when we used to go to her place. That’s when she found out about our personal story.

The teacher was supportive, financially and emotionally, whenever Mirembe was in need. However, when the teacher got pregnant and had to go on maternity leave, Mirembe was left with no one to support her with the school-related fees and had to drop out of school.

Towards the end of a term in Standard 5, Kanika (age 16, Congolese, female) was preparing for the exam when the class teacher called her to the office. The teacher asked Kanika to buy a report card for the exam, which cost about 40 Kenyan Shillings. Since Kanika lived with her mother who was jobless, she could not afford to buy one. She said:

[The teacher asked me], “Where is your report card? If you don’t have a report card, you are not supposed to take the exam. Where are we going to write your marks? You stay outside.” So, I stayed outside near the [classroom door] while my friends were doing the exams. Then it reached a time when I thought, “These people are chasing me every day.... Why am I forcing myself to come to school? Maybe I’ll go back and stay at home. One day, when I get some money to buy a report card, then I will go back and register again.” I finally decided to drop out of school completely.

A missing report card was also the major reason for Aarifa’s (age 20, Somali, female) dropout. One day, the class teacher called Aarifa and said she could no longer locate Aarifa’s report card.

She [the teacher] just told me to buy another one. When the report was missing... you know, the report book is used as a proof that you have finished Classes 1, 2, 3 and 4. So sometimes, they [schools] may refuse you. They will say, “You didn’t pass through these classes.” Because I had no money to replace the report card, I just decided to leave the school.

Even when she could finally afford to buy a new report card, Aarifa thought it was ‘too late’ to go back. According to the participants, hidden, illegal fees interrupted their learning. Without any source of income, even 40 Shillings (less than a dollar) could be unaffordable for many refugee families. These extra fees could be especially burdensome when the family has many school-going children. Reluctant to add additional burdens on the family, many children and youth decide to drop out of school. This finding confirmed the existing literature that children

and youth, especially from poor families, drop out of school because of the hidden costs of schooling (Abuya et al., 2013; Sobic-El-Rayess et al., 2019; Zuilkowski et al., 2017).

In addition to financial (fee-requiring) practices, other policies and practices at the school could also influence students' school-going behaviors. One of them is punishment towards the latecomers. According to the survey, on average, children and youth in Kakuma spend at least five hours doing household chores, some of which are done earlier in the day. Morning duty such as fetching water and preparing breakfast for the family could delay their arrival at school.

As an unaccompanied minor, Ahmed (age 23, Ethiopian, male) took care of everything by himself; for instance, before coming to the school in the morning or during the lunch break, he needed to cook, wash the dishes, and clean the house. At times, this routine made him come late to the school. When he was tardy, he was often not allowed to enter the school gate.

Ahmed described:

I used to come [to school] about 3-5 minutes late. Once it [the school gate] is closed, it is closed forever. They never allow you [to come inside]. You must go back home. Once you miss one subject, forever in your life you cannot get it again. So, it is a really bad punishment to chase away and take us back [home]. We lose that subject, that lesson, which we can never get in our lives.

Although Ahmed admitted that such a school policy about latecomers was initially put in place to discipline students, he was heavily discouraged by the lack of understanding and consideration as well as harsh punishment by teachers.

School policies on academically 'slow' learners or poor performers could also be unrelenting and demotivating. Last term in Standard 6, Joyce (age 20, South Sudanese, female) scored an average of 230 out of 500. She explained that she was slowly recovering from chronic back pain, which mainly affected her academic performance. Her low average grade

was problematized by the head teacher, who not only prevented Joyce from proceeding to the next grade, but also demanded that she transfer to another school. She said, “He [head teacher] is the one who chased me out of school to stop studying. I really felt bad when he said I cannot attend Class 7 with 230 marks. Other schools, they used to allow girls to continue with those marks...so it was very bad for me.” Joyce and her stepmother tried to speak to the headteacher, but he coldly turned down their appeal. According to Joyce, the head teacher used to say that overcrowding was a serious concern in the school. “When you [make] a mistake, you’ll be out [of school]. He will just say ‘get out of my school.’” During the time of the interview in May 2019, Joyce was checking out a few other schools so that she could continue learning.

Strict, uncompromising school policies on absenteeism and school re-entry were huge obstacles for some students. When students are dismissed or suspended, they can miss a few weeks or even months of schooling. Even when they manage to come back to school, absences or removal from the registration can be a barrier to their re-entry. When his mother’s business ‘failed,’ Gatluak (age 19, South Sudanese, male) had to stay home for a few weeks. At the beginning of the next term, Gatluak’s mother encouraged him to go back to school. However, it was ‘too late’ for him to go back to the same class (Standard 7), as it was already the third (and last) term of the school year. The class teacher advised him to repeat Standard 6. Shaking his head strongly, Gatluak said:

I was told by the class teacher that I should go back to Class 6. But because I dropped out in Class 7, the second term, I never wanted to go back to Class 6. That's why I didn't return to school. Though my mom advised me to go back to school, this issue of going back to Class 6 is [unacceptable].

School policies on re-entry are particularly unyielding for Class 7 and 8 (upper primary levels). It is almost impossible for one to register in Standard 8 since all students get registered for the KCPE and receive the index number at the beginning of the school year. Hence,

students who re-enter schools are almost always placed in Standard 7. Unavoidable problems in the camp coupled with rigid policies at school keep a large number of children and youth out of the classroom and discourage their re-entry. Without specific programs designed to welcome and support these returning children and youth, they would never be given ‘second chances’ to access education.

Relationships with teachers. Some participants spoke of the negative interactions they had with their teachers, ranging from indifference to harsh corporal punishment. Benjamin (age 23, Congolese, male) was disappointed by the lack of attention and care he received from his class teacher. He said:

They don’t care. [Whether] you come to school today or you don’t come, they’ll never ask you. Sometimes, I have family issues or problems. Or, sometimes you are sick and you stay out of school for some days. They just continue with the lesson but they’ll never ask for the problem you face. A good teacher will ask you the problem that...makes [you] absent, and you explain the situation to him or her. But they will never ask. They will just punish you and never listen to your problem.

Even when students made noise or fought in classrooms, some teachers simply ignored it.

When a few of her classmates got into a physical fight, Nasrin (age 15, Somali, female) thought the teacher would intervene and stop them, but the teacher never even tried to separate them. Instead, he just walked out of the classroom.

As the literature pointed out, one of the biggest factors that negatively affected teacher-student relationships in Kakuma was the practice of corporal punishment (Din et al., 2011; Mendenhall et al., 2020; Sabates et al., 2013). Even though corporal punishment is illegal in Kenya, harsh disciplinary practices in the form of both physical and verbal punishment are still commonly practiced by teachers in Kakuma. Many teachers use caning, slapping, pinching, and other means to ‘discipline’ students and correct their behaviors. Latecomers and noisemakers are often the target of these sanctions. While some trained teachers take

alternative measures to corporal punishment, such as asking students to clean the toilet, sweep the school compound, or water the plants, many teachers still frequently use physical or verbal abuse. Aarifa (age 20, Somali, female) clearly remembered the day when she came to school late and was “beaten with hands.” If not caned or slapped, “You will be told to kneel down outside [in] the sun. That is the punishment you are given,” said Aarifa.

Some participants also reported that there were times when they were punished as a group and/or for no reason. Ahmed (age 23, Ethiopian, male) and Akong (age 13, South Sudanese, female) both had similar experiences of collective punishment. Akong remembered one teacher in her previous school who would often come to the class and check if anyone was making noise. “If he finds anyone making noise, he will come and cane the whole class. Just because of that one person who made noise, we were all caned.” Similarly, Ahmed’s entire class, boys and girls, was punished when two of the students quarreled and made noise. “When this teacher comes to class, he tells us to lie down—all of us. He beat all of us. Because of these people, he beat all of us.” Although this kind of group punishment may not be the ‘ultimate one reason’ that influenced students’ decision to drop out, it could potentially discourage their academic motivation or engagement. Nasrin (age 16, Somali, female) was one of the students who disliked going to school because of such unfair punishment practices. She said:

He [the teacher] was beating the children for nothing. Whether the children are making noise or not, the teacher will beat the children. I don’t want to be caned for nothing. If I do something wrong, beat me. But if I did nothing wrong, it is bad.

Therefore, harsh disciplinary practices and negligence of teachers were reported to have negatively influenced the schooling of children and youth in the camp.

Quality of teachers: Poor teaching and absenteeism. When asked to discuss some challenges of the previous schooling, some participants described the quality of teachers, referring mainly to their attendance and pedagogical skills. According to Simon (age 13, South Sudanese, male), “The school is good only when the teachers are teaching. There are days when it [school] is bad because we are not taught.” Here, Simon meant that on some days, teachers would not come to class at all, so the students just sat in the classroom and returned home without learning anything. Even though she had innumerable duties at home, Anita (age 19, South Sudanese, female) would attend classes whenever she could. Despite such yearning to learn, teachers seemed to lack commitment and eagerness to teach. She noted:

My experience at [School Name] was not that good because pupils were not taught that well. What I mean by people are not taught well [is that] most teachers don't come to class. Sometimes when they come to class, they can be very rude to us. So, we lose the hope to learn.

Anita would come home, feeling deeply downhearted and questioning the worth of schooling. Another student, Kanika (age 16, Congolese, female), also showed frustrations over teacher absenteeism. “Not all of them used to attend the class. If you have five subjects per day, but you will only be learning three subjects which is not so good,” she said. Whenever teachers did not show up without advanced notice, students were left without any guidance or supervision on how to use the 35 minutes or even longer period in class. Repeated teacher absences affected not only student learning and performance, but also their motivation to come to school.

Eager to transform their lives through education, many participants often longed for ‘serious teaching,’ which was perceived to be lacking in most camp schools. Those few classes that were taught were also not satisfactory. “It [teaching] was really bad. The teacher came to class, wrote on the blackboard and left without explaining the words written there. We just

write it, though we don't understand," said Nasrin (age 16, Somali, female). Teachers in Adut's (age 14, South Sudanese, female) schools were no different. "They just come to class and write on the board and they don't interpret [explain]. Tomorrow, they may come and give a test on what we may not have understood about the content."

Discontented by the lack of quality in teaching, students like Gatwech (age 20, South Sudanese, male) tried to transfer to 'good' schools—with better teachers, higher ranking in academic performance, and so on. "I transferred to [School Name] since I thought teachers were not serious enough in this school. Besides being not friendly, they were not teaching well." In this manner, the poor quality of the teaching force could be one of the critical aspects influencing low academic performance and grade repetition, which could eventually lead to school dropout (Diyu, 2001; Lloyd et al., 2000).

Negative interactions with peers. Schools in Kakuma host students and teachers from diverse tribes and cultures. With an average of over 150 students in one class, fights and conflicts are part of everyday school life. Petty quarrels and squabbles among students were of less concern; however, bullying and discrimination could instigate fistfights and physical altercation, which could influence one's decision to drop out of school (Alika, 2012). In the survey, 25 participants (3.6%) chose discrimination and bullying as their major reasons for dropout. Among those bullied and physically harassed by peers were those who belonged to the minority tribe, and Zina (age 12, Somali, female) was one of them. As she was from a different community in Somalia, her schoolmates often insulted her in the classroom, both physically and verbally.

Learners from bigger clans in Somalia bully me because I come from a small clan. They called (me) dog and all sorts of names. They abused me and I felt bad. I decided to stop going to school. I stopped going to school to avoid fighting and being beaten by

students from bigger clans. They used to take my bags and tear out all the books and exercise in it and destroy them. I stopped going to school in 2011.

After some time, Zina's mother advised her to go back to school and finish primary education. Due to the great discomposure and anxiety, Zina refused. "I resisted. I feared the bullies," she added. Instead, she registered in a *madrassa*, a non-formal, religious institution where children and youth learn about the Islamic culture and Quranic teaching.

While bullying was not the major push factor that made Anita (age 19, South Sudanese, female) drop out of school, she was also affected by her classmates. She said, "Most of them were not very good to me. Most girls were not understanding. They interpret things [that I say] differently and would create some problems between you and your friend." Anita ended up being an outcast and having no friends at school. As much as she wished to resume learning, she would first transfer to another school to avoid her previous classmates.

When Susan (aged 20, South Sudanese, female) was pregnant, she was still learning in school. Her teachers encouraged her to take classes until she gave birth. But the issue was with her classmates, most of whom were not understanding and who made fun of her. "The fellow learners criticized and insulted [me]. Sometimes, they even made a drama [fun] of how big your belly is. They put bags in their stomach [underneath their uniforms] and they would mention your name so you feel very bad." Such maltreatment from classmates disheartened Susan, which made her eventually stop going to school.

In addition to bullying, classroom disputes were also caused by age differences (Flisher et al., 2010; Siddhu, 2011). Besides cultural and ethnic diversity, most classrooms in Kakuma are 'multi-aged.' Due to multiple years of missed schooling, curricular differences, and/or language barriers, overage students may be placed in lower grades, where they learn with younger classmates. Sometimes, this caused tensions between older and younger students.

Both Janvier and Nhial were at least 5 years older than the average classmates. As ‘big brothers’ in the class, they usually took the last rows in the classroom.

Having lost multiple years of schooling in displacement, they strove to study hard, considering that this could be their last chance to pursue education. In an overcrowded classroom, concentrating on classes was not easy; making the matters worse, younger classmates always made noise and distracted the lessons. Nhial (age 22, South Sudanese, male) recollected, “When you go to class, people [pupils] are younger than you and you are older... but I’ll try [learning].” Janvier (age 18, Congolese, male) also claimed that most of his classmates were not willing to learn: “When a teacher comes into class, he or she is teaching only 30 minutes per lesson. During that 30 minutes, most of the children were making noises in classes. The problem was that most of the children were not willing to learn,” Janvier complained.

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, few participants also noted the following factors that influenced their decision to leave school: sickness or disability (physical, mental or learning), language barriers, peer pressure (gang culture in the community), attending religious institutions or activities, and repatriation. Slightly over 9% said they struggled with the language(s) of instruction—Kiswahili and/or English—which are not aligned with their mother tongue. When out-of-school participants were asked about fluency in the languages of instruction, 61% of them reported they were fluent with Kiswahili, as compared to only a quarter of them being comfortable to speak and write in English, which is the main language of instruction for upper primary students in Kenya. About 8% reported that they had to leave school due to lack of support for students with special needs, mainly physical (poor sight or hearing problems) or learning disabilities.

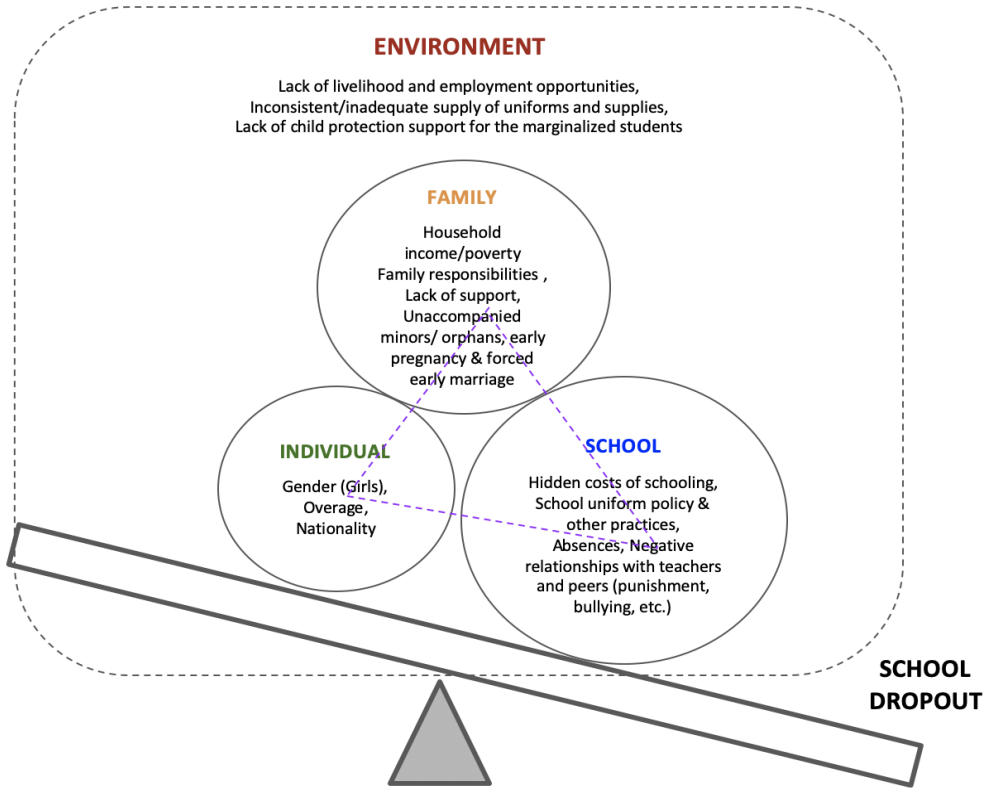
About 2% of the participants chose peer pressure from a friend or neighbor who had already dropped out of school. A majority of those who selected peer pressure were boys (73%). A few older boys admitted that they were persuaded by their friends (who already dropped out of school) to either work and earn money or join the gang in the camp. Some of them would actually be forced into gang culture, which made it hard to come back to school. Less than 1% of the participants chose “I did not want to study” as the reasoning behind their decision to drop out. Most of the participants argued that the dropout happened unwillingly and involuntarily, which made their post-dropout life even more challenging.

Conclusion

According to the out-of-school children and youth, specific factors influenced their decisions to drop out of school. Based on the survey and interview data, I revised the conceptual framework that explained the primary school dropout in Kakuma (Figure 5). Most often, they ‘had to’ leave school by force and not by their own choice. The inability to afford hidden costs of schooling, particularly school uniforms and school supplies, was the overriding reason for school dropout in Kakuma refugee camp. This was also contributed to by some family characteristics such as poverty (caused by lack of livelihood and employment opportunities in the camp), lack of parental figure, family responsibilities, de-prioritization of education, early pregnancy—coupled with strict school policies and practices on school uniforms—that pushed children and youth out of school. Girls and overage children and youth were at the highest risk of dropping out of school.

Figure 5

Factors That Contributed to School Dropout in Kakuma Refugee Camp



When children and youth dropped out of school, they assumed it was a temporary dropout, hoping they could return to school after a few weeks or months. Due to frequent and/or prolonged absences, however, the majority ended up staying at home. As a result, girls were often subjected to early marriage and pregnancy, and boys were pulled into low-wage labor to earn family income (Sabates et al., 2013; Tarekegne, 2015). Despite the majority of out-of-school children and youth's desire to return to school, many of them would often face barriers to school re-entry, especially those who left school at the upper primary level because they were removed from the school register, complicating and discouraging their return to school.

Chapter VII: SCHOOL PERSISTENCE IN IN-SCHOOL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

“Education is the only way to escape being a refugee.”
– Joseph (age 18, Tanzanian, male)

Completing primary education may not be considered a milestone for children and youth in stable or developed contexts, or even in developing countries. However, it could be considered a laudable feat for the refugee children and youth in Kakuma, given the inexorable difficulties they encountered in their daily lives. Similar to the challenges encountered by the out-of-school children and youth in the previous chapter, in-school children and youth shared their experiences of living and schooling in the camp—focusing on both challenges and opportunities for continuing education. This chapter examines the factors that contributed to the school persistence of children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

Drawing on survey data of 685 in-school children and youth and semi-structured interviews with 43 in-school children and youth, I first present the profiles of in-school students and their stories behind what influenced their school persistence. The findings from the survey showed that school persistence is strongly related to children and youth’s aspirations to support their families, communities, and countries in the future. These findings are complemented by individual interviews with the students, which highlight their strong determination to pursue education—despite a whole host of problems encountered in the camp. Their persistence was further driven by the support received from their parents/guardians, siblings, teachers, and peers in the form of financial, emotional, or academic support.

Major Reasons for School Persistence

On the survey, students were given a list of items (derived from FGDs) from which they could select some of the major reasons that contributed to their school persistence (see Table 8). About two-thirds (65%) of the participants selected that they continued education to support their parents or family in the future. There was no statistical significance between gender and their aspiration to support family ($p > 0.05$). Interestingly, almost half (49%) of the participants considered school as a place where they can ‘forget problems’ of the past or present life in the camp. Learning new knowledge or skills was considered another source of motivation for educational pursuit (46.5%), followed by their desire to contribute to the nation-building of their home country (44.5%). When they mentioned supporting the reconstruction of their country, they particularly referred to ‘helping other people in need’ (15.2%), which was another item on the survey. More than a quarter (26.7%) mentioned that through education, they wished to have a good partner (husband or wife). Only 6.3% reported that they came to school to make new friends.

One unexpected finding from this question was that only about 1% of the students chose ‘having a good job’ as the reason for schooling, which was often considered common in other contexts. This could also be explained by the complexities of camp setting, with limited employment in the camp and scholarship opportunities to study outside the camp. In her study of youth aspirations in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Bellino (2018, 2020) discussed how children and youth struggle to pursue education in radical uncertainty. This point on navigating educational trajectories for an ‘unknowable future’ is discussed in Chapter IX (Discussion and Conclusion) (Dryden-Peterson, 2017).

Table 8

Top-ranked Reasons That Contributed to Girls' and Boys' School Persistence in Kakuma (N = 729)

Rank	Reasons for School Persistence	N	Freq
1	To support my parents or family in the future.	383	64.8
2	To forget all of my problems.	290	49.1
3	Because in school, I can learn many different things.	275	46.5
4	To support my country in the future.	263	44.5
5	To have a good partner or family in the future.	158	26.7
6	To help other people in need in the future.	90	15.2
7	Because in school, I can make friends.	37	6.3
8	To have a good job when I finish school.	7	1.2

Relationships with and Support from Family, Teachers, and Peers

Despite being confronted with daunting challenges in the camp, in-school students pointed to the positive relationships with and support from their family members, teachers, and peers that played a significant role in their educational pursuit. Children and youth specified three types of support they received—academic, emotional, and/or material support—and expressed how different surrounding actors attributed to their continued schooling in the camp.

Financial/Material support. Appreciation for the provision of basic needs, including school materials, was frequently mentioned by students. Most often, financial materials were subsidized by parents and guardians. Garang (age 16, South Sudanese, male) and his family escaped to Kakuma in 2014 when the violence reached his village. His father remained in South Sudan, hoping to support the family financially from a distance. A few months after they arrived in Kakuma, however, they lost contact with his father. Since then, Garang's mother has

became the head of the family. Although the life of a widow in the camp is not easy, “she remains strong,” said Garang proudly. He added:

My mother loves me a lot. She struggled to raise the little amount of money to buy food for us and other learning materials. We are very close and [she] keep[s] pushing me to go to school and learn. I have a very good relationship with my mother.

Just like Garang, for many students in the camp, financial support from parents served as ‘proof’ that their parents cared for them. They often associated their love and affection with parents’ provision of school materials. Augustin (age 18, Congolese, male) described his mother as a “very hardworking lady.” With great admiration and respect for his widowed mother, he said:

My mother has been taking care of us single handed without the support of my father [who passed away]. I have a very good relationship with her. I am close to my mother. She is happy with my school [education] and that is what she wants. She provides me with the learning materials.

Similarly, Daniel (age 16, Congolese, male), who also lived with his mother and siblings, described that he was very close to his mother, pointing to how she tried to ‘meet the needs’ of him, especially the school necessities. He said:

My mother is very close to me and she provide[s] for us. Financially, she helps me the way she can. I am obedient to her and we get along well. My mother encourages us to go to school. If you stay home, she will find out why. She helps me buys books, pens, and other learning materials.

In Kakuma, many children and youth have lost their parent(s) in the war. In such cases, relatives, such as an uncle or aunt, often take the role of the guardian. While a few participants mentioned that they experienced neglect from or abuse by guardians—be it a relative or a step-parent—it is not the norm. Many expressed gratitude for their guardian(s), who financially supported their education. Majok (age 18, South Sudanese, male) became an orphan when both of his parents died in the war in Sudan. He lived with his aunt, who was her guardian, and her

children (cousins). Despite the extra burden placed on her to raise nephews and nieces, Majok's aunt did whatever she could to support all of them. He described:

We are very close and she takes care of us in a way that she can. Life is hard but she tries my education. She is not working but she raises money to buy uniforms for her children and us. She struggles to buy learning materials so that we may go to school.

When the parents or guardians did not have jobs, they would sell rations or firewood distributed by the humanitarian agencies to purchase exercise books or pay for school-related fees. Last term, the school demanded that Peter (age 27, South Sudanese, male) pay exam fees, which were 20 Kenyan Shillings. Although it may not be considered a lot of money, Peter hesitated telling his parents, knowing that they could not pay extra fees. When the parents found out, they decided to sell their rice ration in exchange for Peter's midterm exam fees. For Peter, it was a moment to realize how much his parents had cared for him. These examples illustrated how parental sacrifice and support for children and youth's education influenced educational persistence amidst challenging situations in the camp.

In some special circumstances, children and youth received material support from teachers who sometimes provided learning materials, school uniforms, or exam fees to mitigate students missing school or dropping out. When the school enforced the policy that all students should wear uniforms, Aluel (age 18, South Sudanese, female) could not afford to buy one. But then, her class teacher stepped up to support her. Aluel remembered, "He bought for me this uniform when I told him I don't have the uniform." Some teachers would keep stock of exercise books in the staff room so that they could support students whenever needed. Whether these materials were purchased by the teachers themselves or distributed by the NGOs, such support played an important role in keeping students in school. Achol (age 19, South Sudanese, female) and Joseph (age 18, Burundian, male) both had experiences of teachers providing them

with exercise books. Achol said, “When my exercise books are filled up, I can go to him [teacher] and if there are exercise books in the office, he can replace them and give them new ones.” Joseph also mentioned, “When there are exercise books in the office, they distribute them to us.”

Majok (age 16, South Sudanese, male) and Darifa (age 17, Burundian, female) reminisced about the times when their teachers paid their exam fees. “Sometimes, teachers [would] pay money for the local exams since I cannot afford the required amount. They encourage us to come to school every day and learn. Their advice is what keeps most of us going, despite our challenges,” said Majok. Darifa also mentioned that her teachers contributed their own money to buy exams for those who cannot pay for the fees. While school-related fees and policies (e.g., uniforms, exercise books, and exam fees) were noted as the major reason for dropout by out-of-school children and youth, immediate financial support from parents, guardians, and teachers proved to be one of the key factors that prevented these students from dropping out.

Although peers took a small percentage as the major reason for school persistence, some students mentioned that peers shared learning materials that helped them stay in school. Even in an under-resourced environment, students willingly supported one another with materials. Deng (age 16, South Sudanese, male) mentioned that he could easily reach out to their classmates or friends in other classes with the following learning materials—textbooks, pens, or math sets. Deng said, “Whenever I don’t have textbooks, they help me with them. I borrow from them pens or textbooks for my studies at home. I can borrow math sets from them.” Describing that he has a ‘good relationship’ with his peers, Augustin (age 18, Congolese, male) also said, “We share the resources together. I borrow books and pens from

them.” All of these examples showed that although the material support from parents, teachers, and peers may be temporary or one-off provisions, it could possibly influence the children’s education because they feel encouraged to have someone who could readily cater to their needs and support their schooling.

Emotional support. In addition to the supply of basic school requirements, it is the ‘attention’ and ‘care’ that fostered their learning. On a Likert scale of 1 to 5, on average, in-school students who participated in the survey answered that their parents or guardians were supportive of education ($M = 4.1$; $SD = 1.2$) (Din et al., 2011; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Sabates et al., 2013; Shahidul, 2013; Siddhu, 2011; Smits & Huisman, 2013; Yi et al., 2012; Zuilkowski et al., 2016). Besides his aunt who lived with him in the camp, Majok’s (age 16, South Sudanese, male) grandmother back in Sudan called him once in a while, making sure he was still learning in school. She advised him to not give up on education, despite how hard the situation was. He explained, “My grandmother’s advice is what is guiding my determination to learn.”

Similar to Majok, Amer’s (age 16, Sudanese, female) mother always checked in with her. Whenever Amer was caught being at home and not in school, her mother would immediately ask her for the reason. “When I don’t go to school, she asks me, ‘What is wrong? Why are you not going to school?’ She encourages me to go to school. It is only my mother who advises and supports me through that difficult time,” said Amer. Likewise, Andre’s (age 15, Congolese, male) parents ensured that no one in his family missed school. “My parents ensure that we have the required materials to learn. They don’t allow anyone to miss the school for any reason except sickness. They want us to learn and be good people in future.”

When a girl became pregnant, it was common that the parents would urge her to get married to the father of the child and drop out of school. However, it was different for Angelina (age 18, South Sudanese, female). After Angelina had an unplanned pregnancy, her parents remained supportive of her education. They encouraged her to continue learning during pregnancy and resume schooling after giving birth. Her mother offered to take care of the newborn during school hours. She mentioned:

When I got pregnant, my parents decided to care for my baby so that I can go back to school. My mother encouraged me to go to school. She provides for me, my baby and my other siblings with the support from my father back in South Sudan. She looks after us and advises us to stay out of troubles and concentrate on learning. My parents are both in support of my education.

These examples showed that when parents, guardians, and older family members valued education and made it a priority for their children and youth, school persistence was possible, despite the immense challenges—either through parents’ sacrifices to help students gain the materials they needed to learn or through advice and guidance to continue with schooling. Such positive perceptions of and support for education were not clearly explained by the participants, yet many scholars pointed to the level of parental education that could influence such encouraging behavior, as further discussed in the following chapter (Biddlecom et al., 2008; Din et al., 2011; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Lloyd et al., 2009; No et al., 2012; Shahidul, 2013; Siddhu, 2011; Zhao & Glewwe, 2010; Zuilkowski et al., 2016).

Students also highlighted the emotional support received from siblings. As previously noted, many children and youth in Kakuma have lost or been separated from their parent(s) in the war; in these instances, the elder brother or sister often takes up the role of a mother or father. Older brothers and sisters’ sacrifices and encouragement, just like those of parents, have served as a great source of motivation for continuing education. Atong’s (age 19, South

Sudanese, female) elder brother and elder sister acted like her parents, who passed away when she was young. During the interview, over and over Atong mentioned how much she ‘loves’ her siblings, especially her elder brother who was a student at a secondary school in the camp. “We are very close and I love him a lot. He supported my education and always advised me to learn. He always makes sure I don’t miss school. He provides me with [learning] materials and gives me the family love.” Atong’s elder sister also took care of household chores, such as cooking and cleaning. “I love my siblings because they don’t want me to lose focus on my education.”

Another key actor that positively influenced students’ schooling experiences was teachers (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017; Fortin et al., 2013; Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004). Teachers in Kakuma, the majority of whom are refugees themselves and have been educated in the camp, were considered role models by students. Several students recounted remarkable moments or critical incidents when their teachers ‘saved’ them from dropping out of school. Whenever Daniel (age 16, Congolese, male) felt too tired and unmotivated to continue education, his teachers would make time to talk with him outside the class time. “They also advised us and encouraged us not to give up even if conditions are tough. Their advice helps us a lot. They tell us stories of how the[y] struggle themselves to reach where they are. From their stories, we learn that we can overcome challenges and succeed in life.” Another student also spoke of his teachers who persuaded her to never give up on education. “My relationship [with teachers] is good. They normally advise me to work hard in school and tell me about the disadvantages of dropping out from school. They will say that one day if you don’t finish school you will not get a job,” said Fazilah (age 16, Sudanese, female).

Overall, the majority of in-school children and youth reported that having positive interactions with their teachers enabled them to persist in schooling. Some claimed that they had a mutually ‘cooperative’ relationship with their teachers, which was attributable to the obedience or respect they had for teachers. Achol (age 19, South Sudanese, female) confidently said, “I have a good relationship with the teachers. They like me because I have discipline and I work hard. Teachers only don’t like those who fight and are lazy academically. I am not among those notorious students in class.”

While emotional support was important for all students, it played a crucial role in keeping the marginalized students—girls, unaccompanied minors, and students with special needs—in school. Nyaluak (age 17, South Sudanese, female) relied on her teachers more than her stepmother. Whenever she was confronted with some challenges, she would reach out to teachers, especially female teachers, and shared her issues with them. She explained:

If you have problems, you can go and talk to a Madame [female teacher]. If you are a girl, you can go to a *Madame* [a female teacher] and explain the problem to her. She advises you how to handle yourself, how to keep the problem or do this one like that. Because she is like our parents, our mother.

Similarly, Rita (age 16, Ugandan, female) enjoyed talking to most of her teachers, who always encouraged her and offered ‘words of wisdom.’ She said, “A teacher can come in and advise us to work hard. They would say something like, ‘If you read, you can achieve what you want in your life.’”

It is important to note that some students were able to persist with schooling as a result of emotional support received from multiple actors in their family and school environment. While she faced a huge challenge (e.g., early pregnancy) that forced many of her peers to drop out, Angelina (age 18, South Sudanese, female) was able to persist through emotional support she received from her parents at home and her teachers at school. Angelina wanted to stop

going to school when she found out she was pregnant. Although her mother was supportive and adamant that she remains in school, Angelina lost hope because it was hard to keep up with the subjects and take care of her child. However, when her class teacher visited her house, she changed her mind. Angelina emphasized:

I wanted to drop out of school but *Mwalimu* [Teacher Name] encouraged me to continue. He came to our home and had a long talk with me. I changed my mind and came back to school. I had even refused to listen to my mother but *Mwalimu* [the class teacher] convinced me to come back and learn.

Thanks to the support from her mother and her teacher, Angelina became a candidate [for the national exam] and was expected to graduate from primary school at the end of the year. This example illustrated that teachers could act as a cushion and protect girls from dropping out of school through guidance and counseling (Abuya et al., 2012).

Peers also played an important role in uplifting one another in their educational pursuit (Fortin et al., 2013). Whenever Abdul (age 18, Sudanese, male) missed school, his friends would visit him after school. “My friends made me come to school. Whenever I am absent, they come for me in the evening and ask why I miss the class. They advised me to go to school since there is nothing to do at home. That is why I decided to go to school like them and be together with them.” When Monica (age 17, South Sudanese, female) became hopeless and gave up on her studies, her peers made sure that she persisted. “They [my classmates] encouraged me not to give up if I failed the exam and also advised me not to play around but to [be] ready and work hard in school.”

For unaccompanied minors or those living in child-headed households, friends in particular could be more like families. For Augustin (age 18, Congolese, male) who lived alone in the camp, peers assumed the role of a parent, a sibling, or a teacher who would give advice and encouragement whenever needed. With great appreciation for his peers, he said, “They

[peers] give encouragement to continue with school. They give moral [values] to continue working hard. I am really thankful for that.”

Academic support. Besides financial and emotional support, in-school children and youth claimed that the academic assistance they received from their family members (especially older siblings), teachers, and peers supported their education (Chernichovsky, 1985). Some students shared anecdotes of how their older siblings sat with them to help with any assignments. It was common among those who had siblings who were enrolled in or graduated from a secondary school who could provide support. Rita’s (age 16, Ugandan, female) brothers and sisters were always interested in her learning and performance. Whenever there were lessons that she could not fully understand, they would help her review the concepts and formulas. She described:

When [I] go home in the evening, they welcome me and ask what I learned at school. I can tell them and also inform them where I don’t understand during the lesson back in class and they help me to understand that part. They ask if I have a homework and I do, they make sure I have done it first before I do anything else at home.

For Ayen (age 17, South Sudanese, female), it was a daily routine that her brothers, who were enrolled in secondary schools, would check on her academic progress to ensure that their sister was not only ‘in school,’ but also ‘learning.’ She said, “They [my brothers] come back from school and check my progress for the day. They also ask if I am facing any difficulties in some subjects.”

Older siblings not only assisted with academics, but also served as someone to look up to. During the time of the study, Joseph’s (age 18, Burundian, male) eldest sister was in Form 4, equivalent to Grade 12 or the senior year of secondary education. Joseph always looked up to her because she was not only intelligent but also hard-working. He proudly described, “I look up to my elder sister. When she comes back from school, she normally helps me answer

difficult questions.” In fact, students emphasized that their older siblings often served as their role models who were ‘ahead of them,’ paving the way to pursue higher levels of education.

At school, students described that they had ‘good’ teachers who were willing to provide academic support. While the literature pointed to the fact that ‘refugee teachers’ or ‘teachers of refugees’ in the camp are underqualified and untrained (Kirk & Withrop, 2007; Mendenhall, 2017), students used words such as ‘good,’ ‘competent,’ and ‘qualified’ to describe the ability of their teachers. For Majok (age 16, South Sudanese, male), being a student in Kakuma was great because he could continue learning with ‘good’ teachers. He admitted, “Despite challenges, we have opportunity to learn. Teachers are here and they are very good in their lessons. I love coming to school because of the teachers.” Another student, Angelina (age 18, South Sudanese, female), also claimed, “What I like here now is the fact that our teachers are now competent and there are many of them. That is why I come to school every day. I want to get the knowledge from them.”

On average, participants reported that they felt comfortable approaching teachers in and outside of classrooms. As Deng (age 16, South Sudanese, male) noted, “I talk freely with my teachers and they help me out if I have a question that I do not know the answer to. They teach well and they are friendly.” Teachers are considered a major source of knowledge, and students tend to count on them heavily, especially when they have limited reference materials.

Whenever they encountered challenging topics and/or need clarifications, both Assad and Nyabol did not hesitate to visit their teachers in the staff room after the class. “If I have a problem, I go to the teachers and they help me solve the academic question. I borrowed books from a teacher in Class 8. If I fail to understand the lesson, I can approach that teacher later in the office and help me to explain the lesson again one on one,” said Assad (age 16, Somali,

male). Similarly, Nyabol (age 18, South Sudan, female) admitted that she often struggled with her mathematics class. “If I don’t know any subject [content], they make me understand it well. Like in mathematics, they help me with the formulas.” She mentioned one specific teacher who was always willing to support students, especially girls, with their studies so that they would not give up with education.

It is not uncommon to see that students could miss classes during the first two weeks of the month because they had to go and collect rations or firewood. Whenever Andre (age 15, Congolese, male) missed his classes, his teacher would willingly hold individualized sessions to make up for the lessons. “If I miss the lesson, I can go to that teacher and we repeat it together one on one. They encourage us to work hard and pass the exams,” said Andre. While one of the challenges that interfered with children and youth’s schooling was frequent absenteeism or interrupted schooling due to collecting rations or other family issues, students also emphasized that having a supportive teacher could counteract the risk factors that are present for students and contribute to their school persistence (Fortin et al., 2013; Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004).

Furthermore, some participants spoke of the benefits of extra lessons provided by teachers to support their learning. Some teachers would voluntarily organize revision sessions to provide additional support for upper primary students, especially those in Standards 7 and 8. Aamira (age 17, Sudanese, female) said:

On Saturdays, they [teachers] ask us to come to school for additional learning. They tell us not to go home before time [dismissal] and also when lower classes are going home. We should remain behind and revise. Some groups [of students] come back at night to read in school from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.

When asked whose idea it was and whether it was a school policy or not, Aamira added, “It is just an agreement between us and teachers in school.” Another student emphasized that the

availability of teachers was the main reason why he comes to school every day. “The main opportunity in this school is the availability of teachers. The teachers are good and they handle their lessons well. They help us a lot in our quest for education. That is why I come to school,” said Achol (age 19, South Sudanese, female).

Having peers who provided academic support was also a factor that contributed to school persistence (Abuya et al., 2013; Zuilkowski & Betancourt, 2014; Zuilkowski et al., 2016). While they mentioned that teachers were available and willing to support academically, the teaching force was extremely limited in number to attend to the academic needs of over 100 to 150 students for both lower and upper primary classes. In such cases, peer learning often took place through group work and discussions; students complemented each other’s weaknesses. For instance, students would gather together during the break time or after school to review any content they have missed or questions that are difficult to answer. When Fazilah (age 16, South Sudanese, female) arrived in Kakuma in 2011, she was not familiar with the language of instruction in Kenya—English and Kiswahili. However, she was fortunate to have friends who were willing to translate the concepts into Dinka, her mother tongue. “My friends always help me with subjects I don’t understand. Sometimes they even translate it [the subject content] to my mother tongue. This has really helped me a lot,” said Fazilah confidently in English.

Peer learning was commonly witnessed in schools—in between classes or after school closing time—which students called ‘comparing minds.’ Nafisa (age 16, Sudanese, female) also emphasized the benefit of peer learning that usually took place in between classes. She said, “Actually in terms of classmates in school, we do cooperate together and share the knowledge. Because what teachers teach, not everyone understands all, so what we do we go

and sit together and compare our minds.” In the afternoon, Ayen (age 17, South Sudanese, female) and her friends remain in the classroom to review the class content. “We revise together whenever the teacher is not in class or in the evening hours when students are released to go home. We study until it gets dark. That is when we go home,” said Ayen. Sometimes, students would also gather outside the school—mostly in the communities under the trees or at home—to work together. Joseph (age 18, Burundian, male) shared that he spent time working with his classmates at home. He said, “Students in my class are my good friends. Some friends invite me to their home to eat and study together. We revise many past papers and consult the teachers if we don’t get the answer to a question.”

Responsibilities/Expectations as Role Models

Another factor that either sparked or stimulated students’ school persistence was their sense of responsibility or expectations from family members to be a good role model to their younger siblings. Students who lived with younger siblings often felt responsible for having to be ‘someone to look up to’ by their younger brothers or sisters. Participants frequently mentioned they needed to be a ‘good example’ or ‘role model’ in the family. Both Garang and Aamira shared they felt the burden to stay well-disciplined and academically well-performing so that they could set good examples to their siblings. For Garang (age 16, South Sudanese, male), he had to behave well in school because he attended the same school with his younger sisters. “My younger sisters are learning here [in this school] and I am like a role model to them.” He said he needed to act like a big brother. Aamira’s (age 17, Sudanese, female) younger siblings would often tell her they were motivated by her academic performance and persistence, which was one of the reasons why she could not give up on her education. She

explained, “They get motivate[d] by me and go to school. My younger brothers ask me to do some revision with them at home during my free time.”

At times, younger siblings could also play a supportive role. Amer’s (age 16, Sudanese, female) younger brothers, although they are younger than her, act like her guardians and strive to protect her from any risk factors that could disrupt her learning. She explained:

My brothers support my education and that is why they put my interest above their own. I am their big sister but they want me to be comfortable. They protect me from harm such as being attacked by any boy. They are very protective of me in and out of school. In school, no one messes around with me because they fear the fierce temper of my younger brothers.

Amer believed this was due to the ‘respect’ or ‘pride’ they had for her academic persistence and performance.

Some students admitted that not all family members were supportive of education in the beginning. At times, they had to fight for their desire to go to school; through consistent persuasion and pursuit, they gradually saw changes in the perception of their parents, guardians and siblings, recognizing the value of education. When Kareem (age 18, South Sudanese, male) insisted on continuing learning in the camp, his brother refused to send him. Rather, he was forced to look after the cattle in the field just like other siblings. Kareem was persistent. “But I used to tell him, ‘No. As you can see, we are very poor because no one is educated in the family. If I myself don’t go to school, we will remain poor and no one will help you. That’s why I’m in school.’” Eventually, Kareem was able to persuade his elder brother, who allowed him to finish school.

The lack of prioritization of education was particularly precarious for the girls (Holmes, 2003; Husiman & Smits, 2015; Shahidul, 2013; Siddhu, 2011; Smits & Huisman, 2013). For instance, Fazilah (age 16, Sudanese, female) belonged to a tribe where girls mostly stayed

home, got married, and became mothers. She said, “Actually, at first they [my family] didn’t want me to go to school because in our tribes, girls were not allowed to go to school. They didn’t know the importance of school.” From time to time, Fazilah had to make excuses to attend classes or sneak out of her house to run to school. Whenever she got caught, she was punished. However, this did not stop her from coming to school. When she proved her academic competence at the end of the term, her siblings finally changed their minds and decided to support her with education. “When I started Class 4, they now support me because I got good marks. They feel proud and happy,” said Fazilah, with confidence. In many cases, girls face gender discrimination in families and communities that prevent them from continuing education. However, Fazilah’s case proved that her passion and strong determination eventually persuaded her siblings to let her attend school, which then made them witness her achievement and strengthened their beliefs in her academic competence.

Future Aspirations to Support Families, Communities, and Countries

Many students seemed highly motivated to pursue education, as they felt responsible to support their parents, siblings, or family members financially in the future rather than support their own financial advancement. For example, Assad (age 16, Somali, male) was the only male in the family; he lived with his widowed mother and sisters. When his father was killed in the war in Somalia, he took the role of his father as the head of the family. He explained, “I have to learn and achieve many things [so] that I can help my family and make my father proud even if he is not here with us,” Having taken the role of a father, he never imagined dropping out of school.

Instead of giving up his education now and getting a low-wage job to support his family, Assad chose to be more useful and supportive later—that is, after completing his

education. Assad's decision or perspective was somehow different, compared to his classmates who decided to drop out of school. "I replaced my father and I know my responsibility toward my family. I can only help them with good education," he added. Assad believed that it was only through education that he could ensure 'a good life' for his family. A good life for family was also the driving force behind Achol's (age 19, South Sudanese, female) education. She said:

[When] I finish school, I can take my mother out of this camp and provide her a better life than the current one. Education will help me in the future. I will be able to help my family. I know challenges exist but I don't want to give up. Only through education I can realize my dreams, which is to help my mother in the future.

Although students showed their determination to assume responsibilities as the breadwinner, some of them admitted they felt the implicit burden that the family's future is in their hands. For instance, Rebecca (age 23, South Sudanese, female) was the only child in the family with a clean, school uniform. Her mother and siblings, mostly brothers, 'sacrificed' their own desires to eat or purchase things just to ensure that Rebecca remained in school. She said, "I know that they gave up all their demands, so that the little [money] our mother has is used for my needs. It pains [hurts] me a lot that I have uniforms and my brothers don't." Therefore, Rebecca studied hard to pay off her family's willing sacrifice. She firmly stated, "I want to work hard and make it up to them. I want to learn and be successful to help my mother and brothers. I want to show them that their sacrifice is worth it. If I drop out now, who will take care of my family in future?" Such a sense of responsibility was echoed by Amer (age 16, Sudanese, female) who said, "In our family, there is nobody who is educated, so if I don't go to school, there will be no one who will support my family. I want a better life to support my family and other relatives."

While limited work and livelihood opportunities in the camp served as the major reason for school dropout for some students, the economic disadvantages also served as the motivating factor for others. This could be explained by their strong commitment to “to uplift their socioeconomic status” (Dass-Brailsford, 2005, p. 582). While out-of-school children and youth wanted and/or needed to take on responsibilities ‘immediately’ to help their families, in-school students had some degree of freedom to continue schooling and support their family ‘in the future’ owing to the sacrifice of family members, which was to support the ‘future’ of the family.

Two students—David (age 20, South Sudanese, male) and Jacob (age 15, South Sudanese, male) stressed that they were from a poor family, and that kept them in school. They strongly believed that ‘education is the key’ for a better future (meaning a financially stable life). Another student, Angelina (age 18, South Sudanese, female), pointed out that poverty helped her to continue education, affirming her eagerness for a better life. She claimed:

We do face many problems at home such as the lack of water, food, and firewood. I don’t want my family to have these problems in the future. My mother is not educated while my dad has little education. I want to go to university. I want to help my parents and my younger siblings. Only school can give me a better life.

Besides family, students showed a strong level of commitment towards supporting their communities or countries of origin. ‘Giving back’ was a common theme closely associated with the motivation for academic pursuit. Upon completion from secondary or higher education, they wished to repatriate to their home country to contribute to its development and reconstruction. Having experienced the war and/or having witnessed the aftermath of the conflict in the home country served as the impetus for such determination. Majok’s (age 16, South Sudanese, male) plan was to return to his home country, Sudan, after acquiring his secondary or tertiary degree. “I know the situation is bad in Sudan, but I can’t abandon them to

die. My foundation is in Kenya educationally, but I am returning back once I am done with my education.” He added, “I will go back home because they say ‘East or West, home is the best.’ In Shallah, I will be [going] back to Sudan.” Similarly, Kareem (age 18, Sudanese, male) held onto learning so that he can help others who are in need. He mentioned,

I face some challenges at home, but I know it is better for me to suffer now [so that] later I will help others. I can see people are educated and they are helping people. But for us, we are just poor and nobody is supporting each other. That is why I’m in school.

In the future, Kareem wished to go back to Sudan and support people who were suffering from the remnants of the war.

When it comes to ‘giving back’ to the community and country, students specifically mentioned their interests in the field of healthcare, education, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. Ayen (age 17, South Sudanese, female) was born and raised in Kakuma. In 2006, she was just 4 years old when her family decided to go back to South Sudan. There, she witnessed the deaths of countless people as a result of extreme poverty and severe illness.

Ayen explained that what kept her in school were her ‘dreams.’ She explained:

I want to learn and help my people back home in South Sudan. I was there sometime back and I saw how people struggle. They need help. I want to be a nurse because I want to help these sick people at the hospital and also in the village, especially the poor people. [I want to help] those who cannot afford to pay medical fees at the hospital because they are poor [yet they] need help too.

The most popular occupations among students were the field of medicine and public health. Students frequently said they wanted to be doctors or nurses so that they can ‘save people,’ referring to the treatment of diseases and injuries.

In Sudan, Fazilah (age 16, Sudanese, female) pointed out that the lack of trained doctors or nurses has claimed the lives of hundreds and thousands of people. She said:

My dream is to be a doctor because we lack professional doctors in Sudan. I want to treat some disease when [it] is affecting people there like HIV/AIDS which is killing a lot of people. Life is not that good as people are dying. When I finish my school [I will go back] because I would like to introduce new health facilities there.

Another student, Kareem (age 18, Sudanese, male), explained that he wished to be a doctor since when he was young, patients in his country were either undertreated or mainly treated through traditional methods, which Kareem believed resulted in more killing than healing. He said, “In our country, we lack medicine. Our people used to treat people with herbal [medicine], which cannot treat people in a good way. It could lead to death of people.” However, Kareem admitted that he cannot do this alone; he claimed that people in his country must exert a concerted effort in nation-building. “I will cooperate with other people and treat those people who are suffering in my country,” Kareem added.

Being educated in Kakuma was considered a privilege for many students. Having seen and heard about the millions of children who were deprived of educational opportunities and/or having experienced school dropout in the past were the major reasons behind their responsibility to give back. Some students showed their desire to become teachers or build schools in their home countries. Nyaluak (age 17, South Sudanese, female) strongly believed in the power of education to transform not only an individual’s life, but also the future of the country. She emphasized:

When you are educated, sometimes you become a president of a country, then you change the life [fate] of your country in the future. Now the teachers, the time will come for them to be old people and they will die. Maybe some years to come, we are the ones who are going to teach young children this way so that they can continue education, which is the promotion of education... if you are a learner, maybe tomorrow you will be a teacher somewhere, and children and they will be good people in the future.

Some students particularly shared their willingness to help ‘marginalized’ or ‘vulnerable’ populations. Rita (age 16, Ugandan, female) shared that she has a heart for ‘differently abled populations,’ whether the disability be physical, mental, or cognitive. She explained, “[I go to school] so that I can help others to learn in the future. I can even open the school and tell the people the good things about school and I can help especially those who are not in position to help themselves like those with disabilities.” Educating and empowering girls in the home country was the dream of Angelina (age 18, South Sudanese, female), She shared that she wished to help girls back in South Sudan, saying, “They are marginalized and no one is taking them to school. I can talk to [their] parents about the importance of girl child education and encourage them to take their girls [go] to school.”

Besides healthcare and education, some participants also spoke of the need to contribute to their home country’s conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Refugee children and youth all have experienced the consequences of war—whether directly or indirectly. When Rita (age 16, Ugandan, female) was young, she saw countless problems in her community. Although she has not made a final decision on what she wants to be in the future—a teacher or lawyer—her decision is leaning towards the latter, as she hopes to help avoid conflicts in her village.

While many students often said they wished to go back to their home country ‘*when there is peace,*’ Abdul, Darifa, and Garang were different; they wanted to go anytime soon and become advocates of peace. Abdul (age 18, Sudanese, male), who wanted to be someone who could help the poor and uneducated, said, “[I will] try my best to stop people from fighting.” Similarly, Darifa (age 17, Burundian, female) wanted to return to her country so that she could teach people the importance of peaceful coexistence. Garang (age 16, South Sudanese, male)

believed that with the help of education, he could transform his country and make it a better place. “I want to help and solve the conflict in South Sudan,” said Garang.

Consequently, most in-school students aspired to either support family or other people in need, or both. Students like Peter (age 27, South Sudanese, male) wished to be educated for their own life, family, community, and country as a whole. He said, “If you are [an] educated person, first, education can change you. Second, you can help people.” Another student, Achol (age 19, South Sudanese, female), said, “Life is hard, but I won’t give up my education. I am suffering now and I don’t want this kind of life forever. In the future, I want to have a good life. School will help change my life.”

For Joseph (age 18, Burundian, male), “Education is the only way to escape being a refugee.” Achieving peace and prosperity for self, family, community, and country served as a key motivating factor for these students’ continued learning amidst displacement. Despite the fact there is limited or no employment and educational opportunities to realize these personal and professional goals, it is interesting to note that these children and youth highlighted their future aspiration to be one of the underlying factors that contributed to their school persistence (Cha, 2020).

Persistent Barriers to Schooling in the Camp

Despite high aspirations and support from their families, friends, and teachers, children and youth in Kakuma faced persistent barriers to schooling, particularly the lack of school uniforms and learning materials. When his neighbor resettled to the United States, Majok (age 16, South Sudanese, male) ‘inherited’ the school uniform from the boy. Although the size of the uniform was too small for him, he had no choice but to wear it. “One day, the teacher told me to stay home since I didn’t have a uniform. The school required [a pair of] shorts too and I

didn't have it. He said that if I come to class without [wearing] uniform, I can become a bad influence on other students who may do the same thing, coming to school in non-uniform. I had no choice but to stay home." Fortunately, Majok was able to return to school when his aunt raised money to get him those uniform shorts.

Garang's (age 16, South Sudanese, male) uniform was also worn out and torn. He said, "As you can see, my uniform is totally torn apart and my sandal is not in a good condition too. I took this old uniform from a friend who acquired the new uniform. He gave me the old one." Garang went to school in an old, torn uniform, despite the shame he felt, since he has no money to replace it. When Achol (age 19, South Sudanese, female) started school, her mother got her a second-hand uniform. While she appreciated having a shirt and a skirt to wear, she also faced some challenges. "I only have one uniform. When it is dirty, I wash it in the evening and dry it before the school day in the morning. When it rains, the uniform can't [won't] dry and I have to miss school. Good enough there is little rain here in Kakuma," said Achol.

Lack of textbooks and exercise books also constantly interfered with students' learning in camp schools. Garang mentioned, "[When] my exercise book is filled up, it can take me a week or more before I replace it with a new one. Life is very tough here in Kakuma for a student. I am facing a lot of problems, but what can I do?" Coming to school without an exercise book could cause some tensions between students and teachers. According to Ayen (age 17, South Sudanese, female), "If a teacher gives us the work to do and you don't have...exercise books to write and complete the work, it will cause a conflict between the student and the teacher." Depending on the teacher, students could either be chased away from the classroom, sent home, or be suspended for days or even weeks.

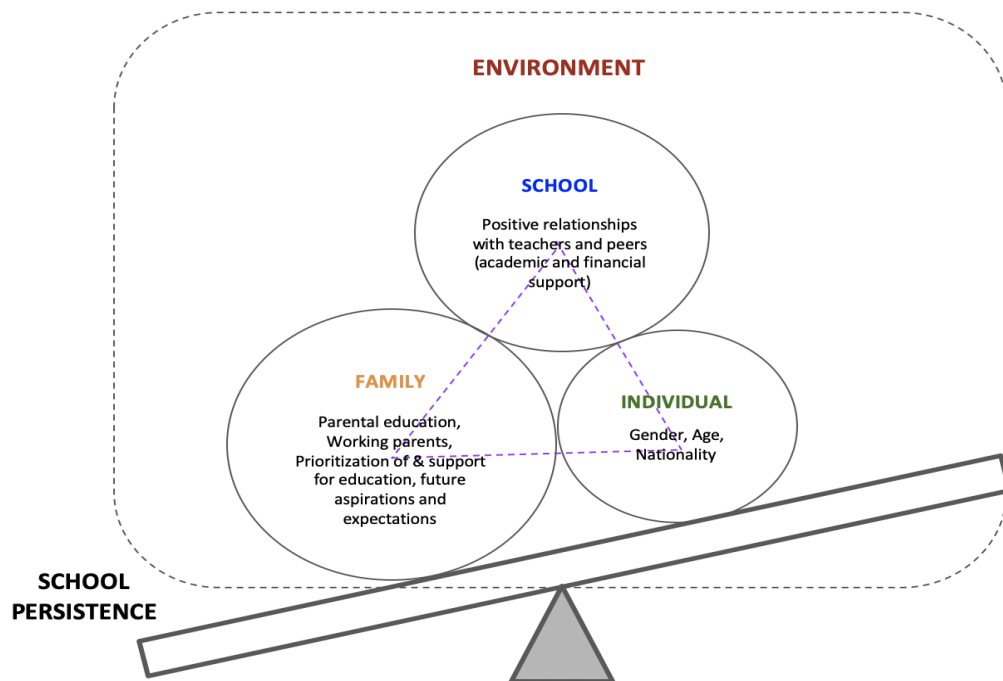
When the school demanded students to pay 30 Kenyan Shillings (\$0.30 US dollars) for the exams, both Deng and Kareem did not know what to do. As an unaccompanied, Size-1 student, Deng (age 16, South Sudanese, male) did not have any parent or guardian to support his education. Unlike some students whose parents had manual work or incentive jobs to earn a living, Deng completely relied on his ration. He said, “I have no guardian to help me. Raising 30 Shillings for exams is always hard for me.” While Kareem often borrowed books and pens from his friends, he admitted that he became deeply concerned or, as he said, ‘suffer a lot’ when the exam period approached. “Even getting pens and books is hard. Paying money for the exam is very hard for me,” he said.

Conclusion

In-school children and youth reported they were able to persist in school owing to the different types of support (e.g., financial, emotional, and/or academic) provided by their parents or guardians, siblings, teachers, and/or peers in the camp, which confirms the findings from a study conducted by (Dryden-Peterson et al. (2017) in Dadaab Refugee Camp that the locally and globally situated resources were the main driving forces of educational pursuit. Moreover, their future aspirations to support their families, communities, and countries, coupled with family expectations to ‘succeed,’ acted as the driving forces behind their school persistence. Based on both the survey and interview data from in-school participants, I created Figure 6, which shows the different factors within the conceptual framework across individual, family, and school levels that kept children and youth in school.

Figure 6

Different Factors That Contributed to School Persistence in Kakuma Refugee Camp



Despite support systems and strong determination for the future, it is critical to acknowledge the persistent barriers to schooling, highlighted by the in-school participants (e.g., lack of school uniform and supplies, harsh school policies and practices, etc.), were no different from their out-of-school peers. These children and youth reported that they struggled with the daily ‘tug of war’ between factors that tried to push them out of school or keep them in school. Hence, it is imperative that we also examine the intersections of factors across different levels (individual, family, and school) that contribute to school persistence and dropout in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

Chapter VIII: COMPARISONS BETWEEN IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN AND YOUTH AND THEIR SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

Although children and youth are confronted with similar challenges related to schooling in camp settings, who gets to stay in school and who drops out of school? What are the odds of dropping out of school for some children and youth? In this chapter, I compare and contrast the individual and family characteristics of out-of-school and in-school children and youth to explore in depth the different factors that influenced their schooling. Through this comparative analysis, I aim to present a list of factors that could help identify the profiles of the most at-risk children and youth in the camp who have the highest odds of dropping out of school.

Identifying determinants of school dropout is critical to understand the underlying constraints that contribute to educational access and persistence as well as to design policies and programs at different levels that support the most marginalized and vulnerable populations in the camp. I first present comparisons between profiles of in-school and out-of-school participants (e.g., descriptive analysis, t-tests, and chi-square tests). Then, I present the results from a logistic regression analysis that examined some of the factors influencing the odds of school dropout among primary schoolers in Kakuma.

Descriptive Statistics: Comparing Participant Profiles

Individual Characteristics

Table 9 below reveals the characteristics of in-school and out-of-school youth by independent variables. Gender was an important variable of interest for the study, as the existing literature pointed out that in many developing countries, significant gaps exist between boys and girls in terms of school dropout. Of the 685 out-of-school children and youth surveyed, 53.4% were female, and 46.6% were male. Gender seemed comparable among out-of-school participants ($p > 0.05$). By contrast, in-school refugee youth had a noticeable

difference in gender composition. Of the 729 students enrolled in Standard 8, only 28.9% were female, while the majority of students (71.1%) were made up of male students. I conducted a chi-square test for independence to examine the relationship between gender and being in or out of school and found a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2(1, N = 1,414) = 87.7, p < 0.001$). The findings suggested that in general, girls are less likely to reach the last grade of primary education, as compared to boys.

Table 9

Characteristics of Out-of-school and In-school Participants (N = 1,414)

	Out of School (N = 685)	In-School (N = 729)	Total (N = 1,414)	Sig
Gender (%)				***
Male	46.6	71.1	59.2	
Female	53.4	28.9	40.8	
Age (Mean Years, SD)	18.7 (3.2)	18.3 (2.9)	18.5 (3.2)	
Age Category (%)				***
10-13 years	7.2	0.8	3.9	
14-16 years	21.5	20.7	21.1	
17-19 years	33.3	55.6	44.8	
20-25 years	35.2	21.3	28.0	
26 years or more	2.9	1.7	2.3	
Years of Encampment (Mean, SD)	8.1 (5.4)	6.2 (3.2)	7.1 (4.5)	***
Years of Encampment (%)				***
0-5 years	38.7	44.3	41.6	
6-10 years	38.3	48.0	43.3	
11-15 years	11.8	4.3	7.9	
16 years or more	11.2	3.4	7.2	
Nationality (%)				***
South Sudanese	29.9	67.9	59.2	
Sudanese	7.9	20.6	14.4	
Somali	22.5	3.2	12.5	
Congolese	12.6	5.4	8.8	
Ethiopian	2.6	1.2	1.9	
Others	4.5	1.8	3.1	

Table 9 (continued)

	Out of School (N = 685)	In-School (N = 729)	Total (N = 1,414)	Sig
Born in the Camp				***
Kakuma-born	9.5	4.1	6.7	
Born elsewhere	90.5	95.9	93.3	
Number of Household Members (Mean, SD)	7.2 (3.7)	6.9 (4.3)	7.0 (4.0)	
Household Composition				**
Live with parent(s)	56.2	48.8	52.4	
No parent(s)	43.8	51.2	47.6	
Number of Hours doing Chores (Mean, SD)	4.9 (3.4)	4.2 (3.0)	4.5 (3.2)	***
Head of the Household				
Yes. Household Head	17.8	18.0	17.9	
No. Not a Household Head	82.2	82.0	82.1	
Firstborn				
Firstborn Child	30.2	30.0	30.0	
Not a Firstborn	70.0	70.2	70.0	
Mother's Education				**
No Education	78.4	70.2	74.2	
Primary Education	13.4	15.8	14.6	
Secondary or Higher Education	6.6	10.0	8.4	
Vocational Training	1.6	4.0	2.8	
Father's Education				***
No Education	74.5	62.5	68.3	
Primary Education	11.7	9.6	10.6	
Secondary or Higher Education	13.0	24.3	18.8	
Vocational Training	0.9	3.6	2.3	
Parental Occupation				**
Employed	14.0	20.7	82.5	
Without Job	86.0	79.3	17.5	

*T-tests and Chi square tests show significant differences between groups

The average age of the participants was 18.50 years, and the age range was 10 to 45 years old. The means of out-of-school and in-school groups were 18.7 years old and 18.3 years old, respectively. I ran two independent-sample t-tests and found no difference between age

and being in- or out of school ($p > 0.05$). When categorized into five groups, the majority of out-of-school youth belonged to the 20-25 years old group (35.2%) and the 17-19 years old group (33.3%), while the majority of in-school youth was in the younger groups—17-19 years old group (55.6%). A chi-squared test for independence showed that age category and dropout status were related ($\chi^2(2, N = 1,414) = 102.6, p < 0.001$). Out-of-school participants were about 20 percentage points more likely to be in older age groups (those above aged 20) than those in school (see Appendix H for detailed information on the distribution of in-school and participant by age category and gender).

In Kenya, students registered in Standard 8 were usually aged 13 to 15. Compared to the Kenyan peers, refugee youth—both in and out of school—were older due to missing several years of schooling in displacement. Among in-school students, 36.1% answered that they once dropped out of school but have returned to school. About 14% of students indicated that they stopped going to school for one year or less mainly due to the conflict; approximately 12% claimed that they missed 2-3 years of schooling; slightly over 10% had to stop school for over three years. This could explain the average age of the students enrolled in primary schools. Moreover, 29.2% of students had previously been enrolled in accelerated education programs, which were created to accommodate overage learners whose education was interrupted for more than a year. It is also interesting to note that despite a small portion, some in-school students (1.8%) were aged 26 and above—adults who were continuing to complete their primary education.

Participants—both in and out of school—came from 10 countries, the majority from South Sudan (59.2%), followed by those from Sudan (14.4%), Somalia (12.5%), DRC (8.8%), Ethiopia (1.9%), and others (those from Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda made up less than

1%, or a total of 3.1% when combined). I also examined the sub-samples separately. A large percentage of in-school children and youth consisted of South Sudanese (67.9%), followed by Sudanese (20.6%), Congolese (5.4%), Somali (3.2%), Ethiopian (1.2%), and Others (1.8%). While the majority of out-of-school children and youth was also South Sudanese (29.9%), a larger number of Somali (22.5%) and Congolese (12.6%) were out of school, as compared to Sudanese (7.9%), Others (4.5%), and Ethiopian (2.6%).

I conducted a chi-square test for independence for nationalities, which indicated a statistically significant difference in the percentage of participants' nationalities and their in-school and out-of-school status, $\chi^2(5, N = 1,414) = 197.0, p < 0.001$. The findings suggested that, on average, compared to South Sudanese and Sudanese, Somali and Congolese had substantially higher percentages of out-of-school participants than those in-school (22.5% and 12.6%, respectively). The out-of-school Somali children and youth were 19.3 percentage points higher than in-school Somalis, and out-of-school Congolese participants were 7.2 percentage points higher than in-school Congolese students, which could be as a result of language and culture, which will be further discussed in the following section.

Participants' years of residence in Kakuma refugee camp were also examined. On average, refugee youth spent about seven years in encampment ($SD = 4.5$). Some arrived as early as 1992, the year when the camp was established to host refugees from South Sudan, and spent over 27 years in encampment; others were recently arrived refugees. I categorized the years of encampment into four—1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and 16 years or more. Among the participants, 42.4% resided in Kakuma for 1-5 years, followed by 41.8% who spent 6-10 years, 8.4% who spent more than 16 years, and 7.5% between 11-15 years. The majority of the participants found a safe haven in Kakuma between 2012 and 2015.

To test whether in-school and out-of-school youth spent the same amount of time in Kakuma, I used two independent-sample *t* tests. The results indicated a statistically significant difference between the encampment years and being either in-school or out-of-school ($t(1,1103) = -7.8, p < 0.001$). On average, out-of-school participants spent more time living in the camp compared to in-school children. While in-school children and youth spent about 6.2 years in encampment ($SD = 3.4$), their out-of-school counterparts spent an average of 8.1 years in the camp ($SD = 5.4$). Examining the effect size or magnitude of the difference, Cohen's *d* revealed that the difference between the mean was of medium effect ($d = 0.4$).

Interestingly, the results also showed that when grouped into four categories, about 92.3% of the in-school children and youth lived in the camp less than or just about 10 years (44.3% for 0-5 years and 48.0% for 6-10 years, respectively). On the other hand, out-of-school participants had more than double the percentage of people who lived in the camp longer than in-school children and youth. A total of 23.1% of out-of-school children and youth lived in the camp from 11 years and above. To be more specific, 11.8% of out-of-school children and youth lived in the camp for 11-15 years, as compared to 4.3% of in-school youth, and 11.2% out-of-school children and youth lived in the camp for 16 years or longer, as compared to 3.4% of in-school children and youth. Hence, the mean of years of encampment for out-of-school was higher than the in-school group due to the larger percentage of those who arrived in the camp earlier. This could be explained by the decrease in academic motivation or aspiration among camp-based children and youth, as they witness the 'broken' or 'unmet' trajectories of those who completed primary or even secondary in the camp (Bellino, 2018).

The variable encampment years also suggested that a great majority of them were 'displaced'—meaning they were born in their country of origin. In fact, when asked about their

place of birth—whether they were born in the camp or not, only 6.7% reported that they were born in Kakuma. Others were all born in their countries of origin, or perhaps in other displaced contexts, and moved to Kakuma. A chi-square test for independence indicated a statistically significant difference in the percentage of participants' birthplace and their in-school and out-of-school status, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,414) = 16.27, p < 0.001$. A larger percentage of Kakuma-born children and youth (9.5%) were among out-of-school participants, as compared to those in school (4.1%). This finding indicated that children born and raised in the camp were more likely to drop out of school, as further discussed later with logistic regression analysis.

Family Characteristics

Children and youth in Kakuma, on average, lived with about seven people in the house (what they would call “Size 7”). Some reported that they lived alone at home, while the maximum number of people at the house was 47. In-school children and youth, on average, had a slightly smaller number of household members ($M = 6.9, SD = 4.3$), compared to out-of-school youth ($M = 7.2, SD = 3.7$). However, two independent-sample t-tests revealed no statistically significant difference between in-school and out-of-school on the household size at the 0.05 level ($p > 0.05$).

Among the participants, 17.9% were head of the household, those responsible to take care of the rest of the family members. There was no statistical difference between in-school and out-of-school youth in terms of household head status ($p > 0.05$). However, I ran a chi-square test for independence to examine the relationship between gender and household head status and found a statistically significant difference between boys and girls, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,414) = 4.6, p < 0.05$. In general, boys took the role of household head (65.2%) roughly 30 percentage points greater than girls (34.8%) ($p < 0.05$). Similar to household head status, I also examined

the relationship between being the eldest or firstborn child and their dropout status. On average, less than 30% of the participants reported they were the eldest sibling in the family. There was no relationship between being a firstborn child and dropping out of school ($p > 0.05$), as well as between firstborn boys and girls ($p > 0.05$).

I asked the participants about the average number of hours they spent in a day doing household chores. On average, children and youth in Kakuma spent about 4.5 hours daily doing household chores. Out-of-school participants reported they spent 4.9 hours doing home responsibilities ($SD = 3.2$), as compared to in-school students who spent 4.2 hours per day ($SD = 3.0$). Two independent-samples t-tests indicated a statistically significant difference between number of hours doing chores at home and being in-school or out-of-school ($t(1,370) = -3.6, p = 0.001$); Cohen's d revealed a small effect between in-school and out-of-school youth in terms of hours spent in doing chores ($d = 0.2$).

I also ran two independent-samples t-tests to see if there was a relationship between gender and chores. I found a statistically significant difference between boys and girls in doing household responsibilities ($t(1,139) = -5.6, p < 0.001$), with an effect size of 0.31 ($d = 0.3$). On average, girls spent 5.1 hours per day doing chores ($SD = 3.4$), which is one hour more than the average hours boys spent with household chores ($M = 4.1; SD = 3.0$). As the previous chapters also showed, girls in the camp were given responsibilities to take care of household chores such as fetching water, cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the siblings, which may influence their schooling.

A wealth of literature has emphasized the role of parent(s) in school persistence or dropout (e.g., parental education, employment, support/engagement, to mention a few) (Din et al., 2011; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Sabates et al., 2013; Shahidul, 2013; Siddhu, 2011; Smits &

Huisman, 2013; Yi et al., 2012; Zuilkowski et al., 2016). However, in crisis-affected contexts, many children and youth have either lost their parent(s) in conflict or been separated from them due to displacement. I explored whether children and youth in Kakuma lived with parents or not. About 52.4% of participants lived with at least one parent—either biological or step-parent. Only 16% of the participants lived with a father, either biological or stepfather, while 48% lived with a mother, either biological or stepmother. When comparing in-school and out-of-school groups, there was a statistically significant difference in the percentage of those who lived with parents or not, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,414) = 7.7, p < 0.01$. Contrary to the existing literature, out-of-school children and youth lived with a parent (56.2%) about 7.4 percentage points higher than those in-school (48.8%).

Parental education is often considered a strong predictor of students' academic engagement and performance (Biddlecom et al., 2008; Din et al., 2011; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Lloyd et al., 2009; No et al., 2012; Shahidul, 2013; Siddhu, 2011; Zhao & Glewwe, 2010; Zuilkowski et al., 2016). To examine how this may or may not contribute to displaced children and youth's school-going behavior, I asked participants to provide the highest level of education achieved by their mother and father—regardless of their current residence or status. On average, 74.2% of the youth reported that their mothers had no education at all, followed by 14.6% whose mothers completed primary education, and 8.4% whose mothers obtained either secondary or university degrees. Others (2.5%) answered that their mothers received vocational training such as tailoring or language courses in or outside the camp.

There was a statistically significant difference between in-school and out-of-school youth in terms of mothers' educational level, $\chi^2(3, N = 1,414) = 16.5, p = 0.001$. About 78.4% of out-of-school youth answered that their mothers did not receive any type of educational

training, compared to 70.2% of in-school youth. While the percentage of mothers with primary education was similar between in- and out-of-school youth, the percentage of in-school participants' mothers with secondary/university degrees was 10.0%, higher than that of mothers of out-of-school children and youth with secondary or higher education (6.6%).

The pattern was similar for fathers' educational background. On average, 68.3% of children and youth in Kakuma had fathers without any educational background. About 10.6% of the fathers received primary education, 18.8% received secondary or higher education; 2.3% of the youth reported their fathers received vocational training or other type of nonformal education. Interestingly, compared to mothers' education, a larger percentage of fathers received secondary or university degrees. Similar to mothers' education, there was a statistically significant difference between in-school and out-of-school children and youth in terms of fathers' education, $\chi^2(3, N = 1,414) = 44.0, p < 0.001$.

About 74.5% of out-of-school children and youth reported that their fathers had no access to education, about 12 percentage points higher than those in school (62.6%). In-school participants answered that 9.6% of their fathers completed primary, and 24.3% reached until secondary or university level. For out-of-school children and youth, while the percentage was 11.7% for fathers with primary education degrees, which is higher than in-school participants, the percentage of fathers with secondary or higher degrees became almost half (13.0%) for out-of-school children and youth, as compared to their in-school counterparts (24.3%). The results showed that in general, in-school children and youth had parent(s) with higher educational attainment—more educated mothers (primary, secondary, vocational) as well as fathers (secondary, vocational)—than out-of-school children and youth. With limited work opportunities in the camp, about 82.5% of the participants answered that their parent(s) or

guardian(s) did not have jobs. However, there was a statistically significant difference between in-school and out-of-school children and youth in terms of parental (or guardian's) employment status, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,414) = 11.0, p = 0.001$. About 20.7% of in-school participants reported that they lived with working parent(s) or guardian(s), while only 14.0% of out-of-school participants' parent(s) or guardian(s) had jobs.

Logistic Regression Analysis

I used a binary logistic regression analysis because it allowed me to examine which characteristics were associated with primary school dropout. The dependent variable was an indicator variable, coded 1 if the student dropped out of school, and coded 0 if the student was still in school. The first model included the individual characteristics of participants, specifically gender, age, years of encampment, nationality, and birthplace (born in the camp or not). The second model included an additional set of variables that represented family characteristics, including number of household members, whether the participant had the following characteristics or not: lived with parents or not, head of household, and firstborn.

The second model also included the levels of mothers' education and fathers' education, and whether respondents had working parent(s) or guardian(s). I reported odds ratios for the various characteristics as the standard metric of effect sizes for logistic regressions. In this study, an odds ratio less than 1 meant that an increase in the variable (e.g., age) led to a decrease in the odds of dropping out from school, while odds greater than 1 meant that an increase in the variable led to an increase in the odds of school dropout. Predicted probabilities were also reported for a select number of variables.

Table 10 shows a summary of regression analyses for two different sets of variables that predicted school dropout in odd ratios (see Appendix E-2 for coefficients). It indicated that

certain individual and family characteristics predicted school dropout. Model 1 contains a student's individual characteristics, mainly demographic variables. The results indicated that dropout of children and youth in Kakuma varied significantly by gender, age, years of encampment, and nationality. The positive and significant odds ratio suggested that gender proved to be a statistically significant predictor of school dropout; even after controlling for other factors, the odds of female children and youth dropping out of school was 2.62 times more than their male counterparts ($p < 0.001$). This effect was consistent (OR = 2.78), even after taking family-related variables into account (Model 2). This finding was consistent with the existing literature that girls were much less likely to be in school than boys in Kenya and other Sub-Saharan countries (Grant & Hallman, 2006; Hunt, 2008; Lloyd et al., 2000).

Table 10

Results of Binary Logistic Regression Models of School Dropout (Odds Ratio)

	Model 1	Model 2
	Individual	Individual + Family
<i>Individual Characteristics</i>		
Female	2.615*** (0.320)	2.784*** (0.361)
Age	1.056** (0.020)	1.044* (0.022)
Encampment years	1.049** (0.018)	1.053** (0.020)
Sudanese	0.600** (0.109)	0.613** (0.115)
Somali	8.345*** (2.034)	10.732*** (2.786)
Congolese	3.767*** (0.805)	7.615*** (1.901)
Ethiopian	3.359** (1.427)	2.942* (1.274)
Other Nationalities	3.278*** (1.151)	4.317*** (1.600)

Kakuma-born	1.629 (0.502)	1.961* (0.643)
<i>Family Characteristics</i>		
Household Members		1.007 (0.017)
Firstborn in the Family		1.091 (0.148)
Head of Household		1.146 (0.205)
Living with Parents		0.908 (0.126)
Mom's Primary Education		0.632* (0.124)
Mom's Vocational Training		0.647 (0.282)
Mom's Secondary/ Higher Ed		0.497* (0.137)
Dad's Primary Education		1.000 (0.213)
Dad's Vocational Training		0.245** (0.132)
Dad's Secondary/Higher Ed		0.384*** (0.075)
Working Parents		0.527*** (0.096)
_cons	-2.151*** (0.371)	-1.726*** (0.421)
<i>N</i>	1414	1414
pseudo <i>R</i> ²	0.160	0.207
<i>AIC</i>	1665.946	1595.505
<i>BIC</i>	1718.487	1705.843

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

^a Nationality Reference Group: South Sudanese

^b Mother's Education Reference Group: No Education

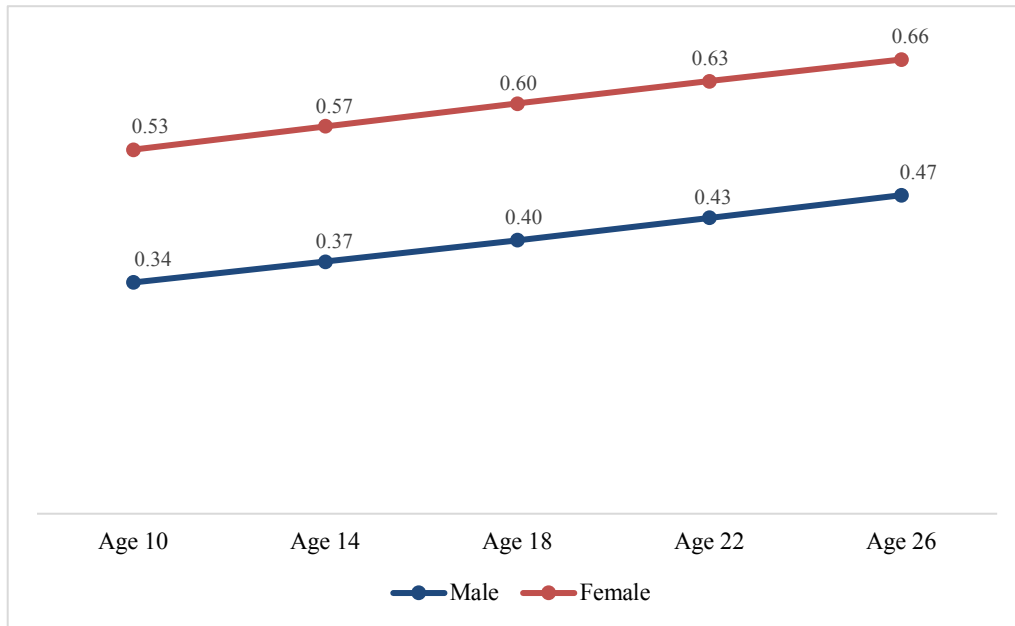
^c Father's Education Reference Group: No Education

Age was also associated with school dropout; a one-year increase in age was associated with increasing the odds of dropping out of school by a factor of 1.1, all else being equal ($p < 0.01$). This suggested that the older the student becomes, the greater the probability of his or her dropping out of school. They may find it difficult to balance life and work—especially for unaccompanied minors—or may be forced into income-generating, low-wage work to support family. Older girls may be responsible for domestic work. I also calculated predicted probabilities based on Model 2, the full model (see Figure 7 below). When other variables were at their mean, girls had a 0.53 probability of dropping out of school, as compared to boys (0.34). Expectedly, the probability increased as children and youth got older; the predicted probability of girls at age 10 was 0.53, as compared to boys (0.34); at age 26, it was 0.66, as compared to boys (0.47). This suggested that regardless of age bracket, female children and youth had a higher chance of dropping out of school than their male counterparts. The interaction terms between gender and age were of no statistical significance, which was why they were not included in the model.

The encampment year variable was also strongly related to school dropout with a one-year increase in residence in Kakuma associated with the odds of dropping out of school by a factor of 1.05, holding other variables constant ($p < 0.01$). Similar to age, predicted probability increased as years of residence in the camp increased; predicted probabilities of those who stayed in Kakuma for five years was 0.46; for those who stayed for 10 years and 15 years, it was 0.51 and 0.56, respectively, indicating the gradual increase in the probabilities of dropout. The older the student and the longer their residence in Kakuma, the more likely they would drop out of school. I found no statistical significance in interactions between age and encampment years; thus, they were not added to the model.

Figure 7

Predicted Probabilities of School Dropout by Students' Age and Gender



Interestingly, there was no statistical difference in school dropout between children and youth who were born in the camp or born elsewhere, holding the other covariates constant ($p > 0.05$). Despite the assumption that camp-born and raised children and youth may be accustomed to the sociocultural environment in Kakuma, and may be fluent in the language(s) of instruction at school, the camp-born status was not associated with school dropout or persistence in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

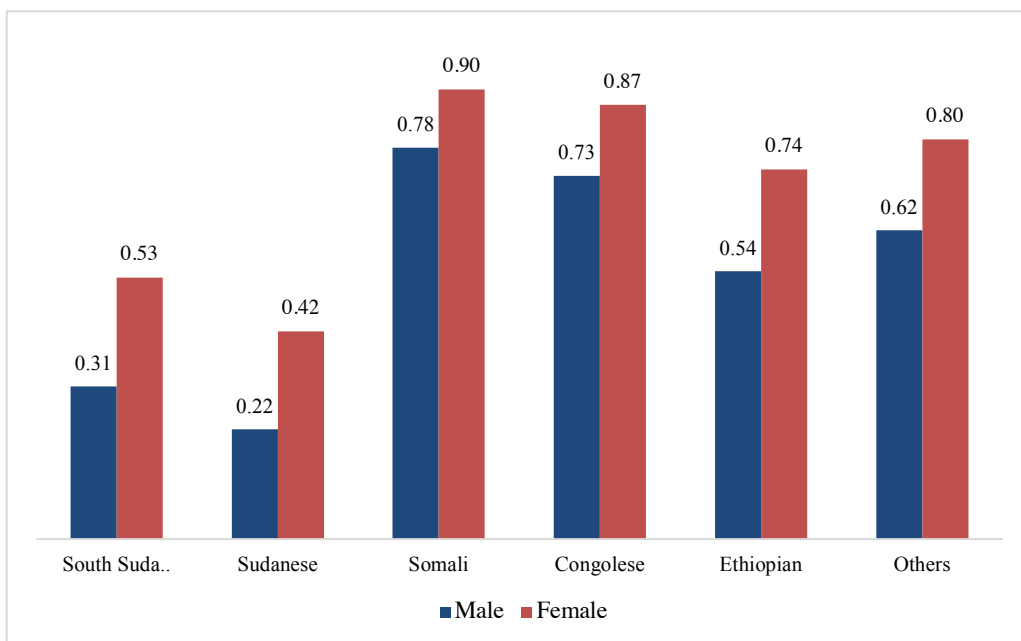
Moreover, I also found that the odds of school dropout varied based on students' nationalities. Compared to South Sudanese (reference group), Somali, Congolese, and children and youth from other countries had significantly higher odds of dropping out of school—about 8.6 times, 3.8 times, and 3.3, respectively, other things being equal ($p < 0.001$), followed by Ethiopians who also had 3.4 times greater the odds of dropping out of school than South

Sudanese, holding other variables constant ($p < 0.01$). In contrast, the odds of dropout among Sudanese were 0.6 times less than that of South Sudanese children and youth ($p < 0.01$).

The predicted probabilities based on Model 2, the full model (see Figure 8 below), showed that when other variables were at their mean, Somali children and youth had a 0.84 probability of dropping out of school, followed by Congolese (0.72) and Ethiopian (0.69). This was almost twice or three times higher than the probability of dropout for South Sudanese (0.40) or Sudanese (0.29) students. In general, predicted probabilities of girls' school dropout were higher than those of boys. It was interesting to note that the gender gap was particularly salient among South Sudanese, Sudanese, and Ethiopian participants; the gap between South Sudanese boys and girls in their probabilities of dropout was widest at 0.22, followed by Sudanese and Ethiopian (both at a 0.20 difference); This suggested that girls from South Sudan may experience more gendered discrimination on education, compared to other nationalities.

Figure 8

Predicted Probability of School Dropout by Nationality and Gender



Although literature is lacking to explain the varying differences of school persistence/dropout by nationality, the high percentage of dropout among Somali and Congolese students could result from language barriers, especially since those from Francophone countries struggle to learn in English and Kiswahili, and/or given the culture of prioritizing family (e.g., business or household chores) over education for Somali populations. Another explanation could be a result of a ‘network effect,’ as South Sudanese and Sudanese made up the majority of the population in camp schools (both student population and the teaching force); hence, children and youth from other countries may feel marginalized (Grabska, 2006).

Moreover, a few of the out-of-school girls mentioned they were enrolled in *madrassas*, non-formal Islamic schools that focus on Quranic teaching. Hence, the availability of alternative, nonformal, and/or religious institutions in the camp may be a reason that parents pull children out of school (No et al., 2016, UNHCR, 2014). In terms of gender dimensions, the findings from predicted probabilities suggested that discrimination against schooling for girls may be particularly salient among South Sudanese, Sudanese, and those from other nationalities, which could be explained by religion, language, and culture.

Model 2 introduced family-related variables, including the number of household members, being head of the household, being the firstborn child, or living with a parent, mothers’ education level, fathers’ education level, and parents’ or guardians’ employment status. Table 9 shows that the adjusted R was only marginally better with the family variables added into Model 2; while Model 1 explained 16% of the variance, Model 2 explained approximately 21% of the variance in school dropout. Interestingly, the results showed that all of the individual variables in Model 1 remained statistically significant, even adjusting for

family-related variables. In fact, the odds of girls dropping out of school becomes greater—2.78 times more than boys, holding other variables constant ($p < 0.001$).

The other noteworthy finding from Model 2 is that the effect of nationality on dropout became greater for Somali, Congolese, and other nationalities. For Congolese, the odds of dropping out of school, as compared to South Sudanese, almost doubled, holding other variables constant ($p < .001$). Being a Somali still had the highest odds (10.7 times) of dropping out of school than South Sudanese ($p < 0.001$). On the other hand, while the Ethiopian nationality remained significant, the odds ratio decreased by 0.42 point ($p < 0.001$). For Sudanese students, the odds of dropping out of school still remained 0.61 times less than that for South Sudanese ($p < 0.01$).

One interesting finding from this is that the variable ‘Kakuma-born,’ which was not significant in Model 2, gained significance in Model 2, indicating that the odds of those born in the camp dropping out of school was almost twice greater than those who were born elsewhere, whether their home country or other displacement context, all else being equal ($p < 0.05$). Indeed, a few participants mentioned in the interviews that whether they were born and raised in the camp, they did not see ‘hope’ in the camp, especially when they saw many primary or secondary school graduates jobless and idle, even upon completion of education (Bellino, 2018).

Parents’ educational background (both mothers’ education and fathers’ education) was also associated with school dropout. The odds of children and youth whose mother obtained primary education were about 0.63 times less likely to drop out of school than participants whose mother had no access to education ($p < 0.05$). Compared to children and youth with mothers who completed secondary or higher education, the odds of children and youth whose

mothers had no educational background were twice more likely to drop out of school than those whose mothers had secondary or higher education ($p < 0.05$). However, the odds of dropout between those whose mothers had vocational training and those without education were not statistically significant, holding other variables constant ($p > 0.5$).

For fathers' education, children and youth whose father had accessed secondary or higher education had the odds of dropping out roughly 0.38 times below those whose fathers had no education, holding other variables at a fixed value ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, participants with fathers who had vocational training backgrounds had the odds of dropping out that were 0.25 times below those with fathers who had never received any education, all else being equal ($p < 0.001$). There were no statistically different odds of dropping out of school between children and youth whose father accessed primary schools and those who did not access education, holding other variables constant ($p > 0.05$).

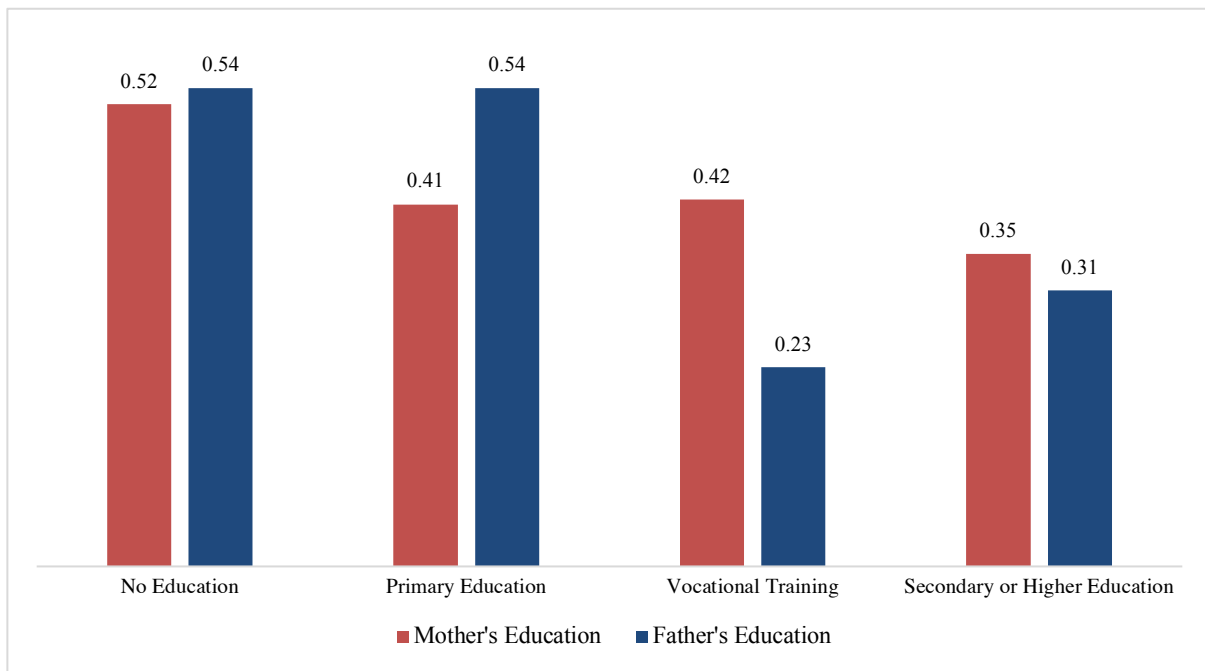
Figure 9 shows that on average, children and youth with mothers and fathers without education had 0.52 and 0.54 probabilities of school dropout, respectively, compared to those whose mothers and fathers had graduated from secondary or higher education diplomas—whose probabilities decreased to 0.35 for mothers and 0.32 for fathers. Figure 8 also shows that the probability of dropout between those whose fathers had no education and those with primary education was the same at 0.54. Interestingly, however, the probability of dropout for children and youth with mothers without education was at 0.52, compared to the probability of dropout for those with mothers who had completed primary education and those who had vocational training—0.41 and 0.42, respectively.

Considering that the majority of households were headed by mothers in Kakuma refugee camps (UNHCR, 2014), the level of mothers' education could have more influence in

school dropout than that of fathers. Therefore, this finding suggests that the higher the level of mothers' educational attainment, the more likely children and youth would persist in schooling in the case of Kakuma Refugee Camp. This also confirmed the existing literature that discussed the associations between mothers' education and school dropout in developing countries (Biddlecom et al., 2008; Cemalcilar & Goksen, 2014; Din et al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2009; No et al., 2012; Shahidul, 2013).

Figure 9

Predicted Probabilities of School Dropout by Parental Education (Mother and Father)



Parental employment status was also strongly related to the odds of dropping out. On an adjusted basis, children and youth whose parent(s) worked in the camp or in the country of origin had the odds of dropping out that were roughly half of those whose parents were unemployed ($p < 0.001$). This finding confirmed the literature that parental education and their employment status—proxies for household resources—were statistically significant to the

probability of primary school dropout (Lloyd et al., 2000; Shahidul, 2013; Smith & Huisman, 2013). This could be a result of parents recognizing the long-term value of education (perhaps through their own experiences) and, thus, being willing to provide either emotional or financial support to their children's education in displacement. Or perhaps it was simply because parents were able, and therefore willing, to cover the incidental costs of schooling. However, it is important to note that despite parental support for and/or prioritization of education, gender discrimination may still exist among families, explaining the higher dropout rate among girls (Brown, 2010; Holmes, 2003; Husiman & Smits, 2015; Shahidul, 2013; Siddhu, 2011; Smits & Huisman, 2013).

While both existing literature and my data (surveys and interviews) with out-of-school children and youth pointed out that their responsibilities at home negatively influenced schooling, the results revealed that the overall number of household members, birth order, being the head of the household, and living with at least one parent did not have statistically differential odds of dropping out of school, holding the other covariates constant ($p > 0.05$). Regardless of household size and composition, in general, girls, overage students, those born in the camp, and/or coming from countries such as Congo and Somalia were more likely to drop out of school.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings suggested that factors such as gender, nationality, age, years of encampment, parental education, and parental employment status were associated with school dropout/persistence. Other characteristics such as place of birth (camp or not), living with at least one parent or not, being a household head, and being a firstborn child had equal odds of dropping out of school between in-school and out-of-school participants. On average, the out-

of-school population had the following characteristics: girls, overage, those who had spent more years in the camp, and were Somali and Congolese nationalities. There were also notable differences in family characteristics among in-school and out-of-school participants. When it came to parental education, a higher percentage of parents (especially the fathers) of in-school students completed primary or secondary education than parents of out-of-school children and youth. Descriptive statistics also proved that in-school students had a smaller household size and spent relatively fewer hours doing household chores.

Chapter IX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In refugee camps, children and youth encounter both challenges and opportunities in schooling that contribute to their school persistence or dropout. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that interrelated factors such as inability to pay school-related fees (indirect costs), school policy on uniforms and supplies, poverty, and family responsibilities contributed to primary school dropout in Kakuma Refugee Camp. By contrast, support from families, teachers, and peers, coupled with strong aspirations for the future, supported students' educational pursuit in exile. When compared to the existing literature, a list of factors proved relevant to primary school dropout and persistence in Kakuma contexts. On one hand, factors such as birth order, household size, being head of the household, and living with at least one parent were found to be less associated with school dropout/persistence. On the other hand, some additional factors were reported to be strongly associated with school dropout (e.g., being an unaccompanied minor, school uniform policy) and school persistence (e.g., support received from family members and future aspirations).

In this chapter, I present how a wider range of factors within children and youth's individual, family, and school levels affected schooling, particularly in the context of Kakuma Refugee Camp. I begin by discussing some of the school-related factors, which were considered the principal reasons that contributed to dropout, followed by family-related factors and individual factors. I also highlight the intersectionality of these factors in understanding how negative and positive predictors of dropout/persistence interact to influence children and youth's schooling in the camp. Based on these findings, I present a modified version of the conceptual framework at the end of this chapter (Figure 10) with all the factors that are associated with and relevant to school dropout and persistence in Kakuma. Addressing the key

challenges and opportunities that exist in children and youth's schooling in refugee camps, I close this chapter with implications for policy and practice on school dropout and persistence amidst displacement, which may also prove relevant and useful for other populations and/or settings. Acknowledging some of the limitations of this study, I also outline directions for future research.

School Persistence and Dropout in Kakuma Refugee Camp

School-related Fees, Policies, and Relationships

The overriding reason behind children and youth's primary school dropout in Kakuma Refugee Camp was the indirect costs of schooling (e.g., school uniforms and supplies) and the family's inability to meet those school necessities. While it was 'free' to access primary schools in Kakuma, most families could not afford to pay for the 'hidden costs' such as school uniforms and other requirements (Zuilkowski et al., 2017).

Without uniforms and/or supplies, students were often chased away from classrooms and/or blocked from entering the school compound. Although the school uniform policy was not officially mandated by the government, it was found to be strictly and commonly enforced by head teachers and teachers in the camp, who argued that the school uniform was important for identifying students from those who were not and ensuring school safety (Sabic-El-Rayess et al., 2019). However, children and youth reported that those reasons were mere excuses and school leaders and administrators often took advantage of this uniform policy to drive away poor and/or low-performing students. This finding confirms the literature which argued that some schools may use different strategies to 'discharge' low performing students to increase the average test performance of the school (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Riehl, 1999, as cited in Bowers, in press).

Besides school uniforms, students were also kicked out of school when they lacked learning materials such as exercise books, pens, and pencils. According to the students, teachers associated school supplies with students' level of commitment and motivation toward learning. Without these items, students were not only scolded by teachers for being 'not academically serious' but were also subjected to corporal punishment (physical and verbal), all of which resulted in academic demotivation, disengagement, and dropout. Overall, the findings from this study revealed that while the inability to afford the costs of school uniforms and supplies—which pointed to the reality of living in extreme poverty in the camp (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2011)—was considered an important factor for dropout, the unofficial school uniform policy contributed to school dropout among primary students in Kakuma.

Most students perceived such undesired, involuntary dropout as a temporary leave from school. However, the majority remained out of school for a longer period of time due to the multiple issues that complicated their school re-entry, one of which was the removal of their names from the school register (attendance sheet). After a few weeks of absence, class teachers or head teachers often deleted students' names from the register. If and when students managed to return to school, they were no longer in the school system and had to wait a term or more. Making matters worse, they were often asked to pay extra fees for registration or had to repeat a grade to be eligible to take the national exams. Therefore, primary school dropout in Kakuma was mainly attributable to the indirect costs of schooling, the informal (and arbitrary) policies of requiring school uniforms, and the strict requirements of school re-entry (No et al., 2016; Sabates et al., 2013; Zuilkowski et al., 2016).

Despite the negative experiences at school—mostly as a result of the strict uniform policy and the practice of kicking children out of school—children and youth also claimed that

positive relationships with their teachers and peers were key to their school persistence (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017; Fortin et al., 2013; Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004). Academic, emotional, or sometimes material support from teachers helped students overcome academic and personal challenges. Having been through similar experiences, teachers showed a sense of ‘relatedness’ with students, which fostered their academic motivation and persistence (Cha, 2020). Many students, especially those who lived without family members, considered teachers to be their parents or guardians, especially those with the same gender or ethnic background. Adolescent girls, in particular, appreciated having at least one female teacher at school who was also considered their role model and friend. Owing to the extra care and attention provided by at least one teacher or an adult in school, several participants noted that they were able to avoid dropping out of school.

Mutually supportive peer relationships could also be a factor that made school a supportive environment, keeping children and youth in school (Fortin et al., 2013). Academic collaboration, encouragement, and borrowing/lending of school supplies were commonly mentioned, all of which contributed to students’ school persistence. In schools and communities, children and youth voluntarily formed study groups to help one another in subjects, especially for upper primary students as they prepared for the national examinations. Peer learning was critical to students’ performance in Kakuma, as there was a limited number of teachers to cater to the needs of each student. In such cases, students relied on voluntary review sessions with peers at school and in the community that improved their academic performance. Moreover, emotional support from classmates through encouragement and sharing of school materials was positively associated with school persistence in Kakuma.

Therefore, this study confirmed existing literature that highlighted the ‘two faces’ of education that could either harm or promote children and youth’s schooling in conflict-affected settings (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). While school-related costs, school uniform policies and practices, and negative interactions with teachers and peers exacerbated schooling experiences for some children and youth, supportive relationships with and support from teachers and peers positively influenced their educational pursuit in displacement (Cha, 2020; Mendenhall et al., 2020; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008).

Family Characteristics: Responsibilities and Support

Besides school-level factors, some of the key family-level factors proved to be a contributory cause of school persistence or dropout in Kakuma (Holmes, 2003; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Smits & Huisman, 2013). Most, if not all, children and youth were expected to perform family duties and spent on average four to five hours doing work at home (Abuya et al., 2012). Boys were expected to look for low-wage jobs (e.g., *boda boda* drivers or security guards) to help generate family income, or to support small family businesses (e.g., running a small supermarket, restaurant, tailor/barbershop, etc.). In general, girls had to take care of heavy domestic work such as tending to young siblings, the elderly, or sick family member(s) at home. Some of the girls were also involved in income-generating roles such as selling *mandazis* on the street, babysitting, or cleaning other people’s houses to earn a small amount of money (Shahidul, 2013; Siddhu, 2011).

By contrast, this study found that family support could also lower the risk of dropout (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017; Zuilkowski & Betancourt, 2014). With academic, emotional, or financial support from parents, children and youth managed to stay in school amidst dire circumstances. Having a positive, warm relationship with at least one parent who encouraged

educational pursuit proved to prevent a child and youth from dropping out (Rutter, 1985). In the absence of support from parents, a parental figure (e.g., an aunt, an uncle, or a grandparent) who can look at the long-term benefits of education prevented children and youth's dropout and enabled them to withstand challenges (Abuya et al., 2012).

Moreover, the majority of in-school participants explained that their school persistence was mainly attributable to the sacrifices of their parents and siblings. Despite poverty and other hardships in the camp, their parents prioritized children's education over other activities such as assisting with household income or domestic work. In some families, parents and siblings also acted as role models, mentors, and sometimes the "catalysts for change" in the children's lives (Warrington & Kiragu, 2012, p. 308). Hence, this study confirmed the existing literature that expressed that parental support for education is one of the key family-related characteristics that fosters school persistence (Abuya et al., 2012; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2017; Zuilkowski & Betancourt, 2014).

Children and youth in Kakuma also persisted in school due to family expectations and/or their future aspirations. Students often claimed they were considered the only 'hope' or the 'future' of the family—and education was the only "path to a better [or brighter] future" (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008, p. 646). Family expectations made them feel responsible to work harder, perform well on the national exams, and proceed to secondary education in the camp, in other parts of Kenya, or abroad. Such expectations or responsibilities from family members shaped children and youth's academic motivation or persistence, as 65% of the in-school students chose supporting parents and family to explain the reason behind their persistence in schooling amidst myriad challenges.

On one hand, having older siblings or relatives who have successfully navigated their educational trajectory also served as a motivating factor to continue education. Seeing how a family member, friend, or neighbor could either get a scholarship to study abroad or in Kenya, or to get employed as a teacher or an NGO staff, enabled them to witness the benefits of or return to education. On the other hand, those with younger siblings were expected to set a ‘good example’ through academic achievement and persistence. Consequently, these family influences were considered one of the most important sources of students’ persistence in school.

Beyond contributions to families, some students asserted that they wished to contribute to the reconstruction of their communities and/or countries of origin. Students spoke of their occupational aspirations and plans, all of which was to support the development of their home countries. Their hope to ‘give back’ fueled their motivation to complete primary education and/or pursue high(er) education. Some claimed that their determination to give back was attributable to their appreciation for the educational opportunity in the camp. They used words such as ‘chosen’ or ‘privileged’ to be educated, while many people back at home (countries of origin) were still ‘struggling’ or ‘suffering.’ They felt responsible to build capacity and resources so that they can contribute to nation-building.

Individual Characteristics: Female, Overage, and Unaccompanied Minors

This study found that some individual/demographic factors such as gender, age, and living alone could influence schooling for children and youth (mostly dropout). Being a female was highly associated with dropout from school in Kakuma. About half of the out-of-school girls reported that early pregnancy contributed to dropout. When they were forced to stay home for a few weeks or even months (e.g., mainly as a result of the lack of a school uniform and

supplies), adolescent girls claimed they were often ‘lured’ into sexual relationships or marriage by men in the community. Other times, they became victims of sexual violence due to insecurity in the camp. Regardless of the underlying causes, most of these girls reported that their pregnancy—which was ‘unplanned’ or ‘undesired’—happened after they dropped out of school. One significant finding from this study was the process or sequence of the dropout among girls in Kakuma. The majority of participants shared that it was the absences and dropout (the school uniform policy being the major push factor) that contributed to their early pregnancy, not vice versa. For girls in the camp, a short-term leave from school could have a longer-term impact, especially due to unplanned pregnancy and childbirth. After giving birth, it was difficult for most teenage mothers to return to school, as they had little to no childcare support and might decide to marry the father of their child.

Age was also associated with school dropout in the camp. As children and youth got older, they increasingly faced social and economic pressures to perform family duties or get married (Abuya et al., 2014; Zuilkowski et al., 2016). Older boys were often forced into income-generating, low-wage work to support the family, while older girls were mainly responsible for domestic work such as carrying out household chores, looking after younger siblings, and/or taking care of sick family members, all of which could largely interfere with going to school (Zuilkowski et al., 2014).

As many studies in developing countries have indicated, the practice of early marriage was also prevalent among many families and communities in Kakuma (Colclough et al., 2000; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Hunter & May, 2003; Hunt, 2008). Parents often married off their daughters to obtain a dowry or have one less mouth to feed. The practices of early marriage were perceived to be a factor that disrupted girls’ learning. This partly explained the high

dropout rate for students at the upper primary classes—especially in Standards 7 and 8. Therefore, sociocultural norms and pressures for marriage or child labor were some of the major reasons that put older children and youth at higher risk for dropping out of school. In particular, the pressure was stronger for older, adolescent girls from impoverished families (Abuya et al., 2014; Zuilkowski et al., 2016).

The absence of a parental figure was a critical factor that influenced children and youth's schooling in Kakuma (Yi et al., 2012). Due to the conflict, a large number of children and youth either lost their parent(s) or were separated from them during flight. Some arrived in the camp with their parents or guardians but lost them due to sickness. The findings suggested that orphans who lost both of their parents in the conflict or during the flight, or unaccompanied minors who came to the camp without parents or guardians, were particularly at higher risk of dropping out of school. They often struggled to balance studies with meeting their basic needs; compared to those who lived with parents or guardians, they had to take care of everything by themselves, such as collecting rations and firewood, fetching water, and cooking, to mention a few activities. Unaccompanied minors and orphans, those under the age of 17, were subjected to receive 'child protection support' from NGOs, yet the delivery of basic materials was often delayed or, in the worst case, did not reach them at all. In these cases, these marginalized children and youth dropped out of school to find low-wage labor or to beg for food and materials from the neighbors to survive.

As a result, individual characteristics such as gender, age, and being an unaccompanied minor/orphan in the camp contributed to school dropout. Although certain factors (e.g., supportive teachers/peers, aspirations for the future) could have positively influenced the schooling experiences, overall, girls, overage learners, and unaccompanied minors/orphans

were at a greater risk of leaving school. Children and youth with overlapping ‘vulnerabilities’ or “multiply-marginalized”—e.g., being an overage, female student who lived alone in the camp—had the highest chance of dropping out of primary school (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018, p. 11).

Intersections and Interactions between Factors

Another noticeable finding from the study were the intersections between different factors—a combination of both positive and negative factors across individual, family, and school levels—that existed in children and youth’s schooling experiences. This confirmed the existing literature that barriers to accessing education often intersected in crisis-affected contexts (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018; Hunt, 2008). Some students highlighted the constant ‘tug of war’ between supportive and discouraging actors and situations, which was part of their daily lives. The stories of Amila and Angelina illustrated two of many examples that showed such interactions or tensions between factors influencing their school persistence and dropout in exile.

As a 20-year-old South Sudanese girl, Amila lived with her stepmother who prioritized the education of her biological children over Amila’s. Instead, she was forced to do most of the household chores, which interfered with her learning. Due to frequent absences caused by lack of school requirements, Amila’s academic performance was heavily affected. Despite such challenges at home, she had one *Madame* (a female teacher) at school who used to sit down with her and empathized with her. At times, she provided Amila with school items such as exercise books and pens. Amila also had an amicable relationship with most of her classmates. She stated, “For me, the school was like my mother or my father. It was like my friend.

Whenever I was in school, I felt happy.” For these reasons, she struggled to attend school, despite discrimination from family members and heavy domestic work.

When Amila was in the lower grades, she received a pair of school uniforms distributed by UNHCR. After a few years, the uniforms became too small and dirty, and she had to come to school in ‘non-uniform.’ When she reached Standard 5, the school started requiring uniforms and chased away those who did not come in proper school attire. Unfortunately, that was about the time when Amila received the news that her uncle (the only relative alive who used to send her some remittances from Juba, South Sudan) was killed in the war. Soon after this happened, the *Madame* at school who used to support her emotionally and financially had also resettled to Canada. Amila’s constant tug of war between push factors (e.g., unsupportive stepmother, home responsibilities, lack of school uniforms) and pull factors (e.g., supportive teachers and peers, sense of belonging, academic performance) came to an end when she finally had to drop out of school in 2013. After she left school, she got married because “there was nothing that I was doing with my life. I was just staying at home, not studying, so I decided to get married.” At the time of the interview, Amila was the mother of two children who regretted dropping out of school and still wished to return to school “when the children are old enough.”

Another example is that of Angelina, an 18-year-old South Sudanese girl who lived with parents and siblings in Kakuma. Even if class congestion, teacher absenteeism, and negative relationships with peers were common issues that sometimes discouraged her from coming to school, she still came to school early in the morning to secure a front seat. One day, when Angelina found out about her unplanned pregnancy (which happened over the school break), she was afraid to tell her parents. Surprisingly, they were supportive of her education

and encouraged her to continue learning at school during her pregnancy, and resume school after giving birth. Her father, who was in South Sudan at that time, sent money to pay for school-related materials for Angelina and her siblings. Her mother also offered to take care of the newborn during school hours. Despite support from her parents, Angelina thought of dropping out of school since she felt uncomfortable at school, especially when her peers made fun of her big belly.

It was when Angelina stayed home for a few days that her class teacher visited her “to have a long talk” with her. “Before then, I had even refused to listen to my mother [who wanted me to return to school] but *Mwalimu* [the teacher] convinced me to come back and learn. I changed my mind and decided to come back to school,” Angelina reminisced. At the time of the study, Angelina was a ‘candidate’ [Standard 8 student] who wished to proceed to secondary education in or out of the camp. She aspired to help marginalized girls in South Sudan: “No one is taking girls to school. I can talk to their parents about the importance of girls’ education and encourage them to take their girls to school.”

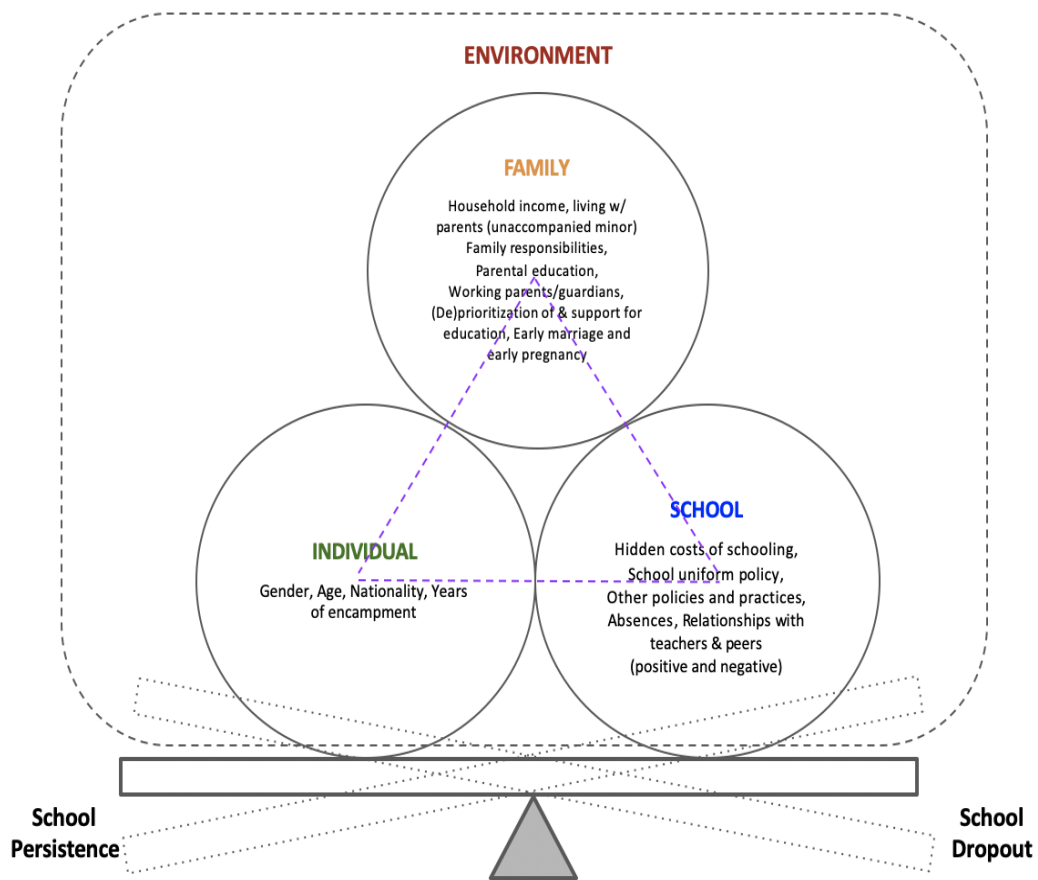
These two stories highlight the intersection of factors at individual, family, and school levels that influenced children and youth’s schooling in Kakuma (Hunt, 2008). This also confirmed the dotted triangles in the conceptual framework (see Figures 2, 5, and 6), which showed the interrelatedness of multiple factors across different spaces in an individual’s sociocultural environment. In other words, students were often faced with a combination of factors that either supported or discouraged their educational pursuits. Hence, this finding emphasized the fact that ensuring educational access and persistence was not the role of a single stakeholder in education—i.e., a family member (parent), a head teacher, a teacher, or a

student. Instead, different actors in children and youth’s sociocultural environments could play a role in influencing their decisions to (dis)continue education.

Based on the findings from this study, I adjusted the conceptual framework (Figure 2), and present a modified version that shows the interrelated factors at individual, family, and school levels that contributed to school persistence and dropout in Kakuma Refugee Camp (Figure 10). This conceptual framework can be used to examine the schooling experiences of conflict-affected populations in exile and/or other mobile and marginalized populations in non-conflict settings.

Figure 10

Revised Conceptual Framework of Children and Youth’s School Persistence and Dropout in Kakuma Refugee Camp



Implications for Practice and Policy

In this section, I present key policy and practice implications that could prevent school dropout and foster school persistence in Kakuma Refugee Camp. In addition to issues at individual, family, and school levels, I also present some of the structural and systemic issues that need attention to ensure the provision of sustainable and quality education for children and youth in displacement.

School Policies and Practices: Engaging and Empowering Local Communities

Eliminating school uniforms may not be a viable option for some contexts like Kakuma, where the benign role they are presumed to play is highlighted: to promote a sense of safety, uniformity, social cohesion, and discipline among students (Sabic-El-Rayess et al., 2019). Besides, children and youth in Kakuma took great ‘pride’ in wearing school uniforms. If the school uniforms cannot be abolished, as it is perceived to be an important part of schooling, then school leaders and teachers must recognize that students should not be punished—whether physically or verbally— if/when they show up without a uniform (the same applies to coming to school without school materials). School leaders and administrators should ensure that students’ inability to meet some of these practices/policies should not impede students’ ability to attend school. Furthermore, students (regardless of their backgrounds and performances) should not be ‘involuntarily discharged’ for not wearing uniforms. As Bowers (in press) underscored, “This behaviour [of involuntary discharge] by school decision makers is highly problematic, unethical, and does not support student success. It should therefore also be detected as early as possible with appropriate follow-up management and policy changes and professional development to refocus the schools on student persistence and support (Bowers, in press, p.15). Consequently, this may require not only training for school leaders and teachers,

but also a paradigm shift for NGOs or UN agencies that closely monitor school policies and practices and intervene when students' schooling is affected.

Humanitarian and development agencies must seek innovative ways to establish a sustainable support system that ensures the provision of school uniforms in refugee camps. One solution is working closely with community-based, refugee-led organizations and those who run their own tailoring businesses in the camp. In fact, a community of refugee tailors works with a local NGO in producing and selling souvenirs such as patterned bags, notebooks, accessories, and other items. They could be actively involved in making school uniforms for children and youth in the camp. In fact, during the COVID-19 outbreak, tailors and artisans in the camp stepped up and used the locally available fabric to make masks and distribute them to the community members (UNHCR, 2020d). Although costs may still be involved in this kind of projects, this is a great example that highlights both the capabilities and commitments of displaced populations, and the importance of providing them with an opportunity to use their skills not only to help their communities but also to make a living.

Another partnership that could ensure sustainability is with technical or vocational training centers in the camp. Producing useful materials such as exercise books, pens, and sanitary pads, incorporated as part of a program or an assignment, could cater to the needs of students. Bottom-up approaches that empower local communities' capacities could lead to the most sustainable, flexible, and innovative results that support the education of children and youth. This approach may also prove useful among other low-income and communities outside of the camp and/or in other settings.

When supplying students with a pair of uniforms, providers must also take into consideration two important aspects: the rapid physical growth of children and youth, and

conditions in the camp (e.g., water shortages and severe weather conditions). From time to time, UN agencies and I/NGOs distribute school uniforms to children and youth, yet one set of uniforms is not enough to ‘survive’ eight years of primary education. Uniforms quickly become too small for students to wear, and the unbearable climate (e.g., dust storms in a semi-arid desert environment) and shortage of water in the camp often preclude students from keeping their uniforms clean. According to some studies, dirty or torn uniforms could signal a female student’s vulnerability and become “grounds for advances by men offering food or money for sex” (Bledsoe & Cohen, 1993, as cited in Sabic-El-Rayess et al., 2019, p. 7). Considering all these factors, education stakeholders, including donor agencies and implementing partners, must take collaborative and innovative approaches to provide school uniforms and supplies consistently, thereby promoting school persistence for children and youth in refugee camps (Mutegi, 2018).

Teachers and School Leaders: Providing Support through Professional Development

Teachers play an instrumental role in the academic and socioemotional development of children and youth in settings affected by armed conflicts, forced displacement, and natural disasters (Kirk & Winthrop, 2007, 2013; Mendenhall, 2017). Particularly for unaccompanied minors or orphans—children and youth who do not have an adult or a parental figure in the camp—teachers can influence not only their schooling but also their life in general. Teachers’ behaviors and actions can either foster academic motivation among children and youth or discourage them from continuing education. Despite such a significant role, most teachers working in crisis contexts are unqualified or undertrained (Burns & Lawrie, 2015; Mendenhall et al., 2018). The majority of teachers in Kakuma are refugees who receive incentives for their

teaching. Most have received secondary education in the camp and become teachers with little to no training (Mendenhall, 2017).

Without support and guidance on how to teach in class or interact with students, teachers find it challenging to form positive relationships with the students and address their needs. Providing contextually relevant preservice training opportunities as well as continuous professional development opportunities is key to improving these teachers' teaching strategies, classroom management skills, and disciplinary approaches, all of which positively influence teacher-student relationships (Mendenhall et al., 2020). When the teacher is trained (specifically on empathic approaches to child protection and support), he or she can identify students at risk, those who are frequently missing school, and the reasons behind their absences. Identifying marginalized and vulnerable students and providing them with adequate care and attention can help prevent dropout and bring children back to school.

Professional development opportunities must also include school leaders such as head teachers, deputy head teachers, academic coordinators, and others. Professional opportunities for supportive leadership, teacher support, and administration will help equip school leaders with pedagogical, management, and relational skills that are contextually appropriate. Since January 2018, all head teacher positions in Kakuma have been given to Kenyan teachers, most of whom were educated outside the camp. While the goal of this decision was to improve the quality of education in the camp with 'certified' teachers, these national teachers may lack knowledge about the camp as well as the student population. By participating in professional development initiatives, head teachers will be able to better understand students' experiences, and design innovative solutions to support their needs. In a decentralized education system, including school leaders in professional development is particularly important as they can act

as decision makers in school-level policies and practices (e.g., school uniform policy) who could be influential in children's school persistence or dropout.

Families and Communities: Educating and Engaging Parents and Guardians

Support from family members, especially from parents and guardians, is another crucial element that determines children and youth's success in schooling. Provision of financial support (e.g., school-related materials) or emotional support (e.g., encouragement) or sometimes academic support (e.g., assistance with homework) can positively contribute to school persistence. However, many parents and families in crisis contexts do not often recognize the long-term benefit of education and, therefore prioritize other immediate needs such as child labor and domestic work (Hunt, 2008; Lewin, 2009; Zuilkowski et al., 2017). Without parental support in education, children and youth cannot access or complete basic education. Through awareness-raising campaigns and ongoing conversations in the community, parents and guardians should be educated on the value of education and its long-term benefits—for both boys and girls.

In supporting children and youth in the camp, international, national, and local agencies must recognize the varying levels of vulnerability among students and identify those who are at the highest risk of dropping out of school. Identifying these students and the determinants of their school dropout is critical to the formulation and implementation of policies and practices that target marginalized groups who may have been hidden from humanitarian interventions (Momo et al., 2019). Some of these marginalized populations include unaccompanied minors, those living in child-headed households or foster families, adolescent girls, and 'differently abled' student populations, to mention a few. For each of these marginalized groups, providing targeted programs and assistance at the right moment is key to reducing dropout in the camp.

For instance, girls are vulnerable as they encounter issues such as discrimination, early marriage, early pregnancy, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). When they reach adolescence, girls are often persuaded or forced to get married by family members. Early pregnancy is also caused during the school breaks or when they are chased away and remain ‘idle’ at home. Building a supportive network within schools or communities could help them be connected with female adults who could be their counselors, supporters, and role models. Moreover, adolescent girls may also be at risk of SGBV due to insecurity in the camp (Hattar-Pollara, 2019). Preventive measures against SGBV must be strengthened at schools and in communities through regular awareness-raising campaigns and activities. Other child protection issues in the camp may include having abusive parents or guardians, whether they be stepparents, foster parents, or even biological parents. Therefore, it is imperative to train parents and communities on child protection issues, ensuring that children and youth feel safe at home.

For sensitization to be successful and sustainable, key education stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, and community members should be involved in all phases of development from a program or project—from design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. The active engagement of these local stakeholders—regardless of age, gender, nationality, and ethnicity—could instill a sense of ownership towards issues that children and youth face in the camp, and come up with locally driven, innovative ideas to solve some of the above-mentioned challenges. In all of these efforts, international and local agencies pursue inter-agency, intersectoral approaches (e.g., education, child protection, SGBV, etc.) to identify the root causes of the problem, resolve any issues at different levels of the systems, and create ways to address the issue efficiently. Taking ownership and working collaboratively across

sectors and agencies could prevent ongoing challenges that impede school persistence in the camp. Participation, empowerment, and collaboration across sectors and actors are some of the most significant ways to ensure the sustainability of the programs.

Systemic and Structural Changes: Strengthening Systems and Ensuring Sustainability

The findings of this study revealed that over 93% of out-of-school children and youth desired to go back to school. Some responded that they could go back as soon as the next day (e.g., if school uniforms and materials are provided), while others hoped to return in the near future when circumstances allowed them to (e.g., upon recovery of their family members from illness, the growth of their babies, etc.). With a few months or even years of disrupted schooling, returning students may need extra support in terms of their learning and adjustment. For instance, programs that help them with academic subjects are essential for them to catch up quickly with their classes. Noting that some students from Francophone countries encounter language barriers, language support is also important to encourage their academic persistence in displacement. These supports could be provided in the form of afterschool programs or weekend classes, with additional incentives for in-service teachers or volunteer teachers who are willing to support students who need academic and language support.

Accelerated education programs (AEP), which currently exist in the camp, should be sustained and offered every term to accommodate returning students. At the moment, AEPs are offered as a result of three-year funding support from a donor agency; ongoing funding is uncertain. Moreover, while AEPs are intended to condense the curriculum (e.g., eight years to four years) for overage students to catch up to their age-appropriate grade level, school leaders and teachers in AEPs must pay attention not only to the learning needs of the students but also to their socioemotional needs. Overage learners may feel ashamed to be in the same classrooms

with small children; although they wear the same school uniforms, they may feel isolated in their classrooms, which are called Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 (Taka, 2021). Teenage mothers sometimes come to school with their infants or toddlers, some of whom may end up dropping out of the AEPs again because of disruptions related to childcare. Others may struggle to balance their studies with home responsibilities.

International and local agencies, in partnership with schools and communities, must seek ways to address such issues and offer services to encourage teenage mothers and older learners to continue learning. For instance, providing a flexible class schedule or afternoon/evening classes for students who need to work could decrease the dropout rate. For teenage mothers who wish to return to classes or enroll in AEP classes, childcare service could be helpful, as research has pointed that school re-entry among them is low because they are unable to find caregivers for their babies (Grant & Hallman, 2008). In addition to these support systems, AEP teachers should be provided with continuous professional development opportunities to understand the unique needs of overage and/or adult learners and learn to interact with them, many of whom could be several years older than the teachers. Teachers should also be provided with safe spaces to discuss their challenges in teaching these returning students and ask for support from school leaders and overseeing NGOs.

Last but not least, ensuring access to and completion of primary education for children and youth in exile is important. However, primary completion in Kakuma does not guarantee a transition to secondary schools. Less than 2% of primary school leavers (graduates) enter secondary schools in the camp. Only a few selected students are granted the scholarships to continue education at elite national secondary schools outside the camp, while others are

supported by parents and families to enroll at schools located in Nairobi or other parts of Kenya.

As a result, the shortage of secondary schools (five schools currently in Kakuma), tuition fees for secondary education, limited scholarship opportunities for higher education, and lack of employment opportunities in the camp lead children and youth to “broken trajectories,” sitting in the community with unfulfilled promises that result in disappointment, resentment, and hopelessness for the ‘unknowable future’ (Bellino, 2018; Bourdieu, 1984; Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Bellino (2020) contended that “school completion raised societal expectations to a standard that was unreachable for the large majority, leading instead to disappointment [and] shame” (p. 13). Given the protracted nature of displacement, policies and programs should continue to address the persistent barriers that limit socioeconomic and spatial mobility for refugees and include them into national systems (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019).

Although Kenya is a signatory to the 1951 Convention, and more recently the Djibouti Declaration on Regional Refugee Education (2017), these inclusive policy frameworks have yet to be realized in practice. The majority of refugees in Kenya, generation after generation, reside in isolated camps, where refugees heavily rely on global assistance due to limited work, livelihood, and educational opportunities in the camp. While there has been increased attention on the expansion of educational programs in the camp, existing systems and structures still pose insurmountable challenges to access education. Bellino (2018) posited, “Calls to expand access to higher education are critical for refugee youth; however, educational expansion alone will not address the struggles experienced by school leavers in this context” (p. 13).

Even with a secondary school diploma, it is extremely challenging to secure a job in the camp or pursue higher education outside the camp. Therefore, key actors at the international,

national, and local levels must exert concerted efforts, across sectors and agencies, to address the existing policy-practice gap in refugee education and provide more learning opportunities for these populations inside and outside the camp. Taking a holistic approach to examine and understand the lives of children and youth in displacement, and to address numerous challenges faced by these populations as a result of structural systemic barriers, is key to fostering school persistence among children and youth amidst displacement.

Conclusion and Future Research

This study examined the different factors that influenced the schooling of children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp. This study found that family poverty (as a result of limited employment/livelihood opportunities in the camp), inability to afford school uniforms and supplies, school uniform policy, living without parents/guardians, and family responsibilities were some of the major reasons that contributed to school dropout. By contrast, different types of support—financial, emotional, or academic—received from family members, teachers, and peers mainly influenced students’ persistence, despite persistent barriers in schooling. This study finds that ensuring educational access and persistence was not the role of a single stakeholder in education—i.e., a family member (parent), a head teacher, a teacher, or a student. Instead, different actors in children and youth’s sociocultural environments could play a role in influencing their decisions to (dis)continue education.

This study had a few limitations that I aim to address in future research. While I attempted to capture the voices of children and youth—both in-school and out of school—through multiple data sources, these voices were collected at one point in their lives. Out-of-school participants had to rely on their memories for why and how they dropped out of school. To better understand their lived experiences and perspectives, and track the graduation and

transition of in-school students into secondary or higher education, I suggest conducting longitudinal, mixed-methods research in the future. Moreover, it should include ethnographic work that closely examines students' interactions with peers and teachers in the classrooms and schools; relationships with family members at home and neighbors at the community would also provide a fuller picture of their lives and educational trajectories. While this study attempted to engage local research assistants in data collection, a participatory research study should be designed and implemented, which includes children and youth to elevate and center their voices in all phases of research, from initial development through to analysis.

I acknowledge the importance of recognizing the unique challenges of children and youth who experience multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities, especially those who live in urban spaces (Karanja, 2010; Landau, 2014; Marfleet, 2007; Payanello et al., 2010). According to Mendenhall et al. (2017), refugees are often subjected to discrimination and xenophobia, exploitation, and harassment among host communities in urban centers; as a result, negative interactions and experiences in urban spaces could threaten children and youth's school persistence amidst displacement. Given that their daily engagements with multiple actors in defining and encompassing the community that has little to no commonalities with their home countries could greatly influence their educational and life trajectories in exile, future research must explore the school persistence and dropout of these forcibly displaced populations in urban centers. I initially attempted to conduct a comparative study that included children and youth in urban centers. Given the difficulty in identifying or locating urban refugees in host communities or national schools, however, I decided to focus only on children and youth in refugee camps. In future research, I aim to expand my research to include urban refugees in

host communities and highlight the similarities and differences between two different settings—camps and urban centers—in their schooling.

This dissertation study was conducted in 2019, before the outbreak of COVID-19. The current COVID-19 pandemic reverses gains made in recent years to improve access to quality education for refugees and other marginalized populations. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, children and youth living in refugee camps were already among the world's most vulnerable populations. Despite the provision of WhatsApp- and radio-based learning programs, extended school closures have put many children and youth at high risk of dropping out of school. The situation could deter even those academically motivated students and their families from believing in the value of education. Although the numbers are not available yet, teachers suspect an increase in the number of early pregnancies and early marriages during the pandemic.

The Ministry of Education in Kenya plans to reopen schools in the first quarter of 2021, starting with the primary and secondary school-leaving examinations in late March. However, it is still unclear whether it is safe to continue learning in densely populated primary classrooms and/or whether families would be willing to send their children to school. My research aims to explore the effect of COVID-19 on refugee education, particularly for the most marginalized groups of students by asking: *How has the COVID-19 situation influenced the lives and schooling of children and youth in displacement? To what extent are teachers working in crisis contexts supported to cope with teaching amidst a health pandemic?* These are some of the questions I will ask in my future research.

Due to the protracted nature of forced displacement, a majority of refugees spend their entire academic cycles in exile (Milner & Loescher, 2011). While some successfully navigate

their educational trajectories, others are unable to complete basic education. Despite the important role education plays in emergency, displacement, and resettlement, refugee education remains under-researched. There is a dearth of research that has investigated what factor(s) at individual, family, and school levels contribute to children and youth's school persistence and dropout amidst displacement. This study aimed to fill this substantial gap in the literature by taking a balanced, comprehensive approach to investigate the experiences of children and youth in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya.

The findings from this study not only contribute to expanding the knowledge base of education in emergencies, but they also support educators and practitioners who are providing and improving education for displaced populations, as well as policymakers within the Ministry of Education working to strengthen education systems and to foster access to quality education. My research findings may also prove meaningful in understanding the school persistence of school-aged children and youth in other refugee-hosting countries around the world, including the United States, and other mobile and marginalized populations in non-conflict settings.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Discussion Protocol

**Participative Ranking Methodology*

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this group discussion! Let's go ahead and share our names. I will go first. My name is Jay. *(As students share their names, write down and try to remember)* Thank you. Let me explain why you are here, and what activity we will do. I am a student who studies in the United States, and I am here to ask you about experiences of going to school in (Kakuma). In particular, I am interested in finding out why some students continue school, while others drop out. Today, I would like to ask for your perspectives on this issue.

Please remember that this is voluntary, and you don't have to participate if you don't want to. If you think the questions are difficult to answer, feel free to remain silent (not share). But if there are any words that you don't understand, please feel free to raise your hands. Do not be embarrassed to ask. Also, I would like this space to be 'safe space.' This means that whatever we discuss here remains in this room/space (between us). We are going to respect each other's answers/opinions, and be mindful NOT to share them with anyone outside this group. Okay? *(If everyone agrees, go to the next stage).*

Permission for audio-recording: Before we begin, I would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation. I may also be writing notes from time to time. PLEASE remember that all of our conversations will remain confidential. Would it be okay for you if I record our conversation? *(If all of the participants agree, start the voice recorder).*

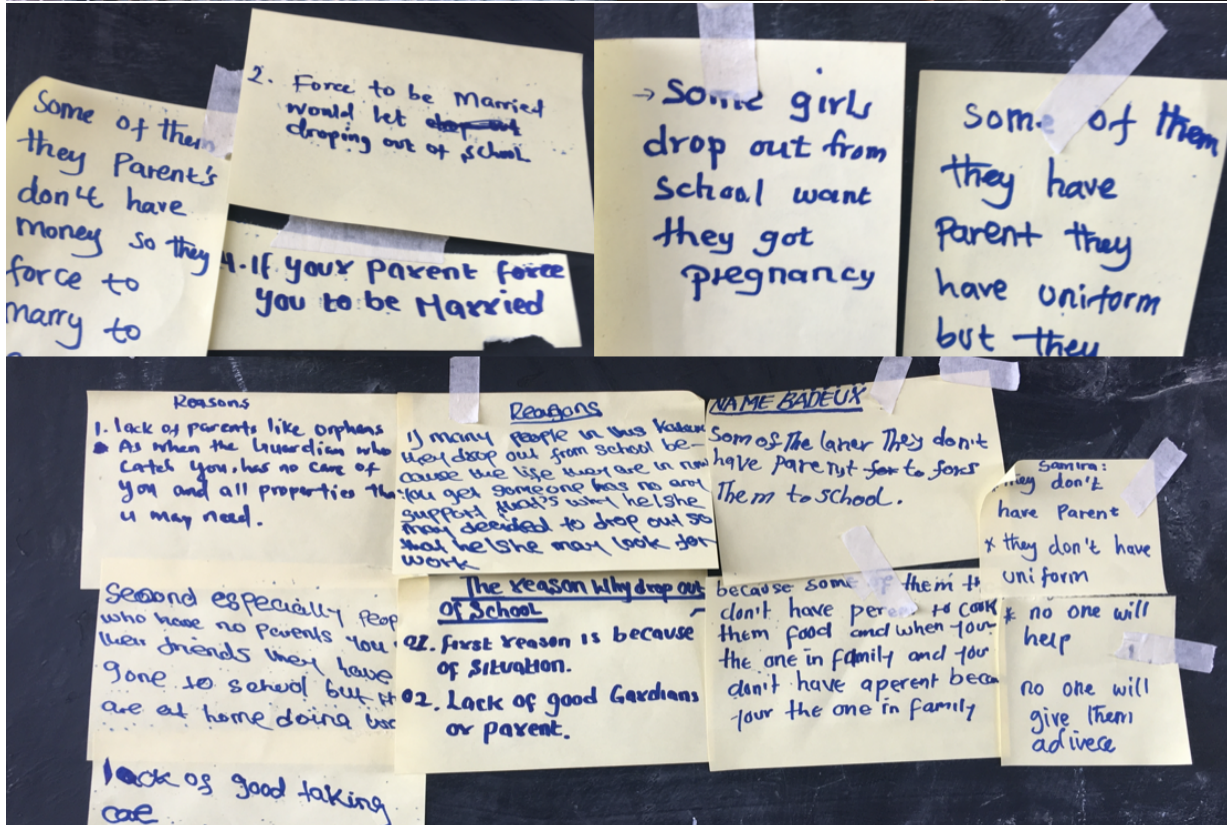
Activity: Here I have some pieces of paper. *(Distribute 3-5 pieces of index cards and a pen per person)* Each person will get three pieces of paper and a pen. Does everyone have them? Okay.

1. On each paper, we are going to write down "one reason" why you think refugee students in Kakuma 1) continue school and 2) drop out of school. You can write the reason in one word, two words or more. Be honest with your answer. Please remember that there is no right or wrong answer in this activity.
 - a. *(Give them 5-10 minutes. When everyone seems to have finished writing, ask them to put their cards down (make sure that answers cannot be seen by others).*
2. Thank you very much. Now we are going to see for ourselves what some of those reasons are that make students drop out of school. *(Place those papers on the ground or tape them on the blackboard so that everyone can see).*
 - a. Individual reasons
 - b. Family-related
 - c. School-related
 - d. Others (this category may be altered depending on students' answers)
3. Now, collectively, we are going to "rank" these answers. One person will stand up, come up to the front, pick up the card that he or she thinks is the most influential factor that contributes to student drop out in Kakuma. In doing so, he/she also needs to provide rationale (descriptions) for why he/she chose it. The person can briefly share an example of himself/herself, peers, siblings, or neighbors. Then collectively, the group decides whether or

not they agree. If someone doesn't, he or she needs to come and explain why. If everyone agrees, we move to another factor (index card).

Closing: Thank you so much for your participation. Your perspectives are invaluable as I continue to study the issue. As I mentioned earlier, I hope our conversations with one another will remain in this space, and that we won't be sharing each other's perspectives to other people. (Ask if participants have any questions; If time permits, ask for places/communities where I can find other children,)

Photos from PRM Activity: Fuji Primary School in Kakuma Refugee Camp



Appendix B

Student Survey (In-school Participants)

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Answer the following items about yourself. Put a tick [✓] next to the answer/option that is most appropriate to you. Otherwise, please write down the answer(s) in the space provided.

1. My name is: _____
2. I live in Kakuma _____ Zone _____ Block _____
3. Gender:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
4. I am: _____ years old
5. I was born in year _____ (year of birth)
6. I was born in _____ (place of birth)
7. Year of arrival in Kakuma:
 - a. I came to Kakuma in Year _____
 - b. I was born in Kakuma
8. Nationality (Select one):

Burundian	South Sudanese
Congolese	Sudanese
Ethiopian	Tanzanian
Kenyan	Ugandan
Rwandan	Other: _____
Somali	
9. Tribe / Community: _____
10. Religion (Select one):
 - Muslim
 - Christian
 - No Religion
 - Others (write it here) _____
11. Language(s):
 - a. What language(s) do you speak? (list all of them below ★★★)

 - b. What language(s) do you speak FLUENTLY?

c. What language(s) do you STRUGGLE with?

12. Are you married? (Select one):

- a. Yes, I am married.
- b. No, I am **not** married.
- c. Widowed (“*mjane*”)
- d. Other (write it here) _____

13. Do you have your own child (children) at home?

- a. Yes. I have a child/children (how many? _____)
- b. No. I do not have a child/children.

14. Number of people in total do you live in your house (total number): I’m size _____

15. Who do you live with in the house in Kakuma? (Select **everyone** ★★★):

- a. Father
- b. Stepfather
- c. Mother
- d. Stepmother
- e. Foster parent(s)
- f. Brother(s) and sister(s)
- g. Cousins
- h. Grandmother or grandfather
- i. Aunt or uncle
- j. Friend(s)
- k. Neighbor(s)
- l. My own child/children
- m. I live alone
- n. Other (write the person you live with): _____

16. Are you a first born in the family?

- a. Yes I am.
- b. No I am not the firstborn. I am number _____ in order. (write number)

17. Number of brothers and sisters you live with in Kakuma : (write number) _____

18. Are you the head of the household?

- a. Yes I am the head of my household.
- b. No I am not the head of my household. (It is my _____)

19. My mother or stepmother’s highest level of education completed (Select one):

- a. No education
- b. Primary
- c. Secondary
- d. University
- e. Vocational Training
- f. Not sure
- g. Other (write it here: _____)

20. My father or stepfather's highest level education completed (Select one):
- No education
 - Primary
 - Secondary
 - University
 - Vocational Training
 - Not sure
 - Other (write it here: _____)
21. What is the job of your parents or guardians?
- She/he is a _____ (write the job here)
 - She/he does not have a job.
22. What are your daily responsibilities at home? (write ALL that you do). ★★★
23. On average, how many hours do you have to work at home? _____ hours per day.

FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS

How much do you agree with the following statements about your family? Put a tick [✓] next to the answer/option that is most appropriate to you.

Strongly disagree: I completely do not think it is my experience.

I disagree: I do not think so.

Neutral or Middle: I someone agree and disagree at the same time.

I agree: I think so.

I strongly agree: I completely think it is right.

- My parent(s) and guardian(s) help me with my schoolwork (Select one):
 - I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree
- My brothers and sisters help me with my schoolwork (Select one):
 - I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree
- My parent(s) or guardians encourage me to continue with my education (Select one):
 - I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree

4. My parent(s) or guardians want me to drop out of school (Select one):
 - a. I strongly disagree
 - b. I disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. I agree
 - e. I strongly agree

5. In my family, girls are encouraged to get married early (Select one):
 - a. I strongly disagree
 - b. I disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. I agree
 - e. I strongly agree

6. In my family, girls are discouraged from going to school (Select one):
 - a. I strongly disagree
 - b. I disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. I agree
 - e. I strongly agree

7. My parent(s) or guardians have a good relationship with my teachers (Select one):
 - a. I strongly disagree
 - b. I disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. I agree
 - e. I strongly agree

SECTION B. SCHOOL LIFE: *Answer the following items about your school. Put a tick [✓] next to the answer/option that is most appropriate to you. Otherwise, please write down the answer(s) in the space provided.*

8. Total number of close friends in this school (Select one):
 - a. 1-2 friend(s)
 - b. 3-5 friend(s)
 - c. 5-10 friend(s)
 - d. More than 10 friend(s)
 - e. I do not have any close friend

9. I have to walk _____ to go to school. (Select one):
 - a. Less than 15 minutes
 - b. 16-30 minutes
 - c. 31-60 minutes
 - d. More than 1 hour
 - e. I am not sure

10. Have you ever repeated a class in the past?
 - a. Yes (When was it? Standard _____)
 - b. No

11. Have you ever transferred schools in the past?
a. Yes. (How many times? Write here: _____)
b. No.
12. Have you attended an ALP class (Level 1 or Level 2) in the past?
a. Yes. I have attended ALP class before.
b. No. I have never attended ALP class.
13. How many years have you ever dropped out of school in the past? (Select one)
a. Less than 1 year
b. 1 year
c. 2 years
d. 3 years
e. More than 3 years
f. None
14. Have you ever thought about dropping out of school?
a. Yes. (Why? Because _____)
b. No.

How much do you agree with the following statements about your experiences in school? Put a tick [✓] next to the answer/option that is most appropriate to you.

15. I like being in this school (Select one):
a. I strongly disagree
b. I disagree
c. Neutral
d. I agree
e. I strongly agree
16. I wish I can study in another school (Select one)
a. I strongly disagree
b. I disagree
c. Neutral
d. I agree
e. I strongly agree
17. I feel safe when I'm at school (Select one):
a. I strongly disagree
b. I disagree
c. Neutral
d. I agree
e. I strongly agree
18. I feel like I belong to this school (Select one):
a. I strongly disagree
b. I disagree
c. Neutral
d. I agree
e. I strongly agree

19. I am proud to attend this school (Select one):
- I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree
20. I like to see my classmates at school (Select one):
- I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree
21. Teachers at my school are fair to me (Select one):
- I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree
22. I learn a lot in this school (Select one):
- I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree
23. I feel supported by my teacher(s) with my studies (Select one):
- I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree
24. I feel supported by my friend(s) or classmate(s) with my studies (Select one):
- I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree
25. I have been physically beaten (e.g. caned) by teachers in my school (Select one):
- Never
 - A few times (2-3 times)
 - More than 5 times
 - More than 10 times
 - More than 20 times

26. I have been verbally abused (e.g. ashamed) by teachers in my school (Select one):
- Never
 - A few times (2-3 times)
 - More than 5 times
 - More than 10 times
 - More than 20 times
27. I have been bullied by my classmate or schoolmates (Select one):
- I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree
28. Who is the most supportive person for your studies? (Select one)
- Myself: It is my own decision to learn.
 - My parent(s) or guardian(s) support me with education.
 - Teacher(s) in school encourage me to continue education.
 - My friend(s) support me with my education.
 - Another person(s): _____

School Persistence

- 1) What makes you continue with your education? I come to school... **(Select 3 answers ★★★)**
- Because in school, I can learn many different things.
 - Because in school, I can make friends.
 - To support my parents or family in the future.
 - To support my country in the future.
 - To have a good job when I finish school.
 - To have a good partner or family in the future.
 - To help other people in need in the future.
 - To forget all of my problems.
 - Other: _____
- 2) What kind of things do you have? **(Select ALL that apply ★★★)**
- School uniform
 - Text book(s)
 - Exercise books
 - Pens or pencils
 - School bag
 - School shoes
- 3) After I complete Class 8, I plan to... (Select one)
- Get married and have a family.
 - Continue secondary school in Kakuma.
 - Go to a secondary school in other places in Kenya.
 - Attend a vocational training in the camp.
 - Stay at home.
 - Other: _____

Appendix C

Student Survey (Out-of-school Participants)

SECTION A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Answer the following items about yourself. Put a tick [✓] next to the answer/option that is most appropriate to you. Otherwise, please write down the answer(s) in the space provided.

- 1) Gender (Select one):
 - a. Female
 - b. Male

- 2) Age: _____ years old

- 3) Year of birth: _____

- 4) Place of birth: _____

- 5) Year of arrival in Kenya: (Write the year here): _____
 - a. I was born in Kakuma

- 6) Nationality (Select one):

Burundian	Somali
Congolese	South Sudanese
Ethiopian	Sudanese
Kenyan	Tanzanian
Rwandan	Ugandan
Other: _____	

- 7) Tribe/Community: _____

- 8) Religion (Select one):
 - Muslim
 - Christian
 - No Religion
 - Others (write it here) _____

- 9) Language(s):
 - a. What language(s) do you speak? (list all of them)

 - b. What language(s) do you speak FLUENTLY?

 - c. What language(s) do you STRUGGLE with?

10) Marital status (Select one):

Married

Not married/Single

Widowed

Divorced

Other (write it here) _____

11) Do you have your own child (children) at home?

a. Yes. I have a child/children (how many? _____)

b. No. I do not have a child/children.

Answer the following items about your family (parents, brothers/sisters). Put a tick [✓] next to the answer/option that is most appropriate to your family background. Otherwise, please write down the answer(s) in the space provided.

12) Number of brothers and sisters you currently live with (total number): _____

13) Number of people you currently live with (total number): _____

14) Who do you live with at home (in Kakuma)? (Mark all that apply):

a. Father

b. Mother

c. Brother(s) or sister(s)

d. Grandmother or grandfather

e. Aunt or uncle

f. Friend(s)

g. Neighbor(s)

h. My own children

i. Foster parents/family

j. I live alone

k. Other (write the person you live with) _____

15) Are you a first born in the family?

a. Yes I am.

b. No I am not the firstborn. I am number _____ in order. (write the number)

16) Mother's highest education completed (Select one):

a. No education

b. Primary

c. Secondary

d. University

e. Vocational Training

f. Not sure

g. Other (write it here: _____)

17) Father's highest education completed (Select one):

a. No education

b. Primary

c. Secondary

- d. University
- e. Vocational Training
- f. Not sure
- g. Other (write it here: _____)

18) Mother's job (e.g. make a living): _____

19) Father's job (e.g. make a living): _____

20) What are your daily responsibilities at home?

21) On average, how many hours do you have to work at home every day? _____ hours

How much do you agree with the following statements about your family? Put a tick [✓] next to the answer/option that is most appropriate to you.

- **Strongly disagree:** I completely do not think it is my case.
- **I disagree:** I do not think so.
- **Neutral (middle):** I somewhat agree and disagree at the same time.
- **I agree:** I think so.
- **I strongly agree:** I completely think it is right.

22) In the past, my parent(s) and guardians used to help me with my schoolwork (Select one):

- a. I strongly disagree
- b. I disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. I agree
- e. I strongly agree

23) In the past, my brothers and sisters used to help me with my schoolwork (Select one):

- a. I strongly disagree
- b. I disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. I agree
- e. I strongly agree

24) In the past, my parent(s) or guardians encourage me to continue with my education

- a. I strongly disagree
- b. I disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. I agree
- e. I strongly agree

25) My parent(s) or guardians wanted me to quit school (Select one):

- a. I strongly disagree
- b. I disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. I agree
- e. I strongly agree

26) It was my decision to stop going to school (Select one):

- a. I strongly disagree
- b. I disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. I agree
- e. I strongly agree

27) In my family, girls are encouraged to get married early (Select one):

- a. I strongly disagree
- b. I disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. I agree
- e. I strongly agree

28) In my family, girls are discouraged from going to school (Select one):

- a. I strongly disagree
- b. I disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. I agree
- e. I strongly agree

29) In the past, my parent(s) or guardians used to have a good relationship with my teachers in my school (Select one):

- a. I strongly disagree
- b. I disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. I agree
- e. I strongly agree

SECTION B. SCHOOL LIFE

Answer the following items about the school you previously attended. Put a tick [✓] next to the answer/option that is most appropriate to you.

1) In the past, the total number of close friends I had in school was:

- a. 1-2 friend(s)
- b. 3-5 friend(s)
- c. 5-10 friend(s)
- d. More than 10 friend(s)
- e. I do not have any close friend

- 2) It took me about _____ to walk to school (Select one):
- Less than 15 minutes
 - 16-30 minutes
 - 31-60 minutes
 - More than 1 hour
 - I am not sure
- 3) Your favorite subject (Select one):
- English
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Social Studies
 - Kiswahili
 - Religion (CRE/IRE)
 - None
- 4) Have you ever repeated a class in the past?
- Yes (How many times? _____ times)
 - No
- 5) Have you ever failed in exams before?
- Yes. (When was it? Standard _____ Term _____)
 - No
- 6) How many years have you been out of school (missed schooling) in the past?
- None
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1 year
 - 2 years
 - 3 years
 - More than 3 years
- 7) Have you ever transferred schools in the past?
- Yes. (How many times? Write here: _____)
 - No.
- 8) What makes you continue with your education? I come to school... **(Select 3 answers ★★★)**
- Because in school, I can learn many different things.
 - Because in school, I can make friends.
 - To support my parents or family in the future.
 - To support my country in the future.
 - To have a good job when I finish school.
 - To have a good partner or family in the future.
 - To help other people in need in the future.
 - To forget all of my problems.
 - Other: _____

9) What kind of things do you have? (**Select ALL that apply ★★★**)

- a. School uniform
- b. Text book(s)
- c. Exercise books
- d. Pens or pencils
- e. School bag
- f. School shoes

10) After I complete Class 8, I plan to... (Select one)

- a. Get married and have a family.
- b. Continue secondary school in Kakuma.
- c. Go to a secondary school in other places in Kenya.
- d. Attend a vocational training in the camp.
- e. Stay at home.
- f. Other: _____

11) Would you like to participate in the interview?

- a. Yes. I would like to participate.
- b. No. I don't want to participate.

12) What language do you prefer to use in the interview?

- a. English
- b. Kiswahili
- c. French
- d. Arabic
- e. Mother Tongue: _____

Appendix D

Layout Map of Kakuma Refugee Camp

KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP



**DATUM WGS 1984
PROJECTION UTM ZONE 36N**

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Kilometers

**CAMP PLANNING AND INFORMATION
UNITS SOURCES:
UNHCR/NCKK-KAKUMA**

MAP PRODUCED FOR CAMP PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY

No part of this map shall be reproduced in any way for any purpose other than that stated above or without prior written consent of UNHCR/RAS/NCKK

May, 2017

Source: UNHCR. (2017a). Kakuma Refugee Camp. Kakuma Camp Map. Retrieved from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/58199>

Appendix E

Individual Student Interview Protocol (In-school Participants)

Script: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. I really appreciate your time. Through this interview, I would love to hear your previous schooling experiences– in relation to your family, community, school, and larger camp/urban environment. This interview will take about 45 minutes to one hour of your time. All of your answers and the information you provide will remain strictly **confidential**. Please feel comfortable sharing your experiences and opinions. This is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. (*Ask for permission to audio-record*)

Questions:

- a) [General] Could you tell me how it is to live in Kakuma?
- b) [School] How was it being a student in Kakuma?
 - a. Tell me about your overall experience of attending school.
 - b. What were some of the challenges and opportunities you face in school?
 - c. (Also ask about their previous educational background, if any)
- c) Could you tell me the relationships you have with your teachers? In what ways do your teachers support or not support you?
 - a. What kind of support do they provide?
- d) Could you tell me the relationships you have with your classmates or peers at school? In what ways do your peers support or not support you?
 - a. What kind of support do they provide?
- e) What are some of the reasons that you continue to attend school?
- f) Is there one (or more) influential factor(s) that contributes to your schooling?
- g) How is the relationship with your parents or guardians?
 - a. How do your parents (or caretaker) think about you going to school (education)?
- h) How do your siblings think about you going to school (education)?
- i) What do you aim to achieve through education?
- j) What is your future plan?
- k) Is there anything else you want to tell me? Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix F

Individual Child Interview Protocol (Out-of-school Participants)

Script: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. I really appreciate your time. Through this interview, I would love to hear your previous schooling experiences– in relation to your family, community, school, and larger camp/urban environment. This interview will take about 30-45 minutes of your time. All of your answers and the information you provide will remain strictly **confidential**. Please feel free to comfortable sharing your experiences and opinions. This is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. (*Ask for permission to audio-record*)

- a) [General] Could you tell me how it is to live in Kakuma?
- b) [School] How was it being a student in Kakuma?
 - a. What was your overall school experience before you dropped out of school?
 - b. What were some of the challenges and opportunities you faced in school?
 - c. Could you share any memories about school that you remember?
- c) How would you describe the relationships you had with your previous **teachers**? In what ways did your teachers support or not support you?
- d) How would you describe the relationships you had with your previous **classmates**? In what ways did your peers support or not support you?
- e) Could you explain the process of dropout? Was there a specific incident or reason that made you reach your decision or was it a series of events?
 - a. When do you feel you began emotionally dropping out of school (detaching)?
 - b. What was going on in your life at home and school at that time?
 - c. Who made the final decision?
- f) Do you feel that there was anything that could have been said or done at any point that may have changed your decision to drop out? If so, what?
- g) How was the relationship with your parents during the time when you were still in school?
 - a. What was your family situation?
 - b. How do your parents (or caretaker) think about going to school (education)?
 - c. How do your siblings think about going to school (education)?
- h) What were your performance during your school years?
- i) Is there anything you can think of that may have made a difference and led to you staying in school?
- j) If you had it to do over, would you make the same decision? If not, what would you do over to change it?
- k) Is there anything else you want to tell me? Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix G

Individual Teacher or Staff Interview Protocol

Script: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. I really appreciate your time. Through this interview, I would love to hear about your students' schooling experiences– in relation to your family, community, school, and larger camp/urban environment. This interview will take about 30-45 minutes of your time. All of your answers and the information you provide will remain strictly **confidential**. Please feel free to comfortable sharing your experiences and opinions. This is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. (*Ask for permission to audio-record*)

Questions:

- a) How would you describe your relationship with your student?
- b) Could you describe your student's experiences at school? (e.g. performance, achievement, relationships, etc.)
- c) What opportunities and challenges does your student encounter in schooling?
- d) What do you think is the main reason that your student continues to persist in schooling? (individual, family, etc.)
 - a. Whose decision is it that the student remains in school?
 - b. Who (or what) plays the major role in contributing to your student's performance or persistence?
- e) How you provide academic support to your student, if at all?
- f) What other types of support do you provide to your students (or this particular student)?
- g) What expectations do you have for your student's future – aspirations on education and employment?
- h) What do you think about the importance (value) of education in achieving these goals?
- i) Is there anything else you want to tell me? Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix H

List of Interview Participants

Out-of-school Children and Youth Participants (Pseudonyms)

Name (Pseudonyms)	Age	Gender	Nationality
Akong	13	F	South Sudanese
Anita	19	F	South Sudanese
Joyce	20	F	South Sudanese
Roda	15	F	South Sudanese
Adut	14	F	South Sudanese
Nadia	13	F	South Sudanese
Karen	12	F	South Sudanese
Amila	20	F	South Sudanese
Susan	20	F	South Sudanese
Gatwech	20	M	South Sudanese
Gatluak	19	M	South Sudanese
Simon	13	M	South Sudanese
Nhial	22	M	South Sudanese
Bol James	21	M	South Sudanese
Samar	18	F	Sudanese
Lisa	19	F	Sudanese
Nasrin	15	F	Somali
Aarifa	20	F	Somali
Hasiba	20	F	Somali
Yusra	18	F	Somali
Zina	12	F	Somali
Kanika	16	F	Congolese
Sarah	16	F	Congolese
Benjamin	23	M	Congolese
Janvier	18	M	Congolese
Ahmed	23	M	Ethiopian
Kofi	22	M	Ethiopian
Gyasi	16	M	Ethiopian
Aisha	22	F	Ethiopian
Afiyaa	22	F	Ugandan
Lena	20	F	Ugandan
Miremba	22	F	Ugandan

In-School Children and Youth (Pseudonyms)

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Nationality
Deng	16	M	South Sudanese
Peter	27	M	South Sudanese
Garang	16	M	South Sudanese
Majok	16	M	South Sudanese
Atem	18	M	South Sudanese
David	20	M	South Sudanese
Jacob	15	M	South Sudanese
Achol	19	F	South Sudanese
Nyaluak	17	F	South Sudanese
Rebecca	23	F	South Sudanese
Angelina	18	F	South Sudanese
Ayen	17	F	South Sudanese
Monica	17	F	South Sudanese
Nyabol	18	F	South Sudanese
Aluel	18	F	South Sudanese
Atong	19	F	South Sudanese
Amer	16	F	South Sudanese
Fazilah	16	F	South Sudanese
Aamira	17	F	Sudanese
Nafisa	16	F	Sudanese
Abdul	18	M	Sudanese
Kareem	18	M	Sudanese
Bashiir	17	M	Somali
Assad	16	M	Burundian
Darifa	17	F	Burundian
Joseph	18	M	Burundian
Andre	15	M	Congolese
Augustin	18	M	Congolese
Daniel	16	M	Congolese
Rita	16	F	Ugandan

Appendix I

Data Analysis Supplementary Tables

Table 1. Participants' age category and gender by dropout status (percentages)

	In-school			Out-of-school	
	Male	Female		Male	Female
Ages 10-13	1	0.5		9.7	4.9
Ages 14-16	17.4	28.9		19.1	23.5
Ages 17-19	53.9	60.2		30.7	35.5
Ages 20-25	25.9	10.0		36.1	34.4
Ages 26 above	2.1	0.5		4.4	1.6
Total	100	100		100	100

Table 2. Results of Binary Logistic Regression Models of School Dropout (Coefficients)

	Model 1	Model 2
	Individual	Individual + Family
Female	0.961*** (0.123)	1.024*** (0.130)
Age	0.054** (0.019)	0.043* (0.021)
Encampment years	0.048** (0.017)	0.052** (0.019)
Sudanese	-0.511** (0.181)	-0.490** (0.188)
Somali	2.122*** (0.244)	2.373*** (0.260)
Congolese	1.326*** (0.214)	2.030*** (0.250)
Ethiopian	1.212** (0.425)	1.079* (0.433)
Other Nationalities	1.187*** (0.351)	1.463*** (0.371)
Kakuma-born	0.488 (0.308)	0.674* (0.328)
Household Members		0.007 (0.017)
Firstborn in the Family		0.087 (0.136)
Head of Household		0.136 (0.179)
Live with Parents		-0.096 (0.139)
Mom's Primary Ed		-0.459* (0.197)
Mom's Secondary/ Higher Ed		-0.698* (0.274)
Mom's Vocational Training		-0.436 (0.436)
Dad's Primary Ed		-0.000 (0.213)

Table 2 (continued)

	Model 1	Model 2
	Individual	Individual + Family
Dad's Secondary/Higher Ed		-0.958*** (0.194)
Dad's Vocational Training		-1.405** (0.537)
Working Parents		-0.641*** (0.181)
_cons	-2.151*** (0.371)	-1.726*** (0.421)
<i>N</i>	1414	1414
<i>R</i> ²		
adj. <i>R</i> ²		
pseudo <i>R</i> ²	0.160	0.207
<i>AIC</i>	1665.946	1595.505
<i>BIC</i>	1718.487	1705.843

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

^a Nationality Reference Group: South Sudanese

^b Nationality Reference Group: No Education

^c Nationality Reference Group: No Education

Appendix J

Codebook for Qualitative Data Analysis

List of Codes for Out-of-School Participants (Focus Groups and Interviews)

Category	Parent Codes	Child Codes / Descriptions
Demographic Information	Nationality/ethnicity	
	Language	
	Marital Status	
	Gender	
	Age	
	Years of encampment/displacement	
Life in Kakuma (General)	Climate/living conditions	
	Household members/family	
	Poverty	
	Responsibilities at home	
	Siblings and schooling	
	Water shortage	
	*Past experiences	Trauma, displacement/mobility, journey to the camp, previous schooling
	[double code] positive	
[double code] negative		
Schooling in Kakuma	Memories of schooling	School environment/climate
		Academic performance
		Relationships (peers, teachers)
	Others Issues	School transfer, repetition, etc.
	[double code] positive	
	[double code] negative	
Challenges in Schooling	Absence, lateness	
	Home responsibilities	Household chores, child labor
	<i>Huduma</i> registration	
	Hunger, poverty	
	Lack of parental support	De-prioritization of education
	Language barriers	
	Living without parents	<i>Orphanhood</i> , unaccompanied minors
	Poor academic performance	
	Poor teaching quality	
	Relationships	Teachers or head teachers (corporal punishment, etc.)
		Peers (bullying, discrimination, etc.)
	School fees	Tuition fees
	School-related costs	Uniforms and supplies
	School policies and practices	Uniform policy, registration, etc.
	Sickness	Self; parents/guardians (double-code with home responsibilities)
	Unfavorable environment	Weather, insecurity in the camp (distance to school)
	Bullying and discrimination	

Major Reasons For School Dropout	Death of the beloved	Parents/guardians or supporter (financial)
	Dropout from other schools	Other parts of Kenya
	Early marriage	
	Early pregnancy	
	Hidden fees	Report cards, examination, registration fees
	Household chores	
	Lack of parental care	
	Lack of school uniforms	
	Lack of school supplies	
	Peer pressure	
	Work/support family	(income-generating)
	Other Reasons	
Emotions	Positive	
	Negative	
Post-dropout Life	Life after dropout	
	Plans for education	Willingness/possibility to return to school,
	Plans for future (general)	Repatriation, resettlement, others
Opportunities	Support received	Family, neighbor, peers, relatives, teachers
		No support at all
Gender	Girl-specific issues	
	Boy-specific issues	
Others	Good quotes	
	Questions, reactions, comments, etc.	

List of Codes for In-School Participants (Focus Groups and Interviews)

Category	Parent Codes	Child Codes / Descriptions
Demographic Information	Nationality/ethnicity	
	Language	
	Marital Status	
	Gender	
	Age	
	Years of encampment/displacement	
Life in Kakuma (General)	Climate/living conditions	
	Household members/family	
	Poverty	
	Responsibilities at home	
	Siblings and schooling	
	Water shortage	
	*Past experiences	Trauma, displacement/mobility, journey to the camp, previous schooling
	[double code] positive	
	[double code] negative	
Schooling in Kakuma	Memories of schooling	School environment/climate Academic performance
		Relationships (peers, teachers)
	Others Issues	School transfer, repetition, etc.
	[double code] positive	
	[double code] negative	
Challenges in Schooling	Absence, lateness	
	Home responsibilities	Household chores, child labor
	Disabilities	
	Hunger, poverty	
	Lack of parental support	De-prioritization of education
	Language and curriculum	
	Living without parents	Orphanhood, unaccompanied minors, work-life balance
	Other incidents	Dropout experience, grade repetition, etc.
	Overcrowding and lack of space	
	Overcoming challenges	
	Poor academic performance	
	Poor teaching quality	
	Relationships	Teachers or head teachers (corporal punishment, etc.) Peers (bullying, discrimination, etc.)
	School fees	Tuition fees
	School-related costs	Uniforms and supplies
	School policies and practices	Uniform policy, registration, etc.
	Unfavorable environment	Weather, insecurity in the camp (distance to school)
Major	Aspiration	Educational and life aspirations
	Enjoyment	Learning, interacting with peers and teachers
	Free education	

Reasons for School Persistence	“Give back”	Willingness to contribute to family, communities and home countries
	Support for learning (types of support)	Academic support
		Emotional support
		Financial support
	Support for learning (sources)	Family (parents and siblings)
		Teachers
		Relatives
		Community members
	I/NGO support	
Meaning of school		
Emotions	Positive	
	Negative	
Gender	Girl-specific issues	
	Boy-specific issues	
Others	Good quotes	
	Questions, reactions, comments, etc.	