A COMMUNITY BASED ASSESSEMENT OF SCHOOL PARTICIPATION AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS IN GEDEO ZONE, SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA[1]

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ABSTRACT: *A community-based survey was made to assess the school participation and dropout rates, households' attitude towards education, households' ability and willingness to educate their children. Data was collected using a household survey questionnaire on a total of 1034 (rural = 747 and urban = 287) households in six PAs and two UDAs randomly selected from Yergachefe and Bule Woredas, Gedeo Zone, Southern Ethiopia. Descriptive statistics, chi-square analysis and t-statistic were computed to find possible differences with respect to gender, literacy status, and attitude of households towards education, location and residential variations. The results revealed that literacy status, gender of the household head, location and residential variations are significantly ($p < .01$) associated with household's ability to pay for schooling. Residential variation and family size are found to markedly affect household's willingness to educate their children. However, statistically significant differences are observed in age at entry into grade one due to differences of location, place of residence and gender of the household head. Implications of the findings to address the existing problems are also discussed in this paper.*

INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that education is fundamental for socio-economic, political and cultural developments of a country. Both the individual and the society at large are beneficiaries of the fruits of education in one form or anther.

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However, the state of education in Ethiopia is characterised by low school enrolment rate, rural-urban and gender differentials. Recent estimates of school enrolment at both primary and secondary levels depict the current state of affairs. For example, the EMIS (1999) survey estimated the overall gross enrolment ratio (GER) of 45.8% at primary (grades 1 to 8) level. Apparently, the net enrolment ratio (NER) at primary level is still by far the lowest. It stands at 39.6% (EMIS, 1999). To make the situation even worse GER and NER further decline if gender and place of residence are taken into account. For instance, female enrolment (35.3%) was significantly less than that of males (55.9%) in primary grades (EMIS 1999). Parallel to the existing gender gap, primary enrolment in rural areas is remarkably lower as opposed to the enrolment in urban areas. The recent available data on gross enrolment rates for urban and rural areas are respectively 91% and 18% (cited in Mulat, 1998).

Among the explanations given for the existing low school participation rate Tekeste Negash (1996) made the boldest assertion. He rejects formal education as irrelevant to Ethiopian rural population and recommends non-formal education as an alternative for a country whose people are predominantly agrarian.

Nonetheless, many educators (Amare, 1997; Belete, 1996; Haileselasse, 1996) challenged the assertion that formal education is not relevant to Ethiopia. Rather, it has been argued that the attitude towards education has never been negative and the reasons for low demand for schooling have never been "formal education", albeit the socio-economic factors that impinge upon the day-to-day life of our people (Amare, 1997).

Furthermore, it is contended that the conclusion "let the formal education defend itself" (Tekeste, 1996) is based on scattered evidences obtained from limited survey studies and literature review in the area. For the most part, the reason on the part of those who (for example, Amare, 1996) reject Tekeste's conclusion as untenable is the inherent lack of dependable evidence to substantiate his assertions.

At this juncture, it should be born in mind that the present study does not have the objective of addressing the controversy surrounding the issue directly. However, it is to shade some light on the impact of paucity of adequate information regarding factors that affect school participation that perhaps contributed to these divergent views. Thus, a part from giving

evidence regarding the current state of affairs in our school system, it is believed that household level assessment of the factors that are associated with school enrolment and participation are useful for planning as well as revitalising our educational programs. Further, this study is believed to make a modest contribution to the wealth of information available in the Ethiopian context.

By way of portraying the status of the education of school aged children in the studied community in terms of gross participation, dropout rates, school entry age, and effect of socio-economic and demographic variables on school participation of children in the eligible age group, the study is assumed to provide valuable information for pertinent bodies to redress the issue. It is also assumed to initiate further research in the area.

The following paragraphs dwell on a brief review of the existing literature regarding the socio-economic and demographic variables that are assumed to impinge upon school participation.

Determinants of School Participation

Thus far available data revealed that school participation in Ethiopia has been very low even by the standard of the sub-Saharan African countries. Compared with the neighbouring Sudan, school participation both at primary and secondary levels is low in Ethiopia. For example, for the year 1985/86 gross primary school participation was about 50% for The Sudan while after more than a decade (i.e. in 1999) school participation at the same level stand at 45.8% in Ethiopian educational system (EMIS, 1999). Similarly, secondary school participation depicted a wider gap between the two countries disfavouring Ethiopia during the same period (i.e. in The Sudan 17% in 1985/86 cited in Magald, 1994; and for Ethiopia 9.7% in 1998/99; EMIS, 1999:4). For the most part, the phenomenon has been attributed to low demand for schooling.

Studies that assessed the determinants of demand for schooling[1] in Ethiopia disclosed some of the factors that are responsible for low level of school participation of children in Ethiopia. In a broader context the existing studies on demand for schooling revealed the impacts of demographic (gender, educational status, place of residence, and family size), socio-

economic (willingness and ability to pay for schooling and opportunity costs), and socio-psychological (attitude towards education) factors.

Regarding demographic factors, there is evidence to suggest that residence, family size, gender and parents' education significantly affect demand for schooling. Specifically, a recent survey conducted by Mulat & Zewdie (1996) showed that female household heads tend to enrol their children into school more than their male counter parts do.

Similarly, family size and educational status of the household head also markedly affect school enrolment. The same study revealed that households with more children tend to enrol their children into school vis-à-vis those with less number of children (Mulat & Zewdie, 1996). As similar finding was observed in rural Botswana (Chernovisky, 1985). However, a recent study in The Sudan claimed to find an inverse relationship between family size and enrolment (Magald, 1994). On the other hand, household heads having better education tend to send their children into school than those with less education. Nonetheless, the significant difference in willingness to enrol was attributed to the marked variation observed between illiterate and those who have a tertiary level of education (PHRD, 1996). A recent study (Mulugeta, 1998) using a multivariate analysis technique also reported a statistically significant difference between literate and illiterate household heads in enrolling their children into school in favour of the former.

Likewise, place of residence is an important variable that affect demand for schooling. With regard to this, a nation-wide survey revealed that primary enrolment stands at 18% in rural areas, while it is about 91% in urban areas in the Ethiopian context (PHRD, 1996). This depicts the marked disparity attributed to residential differences.

On the other hand, the attitude of parents towards education as well as the expected economic benefits as a result of parent's investment to the education of children impacts school participation (PHRD, 1996; Esomonde, 1991). Specifically, it is assumed that a favourable attitude that parents hold towards education is expected to be positively associated with their willingness to send their children to school. On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that parents' willingness could be positively or negatively impacted by the expected economic returns of schooling regardless of attitude. Since, parents' perception of opportunities for gainful employment influences their decision to invest on the education of their

children. Esmonde (1991) confirms this in the study conducted in Gurage Zone, Dalocha *Woreda* that some parents are reluctant to invest on the schooling of their children due to lesser chance of formal employment.

Nonetheless, studies done in Ethiopia generally reveal positive attitude (cited in PHRD 1996) towards education, despite the impacts relating education with employment. However, there is an indication that there is a declining willingness of parents to educate their children due to the limited chance of formal employment for school graduates (USAID, 1994; Esmonde, 1991).

The other significant attributes of demand for schooling are purely economic in nature. These include opportunity costs of schooling (i.e. children are needed for work around home and farming activities) and ability of households to cover schooling expenses. An earlier study in Ethiopia (USAID, 1994) confirmed that some parents preferred not to send their children to school because they are more important for the economic survival of the household. Consistent results were also reported in a recent rural household survey (Weir & Knight, 1996, cited in PHRD, 1996). On top of this, there is evidence to suggest that late entry into first grade and dropping-out of school is partly due to opportunity costs (Mulat & Zewdie, 1996; Weir & Knight, 1996 cited in PHRD, 1996).

From the foregoing discussion the relationship between demographic and the socio-economic variables seems to be apparent. Even though previous studies tried to find out some of the most important factors that determine schooling at a national level, the peculiarities of the reasons that gave rise to the existing low school participation rate (as determined by school enrolment ratios) have not been adequately demonstrated in the context of Southern Ethiopia. It is, therefore, the thrust of the present study to analyse the exiting relationship between the selected demographic and socio-economic factors in determining school participation in Gèdeo Zone, Southern Ethiopia.

In this light, the study attempts to dwell upon the following basic issues:

1. Whether or not households are willing to enrol their children into school.

2. Proportion of households that are able to pay for schooling of their children.

3. Magnitude and factors of late entry and dropping-out of school.

4. Parent's (household's) attitude towards education and its association with willingness to pay for schooling.

5. Socio-demographic characteristics of household heads influencing their ability and willingness to pay for the education of their children.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

Data Source and Study Population

This study was conducted in two *woredas* of Gedeo Zone, Southern Ethiopia. The particular choice of this Zone was initiated by lack of a baseline educational information regarding the Zone to conduct further research by students and academic staff of the Dilla College of Teacher Education and Health Sciences.

Data was collected using a survey questionnaire from a total of 1,034 households in March 1998.[2] Of the total sample, 747 were from rural areas and the remaining 287 from urban centres in Yergachefe and Bule *Woredas*. The selection of the two *woredas* for the household survey was made by taking into account the relative levels of development of all the *woredas* (i.e. Wonago, Yergachefe, Kochere, and Bule) in Gedeo Zone. The four *woredas* were classified into two categories based on their relative level of socio-economic development (in terms of accessibility to basic social services and availability of basic infrastructure in respective localities). Accordingly, Wenago and Yergachefe were found as relatively more developed. Whereas Kochere and Bule were categorised as less developed *woredas*. From each category one *woreda* was randomly selected and included in the study. Employing the same procedure, from both *woredas* altogether six Peasant Associations (PAs) and two Urban Dwellers Associations (UDAs) were included in the survey. The total number of PAs and UDAs in the two *woredas* considered in this study were respectively 61 and 6. Further, after determining the total number of households in the study sites the sample households to be included in the study were selected using a systematic random sampling. This procedure was performed based on the lists of names of household heads that were obtained (containing house codes) from the respective PA and UDA offices.[3]

Instrument

The process of developing the household survey questionnaire involved extensive review of existing literature. Following this, two language experts in collaboration with the investigators translated the English version of the questionnaire into Amharic and Gedeo languages. To ensure the reliability of the original instrument, both the Amharic and Gedeo versions were back translated into English and Amharic respectively. Try-out data collection was made in Chechu PA in Wenago *Woreda*. After the completion of the try-out data collection, discussion was made regarding the overall process of pilot testing with enumerators.[4] As a result, the weaknesses of some items in the household questionnaire were eventually eliminated before the final data collection was conducted.

Definition of Major Variables of the Study

Households' attitude towards education, willingness to pay for schooling and ability to pay for schooling were variables operationally defined as follows:

Attitude towards Education was measured based on a composite score of three positively worded items related to (1) the extent of household head's belief regarding the outcomes of education for their children as informed citizens, (2) belief that education contributes or otherwise for the improvement of the day to day life of people, and (3) perceived quality of life of the educated vis-à-vis the uneducated ones. The questions used to measure attitude respectively were: 'Education is important for betterment of my children's future as grown up adults; I see improvement in my child's day to day life as she/he continues to get education; Educated people have better living standard than uneducated ones'. All the three items were dichotomously scored ('agree' or 'disagree' type). A respondent was considered to have a favourable attitude if he/she positively answered at least two out of the three questions, while a 'disagree' response for at least two of the items were taken as unfavourable attitude.

Ability to pay for Schooling was based on household head's response regarding his/her ability to cover the expenses required for educating the school-aged (7 years and above) child/children.

Willingness to pay for schooling was based on household head's response as to whether or not he/she is willing to enrol his/her school-aged child/children into school irrespective of the household's financial position

Method of Analysis

Univariate and bivariate statistical analyses were made to interpret the data. These included both qualitative as well as quantitative procedures. All statistical hypotheses were tested against .05 level of significance. Data coding, entry and analysis were carried out using the SPSSWIN software of the 1997 version.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sampled Households

The following table describes the sample in terms of location (*woreda*), residence, family size, gender, literacy status, occupation, ethnicity and religion, age and marital status of the household head.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Sample Household Heads in Bule and Yergachefe (1998)

Variables	N	%	Variable	N	%
Location			**Occupation**		
Bule	420	40.6	Farmer	723	69.9
Yergachefe	614	59.4	Merchant	95	9.2
Total	1034	100	Petty trader	20	2.0
Residence			Civil servant	59	5.7
Urban	287	28	Unemployed	33	3.2
Rural	747	72	Pensioners	9	0.9
Total	1034	100	Others	28	2.8
Gender			**Total**	1034	100
Male	912	88.2	**Religion**		
Female	122	11.8	Orthodox	354	34.2
Total	1034	100	Protestant	345	33.4

Table 1. Contd.

Variables	N	%	Variable	N	%
Marital Status			Cultural religion	275	26.6
Unmarried	4	0.4	Muslim	45	4.4
Married	928	89.7	Catholic	15	1.4
Divorced	31	3.0	**Total**	1034	100
Widow	66	6.4	**Ethnicity**		
Others	5	0.5	Gedeo	722	74.7
Literacy Status			Oromo	90	8.7
Illiterate	456	44.3	Amhara	99	9.6
Literate	576	55.7	Gurage	54	5.2
Total	1032	100	Others	69	6.7
Age			**Total**	1034	100
18-25	71	6.9	**Family Size**		
26-35	265	25.6	1-3	159	15.4
36-45	315	30.5	4-6	504	48.7
46-55	172	16.6	7-9	297	28.7
56-65	130	12.6	10-12	71	6.9
65+	81	7.8	13+	3	0.3
Total	1034	100	**Total**	1034	100

*Average family size = 5.8 persons for the sampled households

Findings

Description of the population of children and youth in terms of age and sex composition and gross enrolment ratios (GERs) at primary and secondary levels are depicted in Table 2 and 3.

Table 2. Age and Sex Composition of Children and Youth in Sampled Households in Bule and Yergachefe in 1997/98 Academic Year

Age	Male	Female	Total
0-6	631(16%)	602(15.2%)	1298
7-14	972(24.6%)	854(21.6%)	1826
15-18	556(14.1%)	287(7.3%)	843
19≥	25(0.63%)	10(0.23%)	35
Overall	**2184(55.3%)**	**1753(44.7%)**	**3952(100%)**

Table 3 Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER*) at Primary (grades: 1-8) and Secondary Level (Grades: 9-12) for the 1997/98 Academic Year

School Level	Male		Female		Overall	
	N	GER	N	GER	N	GER
Primary	852	87.7	395	46.3	1247	68.3
Secondary	104	18.7	32	11.1	136	16.1

* GER is computed as a ratio of the number of children and youth currently attending school to the total number of children in the eligible (i.e. primary: 7-14; secondary: 15-18 years) age group

The gross enrolment ratio at primary level in Gedeo Zone was found to be greater than the average for Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Administrative Region (SNNPAR) that stands at 56.8%. For the 1998/99 academic year (EMIS 1999). Both male and female enrolment rates are found to be higher than that obtained at regional level as well. The regional average for male and female were 75.6% and 37.7% respectively (EMIS, 1999). In this study, however, the gender-gap at primary and secondary levels respectively were 41.4% and 7.6%. While at a regional level (SNNPAR) it was found out to be 37.9% and 6.6% at primary and secondary levels respectively (EIMS, 1999). This implies that school participation of girls in Gedeo Zone at both levels is lower even by the standards of the SNNPAR. Apparently, this data reveals the seriousness of the situation. This finding invites further investigation of the factors that negatively affect the education of girls.

Table 4. Educational Status of Children and Youth 7-24 Years in the Sampled Households in 1997/98 Academic Year.

Educational Status	Male	%	Female	%	Both Sex	%
School going	956	51.8	427	35.7	1383	45.9
Dropped out	198	10.7	212	17.7	410	13.6
Completed 12th grade	19	1.03	12	1.0	31	1.0
Never been to school	673	36.5	544	45.5	1217	40.4
Overall	**1846**	**100**	**1195**	**100**	**3041**	**100**

The proportion of those who have never been to school (those who did not have the chance to enrol) is high which in turn reveals lower literacy rate. With regard to gender differences, the data portrays that more boys than girls are currently at school, while more girls have dropped-out. Other studies have reported similar findings disfavouring females recently (Ayalew, 1997; Darge, 1997). The possible explanation for the obtained high overall dropout rate (i.e. 13.6%) could be the low literacy rate in the studied population (i.e. the literacy rate both in urban and rural is 55.7% see: Table 1). Literate parents tend to realise the value of education than do illiterate ones. Consistent results were reported in a study of primary school participation and wastage rates in different regions in Ethiopia. Specifically, the study found out a significant association between dropout rate and literacy status in the general population (Darge, 1997). On the other hand, even though the number of children who completed secondary school is very small, a comparable proportion of boys and girls have succeeded in finishing grade twelve. This may be because girls in urban centres have a comparatively better chance to continue their education than their rural counterparts.

Definitively revealing reasons for dropping out and late entry into schooling could not be provided by this study, the fact that the responses were not obtained on all households considered. Despite this shortcoming, however, the information obtained from 221 households on which data were available in this study agrees with earlier studies (USAID, 1994; Esmonde, 1991; Mulat, 1998). The results are summarised in Tables 5 and 7 below.

Table 5. Reasons for Dropping-out of School and Grade Level Achieved at Dropping-out Both in 1997/98 Academic Year (both sexes)†

Reasons	N	%	Grade Achieved	N	%
Opportunity cost	24	10.9	1	38	12.9
Marriage	22	10	2	53	18
Less chance of getting employment	26	11.8	3	43	14.6
Repeating grade	28	12.7	4	25	8.5
Financial problem	72	32.6	5	31	10.5
Health Problems	31	14	6	29	9.9
Distance of School	5	2.3	7	24	8.2
Fear of abduction	10	4.5	8	17	5.6
Others	3	1.4	9	21	7.1
			10≥	13	4.4
Total	**221**	**100**		**294**	**100**

† Data were available only on 221 and 294 households regarding reasons for dropping–out and, grade at the time of dropping-out of school respectively.

A close inspection of the data revealed that a marked proportion (about 88.2%) of children dropped out of school before achieving primary level (8th grade), and about 21% (91) of the total left schools even before finishing grade two.

The significant proportion of children gave up schooling due to economic reasons. For example, households reported that opportunity cost (10.9%) and financial problem (32.6%) as important reasons for termination of school. In addition, about 10%(22) attributed dropping-out to marriage arraignments while about 4.5% of the households reported that their daughters gave up schooling for fear of abduction on their way to school. On top of this, a sizeable proportion (11.8%) of the respondents reported that the declining chance of getting formal employment frustrated them to encourage the education of their children. This finding is agreement with a study by Esmonde (1991) in Gurage Zone, Dalocha *Woreda*.

Age at Entry into School

Age at entry into first grade is a good indicator of school participation and enrolment rate (PHRD, 1996). Apart from calculating the mere average of age at entry, an attempt was made to find the effects of location, place of residence, gender and literacy status of the household head. The impact of these demographic variables on age at entry was determined by computing a t-statistic. The results are summarised in table 6.

Table 6: Number of cases, Means, Standard deviations (SD), and t-test Results of Age at Entry Into Grade One by Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Household Heads 1997/98 Academic Year

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-value	
Location					
Blue	336	9.49	1.47	-4.98*	
Yergachefe	556	8.82	2.57		
Residence					
Rural	622	9.78	1.02	-24.1*	
Urban	270	7.44	1.86		
Literacy Status					
Illiterate	417	9.18	2.07	1.69	
Literate	469	8.95	1.88		
Gender					
Male	775	9.26	1.97	9.24*	
Female	117	7.83	1.49		
Family Size					
1-6	98	8.82	1.86	1.63	
7≥	794	9.10	1.99		
Overall	**892**	**9.07**	**1.98**		

* * P <. 001, degrees of freedom are adjusted for unequal sample size

The observed average entry age into grade one (mean = 9.07) is well above the recommended age for primary level in the Ethiopian school system. The picture rather worsens when we look at the average entry age in rural areas. The data also depicts that mean age at entry for Yergachefe is significantly less than that of Bule *Woreda* that is a little better than the rural average.

The finding that is attributed to place of residence may not need explanation because this is a typical feature of the state of education in rural areas of Ethiopia. The possible reason for a higher average age at entry in Bule,

however, can be ascribed to the comparative disadvantage in availability of social services and higher demand for child labour. Because in Bule, people largely engage themselves in agricultural activities through out the year due to its agro-ecology; while in Yergachefe by and large, people depend on coffee production for specific periods of the year; as a result of which children in Bule are required to support their families in farming, cattle tending, harvesting and buying and selling of their agricultural produce and the like more than the children in Yergachefe do. Thus, their involvement in farming activities and other household chores may possibly delay school entry age.

As can be observed (see Table 6), no statistically significant differences seem to exist between literacy status of the household heads regarding age at school entry. This makes it evident that children start late not because the household head is illiterate or otherwise. This is demonstrated by the fact that illiterate households have sent almost half of 152 (49.4%) of the total children who started schooling at the appropriate age. This finding does not contradict with PHRD (1996) finding in which a significant difference was obtained between illiterate and those households with tertiary level education only.

As opposed to literacy status, gender of the household head is significantly related to age at entry. The difference between male and female household heads in age at entry is statistically significant ($t = -9.24$, $p < .001$, $df=184$). This reveals that proportionally, female-headed households tend to send their children to school at the right age than do their male counterparts. This may be generally attributable to the nurturing and caring role of women (Hetherington and Parke, 1986) together with the opportunity for decisive decision making as the only leader of a family regarding the education of their daughters. This argument is supported by a study conducted in Swaziland that assessed the behaviour of women household heads with regard to the education of their daughters. The study revealed that women household heads (women with no husbands) were found to express more concern for the education of their daughters than do households headed by men. Furthermore, girls were not negatively influenced in their school achievement due to absence of father than do boys (Booth, 1996). However, the absence of father affects the success of both girls and boys if there is no economic support to the family (Pong, 1996).

Reasons for Late Entry into School

In this study, effort was made to find out the reasons for late entry into first grade. To this effect, households whose children started the first grade beyond the ideal age were asked for the reasons why they did so? The reasons advanced were the following.

Table 7: Reasons Why Households Failed to Send Children to Schools at the Recommended Age (in 1997/98 Academic Year)

Reasons	Yergachefe	Bule	Total	%	Rank
Opportunity cost	100(42.6)*	135(57.4)	235	40.2	1
Low value for education	1(6.7)	5(83.7)	6	1	5
Financial problem	95(44.2)	71(55.8)	215	21.5	2
Physical Maturity	6(60)	4(40)	10	10	4
Distance of School	47(39.8)	71(60.1)	118	20.2	3
Total	**249(42.6)**	**286(57.4)**	**584**	**100**	

*Figures in parenthesis are percentages

The data (see Table 7) reveals that financial problem and opportunity cost (engaging children in different activities including cattle tending, supporting in farming activities, fetching water, collecting fire wood, and other household chores) prevented parents from sending their children at the appropriate age. In addition to this, distance of the school from their homes was also mentioned as the third major reason advanced by the households. They further reasoned out that children need to be physically mature to cover long distance and strong enough to tolerate hunger when they are away from their localities.

Willingness and Ability to Invest on the Education of Children

It is indicated that willingness of parents to invest on the education of their children and their ability to pay for their education is found to determine school enrolment (USAID, 1994; PHRD, 1996).

With reference to this, the present study revealed that of the 1019 households in Bule and Yergachefe *Woredas*, 467(45.8%) of them said that

they are economically able to cover their children's schooling expenses, while 554 (54.2%) reported that they are not (see Table 8).

In addition, proportionally, more rural households reported to have economic constraints finance for their children's schooling in Bule *Woreda*. While in Yergachefe, the proportion of those who are able and unable to pay are nearly equal. This may be due to the fact that Bule is the only non-coffee producing *woreda* in Gedeo Zone where people largely depend on less rewarding agricultural produce unlike those in Yergachefe. In contrast, when asked about their willingness regardless of ability to pay, the overwhelming majority of the households (94.3%) said that they are willing to enrol their children into school (i.e. cover the expenses of their children schooling if money is at their disposal).

Table 8. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Household Heads and Willingness and Ability to Pay for Schooling of Children

Variables	Willing	Not willing	Total	χ^2	Able to pay	Not able To pay	Total	χ^2
Location								
Bule	393(38.9)	19(1.9)	412	1.67	172(16.4)	250(24.5)	422	
Yergachefe	558(55.3)	39(3.9)	597		295(29.6)	302(29.6)	597	7.89**
Total	951(94.3)	58(5.7)	1009		467(45.8)	552(54.2)	1019	
Residence								
Rural	678(67.2)	50(4.9)	728	6.05*	387(37.9)	348(34)	735	
Urban	273(27.1)	8(0.8)	281		80(7.9)	206(20.2)	286	6.84**
Total	951(94.3)	58(5.7)	1009		467(45.8)	554(54.2)	1019	
Attitude to Educ.								
Favourable	940(94)	51(5.1)	991	0.31	457(44.7)	548(53.6)	1013	
Unfavourable	5(0.5)	4(0.4)	9		5(0.5)	4(0.4)	9	1.36
Total	949(94.5)	55(5)	1000		466(45.5)	552(55.5)	1023	
Literacy status								
Illiterate	454(44.9)	31(3.01)	485	0.35	196(19.2)	296(28.9)	492	
Literate	497(49.1)	29(2.99)	526		27126.5)	260(25.4)	531	12.5**
Total	951(94)	60(6)	1011		467(45.7)	556(54.3)	1023	

Table 8. Contd.

Variables	Willing	Not willing	Total	χ^2	Able to pay	Not able To pay	Total	χ^2
Gender								
Male	835(82.6)	54(5.3)	889	0.9	432(42.4)	465(45.6)	897	
Female	116(11.5)	6(0.6)	122		35(3.4)	87(8.5)	122	15.9**
Total	951(94.1)	60(5.9)	1011		467(45.8)	552(54.2)	1019	
Family Size								
1-4	135(13.1)	24(2.3)	159		69(6.7)	82(8.01)	151	
4-7	465(45.)	39(3.8)	504	15.1**	220(21.5)	282(27.6)	502	1.56
8+	351(34)	19(1.8)	370		178(17.4)	192(18.8)	370	
Total	951(92.1))	82(7.9)	1033		467(45.7)	556(54.3)	1023	

* P<. 05, for cell frequencies < 5, chi-square values are corrected for continuity
** P< .001,
*** Figures in parenthesis are percentages

A close inspection of the data reveals (see Table 8), regardless of their residential differences, of those who claimed to be able to pay, the majority (95.78%) are willing while only 19 (4.2%) are not willing (even though they have claimed to be able to pay for schooling). Similarly, comparable proportion (54.7%) claimed they are not able to pay. This implies that 4.2% of households do not seem to be willing to spend on the schooling of their children even if they have the money.

In brief, the percentage of households who claimed to be able to pay for schooling is comparable to those who are unable to pay. In addition, greater proportion of the rural households are found to be able to pay than those households in urban areas. However, no difference seems to be observed in willingness due to differences by *woreda* and place of residence.

The ability and willingness to pay for schooling were also analysed in order to find out weather or not there exists a significant difference due to differences across selected demographic variables.

As indicated in Table 8, except for the impact of place of residence ($\chi 2 = 6.05$, $p < .05$) and family size ($\chi 2 = 15.1$, $p <. 001$), households did not differ significantly by gender, attitude towards education and literacy status of the household head in case of willingness. This implies that male and female, literate and illiterate households are equally willing to finance the education of their children if they have the money. Nonetheless, the difference due to place of residence in favour of people living in urban areas seems plausible because rural households tend to be less enlightened than

their urban counter parts. However, it is interesting to note that large families tend to be more willing to enrol their children into school than does smaller families. This implies that chances are slim for children in households of smaller family size. The possible explanation for this may be attributable to the impact of opportunity costs. Since, children in smaller households tend to be overwhelmed by household chores than do children in bigger families. Thus, children in bigger families seem to have a better chance of joining schools as parents have the chance to relieve some of their children from household activities for quite a good period per day. This finding is in agreement with similar studies conducted in Ethiopia (Mulat and Zewdie, 1996) and other developing countries (Chernichovsky, 1985).

Nonetheless, family size failed to produce significant difference in ability to pay. This finding is not consistent with PHRD (1996) study where they found out that ability to pay is inversely related with family size. This may be partly because of the method used to collect data on household's ability to finance schooling in the present study. In this regard, further research based on data other than self-reported measure may be desired to confirm or not confirm the results arrived at.

Contrary to family size, households significantly differed because of location ($\chi 2 = 7.80$, $P<.001$, $df = 1$), residence ($\chi 2 = 6.84$, $p<.001$, $df=1$), literacy status ($\chi 2 = 12.5$, $p<.001$, $df = 1$). In addition, the difference between male and female households is statistically significant ($\chi 2 = 15.9$, $p < .001$) when it comes to ability to pay. Meaning, proportionally, more male household heads are able to finance their children's schooling than do female household heads. This implies that female households are economically inferior to their male counterparts. The present finding is in agreement with a recent study regarding the constraints to school enrolment and demand for fee-charging schools in Ethiopia that revealed female household heads prefer to send their children to non-fee-charging government schools due to economic restraint (Mulat, 1996).

Similar to gender, marked differences were observed due to variation in literacy status with regard to ability to pay. As portrayed in Table 8, no difference was observed between literate and illiterate households in willingness to spend on the schooling of their children. This may be a positive indication in that illiterate parents have a favourable attitude towards the schooling of children. However, a problem arises when it

comes to the actual practice of covering schooling expenses because ability to pay is strongly related to the literacy status of the household head. This is demonstrated by the statistically significant difference ($\chi 2 = 12.5$, $p < .001$, $df = 1$) found between illiterate and literate household heads in ability to pay for education of their children. This result portrays that, compared to illiterate parents; literate parents tend to be able to pay for the schooling of their sons and daughters. This may partly be ascribed to the better chance of literate parents to get employment opportunities as well as the higher probability of educated parents in rural areas in using better farming methods that may result in better income, savings and above all better understanding of the value of education.

Furthermore, place of residence made a prominent contribution to ability to pay. Surprisingly, this difference was bigger among those households in urban areas i.e. 72% cannot pay whereas 28% reported that they could cover schooling expenses. This may be attributable to the similar reason that most rural households particularly in Yergachefe produce coffee as well as other cash crops, which may enable them to pay for schooling unlike their urban counterparts in both *woredas*.

Households' Attitude towards Education

Among others, the attitude of parents and the community at large towards education is assumed to affect the probability of enrolling children into school. This is may be because, for the most part, attitude is very likely to influence people's future intentions and actual behaviour (Kleinke, 1984).

In this regard, households were asked to reveal the value they attach to educating the children in the family. Their responses were tabulated as favourable and unfavourable for further analysis.

As can be seen from Table 8, regardless of "ability" and "willingness", the overwhelming majority of the respondents have a favourable attitude towards educating their children. This implies that, parents tend to consider the education of their children as an important factor in determining future personal development, in terms of the possible gainful employment that education makes it possible to their sons and daughters; and as well as the resulting economic support from their children. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies (For example: Weir and Knight; cited in

PHRD, 1996). However, it did not support Tekeste's (1996) assertion that the rural population has developed a hostile attitude towards education.

Nonetheless, a favourable attitude was not accompanied by ability to pay. In this vein, the data depicts that only 465 (45.9%) of the households reported that they are able to pay even though 991 (99.1%) households have a favourable attitude towards education. This implies that though parents want to send children to school, they are unable to do so because they are not in a position to cover their schooling expenses.

In general, the results confirmed that the majority of the households give value to education. However, the awareness of the community about the importance of educating children seem to be moderated by their inability to cover schooling expenses. Moreover, inability to send their children to school due to inability to pay seem to be serious impediment among illiterate and female headed households. Interestingly, however, households with large family size are willing to send children to school than smaller households that can be partly attributable to opportunity costs. The more the number of children live in the household, the higher the tendency of parents to enrol some of them since household chores are taken care by those who remain at home.

CONCLUSION

The profile of education in Gedeo Zone, based on the sampled households, revealed an overall GER of 68.3% and 16.1% at primary and secondary levels respectively and a dropout rate, of 13.6%. The average entry age into grade one was found to be 9.07. Compared with the national average, the mean age at entry into grade one in Gedeo Zone was found to be less than the national average (PHRD, 1996) even though the figure is very high compared with the ideal school entry age. In contrast, participation rate was a little higher compared with the regional (SNNPAR) as well as national overall GER at both primary and secondary levels computed for 1998/99 academic year (EMIS, 1999).

With regard to attitude towards education, the result revealed that in both rural and urban contexts there is a favourable attitude towards education. A majority of the households believe that education improves the day-to-day life and has an impact in their life styles. This contradicts Tekeste's (1996)

assertion that rural communities have developed hostility towards formal education.

Nonetheless, the data show that parents' favourable attitude towards education is compromised by economic constraints. This seems to be further confirmed by the proportion of households who reported favourable attitude towards education but not able to cover schooling expenses.

Similarly, the reasons put forward for late entry and termination of schooling by and large is ascribed to economic problems. For example, financial problems, lesser chance of formal employment, opportunity costs, involvement in economically beneficial household chores were those that provided support for the negative impact of economic constraints of households to educate their children. The finding supports Amare's (1997) argument that low demand for schooling is largely caused by socio-economic problems.

As to the school entry age, the results indicated that regardless of place of residence and location 57% of the children who were already at school had started schooling after 7 years of age. Further, late entry was found to be more of a characteristic of rural children. The reasons for being late to enrol according to their degree of importance were: Opportunity cost, distance from school, economic problem, belief that children are physically less mature at the given age, (i.e. parents in rural localities believe that the ideal school entry age doesn't apply to them as their children should be physically strong to cover long distances and should be able to tolerate hunger and thirst. This seems for the most part, caused by the physical distance of schools.) And low value for education in that order. Thus, a part from addressing the problems related to economic status of households opening up primary schools in the near by localities is believed to minimise this.

The outstanding reasons for dropping out of school included health problems, less chance for formal employment and grade repetition. School dropping-out that may possibly be caused by health problems would be minimised by improving health services. This can be facilitated by government health offices at regional and local levels so that they would encourage private investors to open clinics and other health facilities to that effect.

However, the high rate of dropping-out due to repetition of grades among others may be addressed by minimising absenteeism. This is because there is evidence to suggest that absenteeism contributed to the significant portion of repeating grades among rural children in the Ethiopian context (Darge, 1997). Thus, adapting a flexible school timetable particularly in rural schools seems very important. Absenteeism, to a large extent, was found to be caused by additional responsibilities of children during class hours, as most of them are economically insecure.

The present study also revealed the significant role of socio-demographic variables in impacting households' ability to pay for schooling. Gender, literacy status, place of residence and location were found to have a significant bearing on ability to pay for schooling. Consistent with Mulat & Zewdie (1996), significant difference was observed in households' willingness to pay for schooling due to family size. The results further portrayed that the economic problem seems to be serious among those illiterate parents and female-headed households. In addition, significantly high proportion of households reported that they are not able to cover schooling expenses in Bule *Woreda* as opposed to those in Yergachefe; and more from urban than rural households. Thus, an intervention that may envisage ameliorating the situation should consider impoverished households in urban centres as its priority.

Parents' refrain from sending their children to schools largely due to opportunity cost which parents would otherwise lose due to their children's schooling or inability to cover their schooling. Therefore, it is suggested that donors and non-governmental organisations can assist the education sector through extending material (such as provision of exercise books, pencil and pen textbooks etc.) and financial support (in the form of short-term loan schemes) to poor urban and rural families that considered female headed households so that they can invest in small scale income generating activities in a way that minimise children's heavy work load. This is believed to encourage their schooling as it has a positive impact on the financial position of households. What is more, introducing flexibility in school timetable, and opening up new primary schools in nearby villages of relatively high population density may minimise fear of abduction, and may encourage parents to send their children to school at the right age. Added to this, efforts should be made by local government officials and concerned

bodies to convince local chiefs and significant others to join their efforts in abolishing bad cultural practices such as abduction.

In agreement with other studies, opportunity cost of the student time was found to be the major determinant of school participation in the context of the studied population. The data depicts, however, that girls seem to be seriously affected by the workload compared to their male counterparts as about 45.5% (544) of girls are out of school system. This may be because of the comparatively less preference of households towards girls' education and high opportunity costs. A similar step can be thought of to increase female enrolment by minimising the around-home responsibilities of females through financial assistance as suggested for poor households. Added to this, as much of the girls' time is devoted to around-home activities such as caring for younger siblings, fetching water, carrying fuel wood and the like investing to address basic community needs. They would need free time for their education as well as other productive activities.

In brief, the study depicted the role of demographic and socio-economic factors on school participation. Nonetheless, it has limitations as the data on households' financial positions (i.e. ability to pay) is based on self-report measure. Hence, further research in the area can be pursued through obtaining more reliable data on households' ability to pay for schooling.

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Notes

[1] The concept of "demand for schooling" is taken in exactly the same way as in Mulat's (1998) study.

[2] A total of 1,100 households participated. However, 66 of them were eliminated from that data analysis because of incomplete information.

[3] Peasant Association (PA) and Urban Dwellers' Association (UDA) are the smallest administrative units in rural and urban areas respectively.

[4] A total of 16 enumerators had participated in the data collection process in Bule and Yergachefe *Woredas*. To make data collection easier, the enumerators were employed from the respective or nearby PAs and UDAs. All speak *Gedeo* language.