

Selected Social Factors That Affect Girl Child's Participation In Secondary Schools In Bureti Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract: This study, carried out in the Bureti Sub County investigated selected social factors that affect the girl child's participation in secondary school education in Bureti Sub County. The sub county had 62 secondary schools of which 15 were girls' schools while 30 were mixed secondary schools and 17 were boys' schools. The entire sub county had a total population of 12250 students and 406 teachers. The target populations were 5541 girl students and 62 secondary school teacher counselors in the sub county. Survey design was used in this study in which a sample size of 360 girl students and 16 teacher counselors were drawn from 15 girls' and mixed secondary schools in the sub county using stratified sampling technique. Students and teachers' questionnaires were used to collect the required data from the students and counselor teachers respectively. Research Instruments were validated through pilot study and reliability of 0.75 was determined using Cronbach's alpha procedure. Descriptive statistics; mean, frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the data while Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used for analysis. From the study, it was established that the most common factors that affected girl child participation in secondary school education were societal demands and attitudes, parents' perspective and their stereotype thinking towards girl child education. These have led to low level of participation by girl child in secondary school education. As a recommendation, the government through all dimensions of leadership should aid the education of girl child in the sub county through provision of bursaries for the girl students as effort is also made to ensure that parents' attitude is changed for the benefit of girl child education.

Keywords: social factors, Participation, Girl child.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Education forms the basis upon which economic, social and political development of any nation is founded. Investment in education can help to foster economic growth, enhance productivity, contribute to national and social development, and reduce social inequality (Bruns, A. & Mingat, P. 2003)). UNESCO (2005) argues that the level of a country's education is one of the key indicators of its level of development. Globally, education is recognized as a basic human right. The Human Rights Charter treats education as one of the human rights. Odipo (2007) indicates that in 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights laid down Article 26, that everyone had the right to education and that education

would be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Harbison. (1973) states that education is a major contributor to economic growth. It is the route to national development and individual upward social mobility. Schults (1981) notes that education as the most effective weapon in fighting ignorance, poverty, and diseases. Globally, countries are striving towards achieving the goal of providing education to its citizens (E.F.A) without any discrimination. Education produces citizens who are able to compete in the global arena (World Bank, 2004). It is believed to be a prerequisite to equity, equality, and diversity. There are still 58 million girls who are not in school. (UNESCO 2005) majority of them live in Sub Saharan Africa and South West Asia. This means The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to get as many girls as

boys into primary and secondary school by 2015 is likely to be missed in more than 75 countries.

Although Kenya has adopted Basic Education for All (BEA) Republic of Kenya, (2004) and offering free and Compulsory Primary education (FPE), there are areas which have not taken full advantage of this. A report compiled by Center for Study of Adolescence (Moyoncho 2007) shows that in Kenya, the school completion rate for girls remains lower than that of boys in most parts of the country. This points out to the low participation of girls in educational opportunities in Kenya. Educating girls help make communities and societies healthier wealthier and safer. It can also help to reduce child deaths, improve maternal health and tackle the spread of HIV and AIDS (IFRI 2004). Like in many parts of Africa, the girl child in Kenya is faced with varied challenges that might lead to absenteeism, dropout or the entire quality of their education.

The Children Act (2001) provides that every child shall be entitled to education; the provision of which shall be the responsibility of the government and the parents. This is because in Kenya, education is linked to economic development, social mobility, and national unity. Therefore, it plays a key role in transforming the society and providing individuals with the necessary skills for survival

However, in Republic of Kenya (2004), economic survey indicates that the enrolment in schools is in favor of males. Girl child's participation in secondary school education has therefore been affected by factors that may be related to their social economic background. By undermining the girl child's education, it will have a negative impact on their future lives in terms of employment opportunities, improved economic productivity and fundamentally the health of the family, nutrition and the schooling of the next generation. In Bureti Sub county (DEO 2007), enrollment in secondary schools is in favour boys. Furthermore, cases of school dropouts, absenteeism and low performance in classroom work are more common with girls than boys in secondary schools in the sub county.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The thousands of girls out of secondary schools in Kenya is clear evidence of the challenges in an effort to attain Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Government's goal of providing equity and access to education in the country. Out of the many students who enroll each year in form one within the secondary schools in the country, a bigger number of girls as compared to boys do not complete secondary school education.

The magnitude of the challenge underscores the need for urgent attention and commitment to establishing these negative social factors that undermine girl child education. It is considered that girls' education contributes to improved quality of life and enhances national development. It leads to increased economic production rates, improved hygiene and nutritional practices, reduced child and maternal mortality rates. The problem of low participation of girl child in secondary school is evident in Bureti Sub county among other parts of the country. Since very little study has been done, there was therefore need for an empirical research to determine the social factors that negatively affect the girl

child's participation in secondary school education.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to establish the selected social factors that affect girl child's secondary education Bureti Sub County Overall; it aimed at establishing the home environment factors that have taken up child's schooling time. The concern of the study was also to explain the; the benefits of keeping the girl child out of school. It was therefore the purpose of this study to generate more knowledge on the selected social factors that affect girl child's participation in secondary school education so as to mitigate the challenges and improve educational opportunities for the girl child in the sub county.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The specific objective of this study was:

To identify the selected social factors that affect girl child's education in secondary schools in Bureti Sub County.

II. METHODOLOGY

A survey design was used in this study as it was the most appropriate. This design is economical and has a rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell, 2003). This design therefore was appropriate in the sense that the identifiable characteristics of the sampled population of the girls and teachers from the secondary schools in the sub county would give a significantly correct conclusion of the entire population under investigation. Therefore by use of survey method, the results obtained from the sampled population would be generalized to the entire population of the study, and even to areas outside the study area.

This research was conducted in secondary schools in Bureti Sub county in Rift Valley Province of Kenya and has a variety of secondary schools (i.e. Private, Public Mixed day and Boarding schools). The area under study was predominantly rural with some few emerging urban and market centers hence the information obtained could give an impression reminiscent of the Kenyan society; the urbanized and the rural as far as schooling participation is concerned. From the Ministry of Education, Bureti Sub County Education Office (DEO 2007), the sub county had 62 secondary schools with 12250 students and 406 teachers. Out of the total population of the students, 6809 were boys and 5441 were girls. The target population therefore, was 5441 girl students and 406 teachers. The sample population was selected from 15 secondary schools in the sub county.

Krejcie and Morgan (1970) provide the following formula for estimating the sample size (S) needed. The sample size is relative to population size (N), a specified confidence level e.g. (95) associated with a Chi-square Statistic for one degree of freedom, and the designate degree of accuracy as reflected by the amount of sampling error d that can be tolerated.

Therefore the formula for getting the sample size is $S = \frac{X^2 NP}{(1-P)}$

$$d^2 (N-I) + X^2 P (1-P)$$

Where; S = required Sample Size, N = the given population size, P = population proportion assumed to be 0.5, d = degree of accuracy reflected by the amount of error that can be tolerated assumed to be 0.05, X^2 = table value of Chi square for one degree of freedom relative to the desired level of confidence, which is 3.841 for 0.95

This meant 360 girls from secondary schools in Bureti Sub County were selected for the purpose of this research. Based on the same formula, out of the total 406 teachers in Bureti, 62 counselor teachers were the target population of which 16 formed the sample size for this study. This research study used Proportionate Stratified-sampling technique hence schools were stratified into three main categories; purely girls' boarding schools (15 in number), mixed and boarding schools (17), and day secondary schools (13) and therefore selection was done in the ratio of 1:2:1 respectively with full consideration of the geographical locations of the schools. Stratified sampling was also used to cater for the class (forms) difference among the students sampled. This means that at least a girl student was sampled from all the forms (Form 1-4) and in every stream in the sampled schools. Random sampling was used at the classroom level to select the respondents.

The data for the study was collected using questionnaires (Students' Questionnaires and Counselor Teachers' Questionnaires). The Students and Teachers' Questionnaires were administered to the respondents; students and counselor teachers respectively. The sampled students gave their responses in the Students Questionnaire. This questionnaire sought to record information on the girl child's details including social background, parental demands on the girl child, and their level of girl child's participation in school. Counselor Teachers' Questionnaire generated information on teacher counselors' opinions on the level of participation of the girl child in secondary school education. Girl child parental influence was measured using Likert five scale rating while the student respondents' opinions about the home and school environment wherein forced-type responses; taking in view the level of understanding of the respondents.

The reliability of the study was also determined using the Cronbach's alpha procedure (Kathuri & Pals, 1993) and a coefficient of 0.75 was obtained.

Once all the completed questionnaires were collected, the items were coded, tallied, tabulated and data analysis was done using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics involve the use of the percentages, means and frequencies. The percentages and frequencies were used to display the outcome of the study especially in quantifying the responses from the respondents (girl students, and the teachers). These tools were particularly used in quantifying, giving ratio and frequency counts on parents' level of income, number of students missing exams/CATs, availability of study rooms/materials at home and causes of absenteeism among secondary school girls among others. Once the Percentages and frequencies were tabulated, the research data was translated into pie charts and graphs. The presentation of data in pie charts and graphs provided for effective qualitative analysis and discussion on the research finding.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the study it was evident that there was an idea among the girls that given financial difficulties at home; more girls would drop out school than the boys. In the thinking of the respondent students, the parents would prefer to educate a boy than a girl and therefore they were already armed with the idea that given a financial constraint at home, the girl child's education would be foregone and a boy allowed continuing. This finding could reinforce the stereotype thinking that it was more beneficial to educate a boy than a girl for the possible reason that once a girl was married she relocated to her matrimonial home taking away all her education and all the benefits leaving the family in the same or lower economic position as before. Therefore the fear that a girl transfers the benefits of education elsewhere gave the license to some parents to invest on the boys than the girls. The girls were also therefore informed by conscience that given a fall in family finance or income, they were more likely to drop out of school than boys. With this kind of thinking or idea the girl child in secondary school in Bureti Sub County may not take education seriously and may lead to poor performance or low participation in their education. The study also sought to establish the preference of girls to different types of schools, Girls Boarding mixed boarding, Girls day and mixed day school. From the study, it was established that 83% of 5th girls would prefer to learn in girls' boarding schools while 11.6% would prefer mixed boarding schools. 3.1% of the study population would rather join girls' day schools. Only 2% of the girls would rather join day schools. This meant that if it was within their ability, most girls would rather learn in girls boarding schools. However on the ground that there were only 15 girls' boarding schools, 17 mixed boarding schools and 15 mixed day secondary schools it was not possible as the best boarding opportunities were limited. The reason for this preference could be attributed to the privileges and benefits of being in boarding schools that could enhance proper participation in secondary school education (IFRIT 2004). On the other hand there were various disadvantages associated with day schools that militated against the education of the child girl in secondary schools. This could explain the reason for the preference of boarding schools to other types of schools by the girls in the sample population. The counselor teachers gave statistics from their schools on cases of girls' sexual abuse or intimidation; early marriages, drop outs and early pregnancies. From the study it was established that the biggest number of girls were those who simply dropped out of school (280). The reasons could be related to school fees and other factors. The second largest categories of girls' students were those who had babies yet they were still in school. These, summed up to 145 girls in one year. Considering the challenges of being a student mother, such girls were unlikely to do well in their secondary school education. The third category actually represents girl students who get married before getting to form four. By not going through the full cycle of secondary school education, these students will have denied themselves opportunities for further education, employment and active roles in the society. The last category was the number of girls who were sexually harassed on intimidated during or on their way to school. These were cases

related to verbal abuses, waylaying and physical threats by other boys, villagers or strangers. Such cases were however hardly reported to the police. The study also established the fact that girls enjoy their academic work at school. This was justified by 93.75% of the teachers sampled while 6.25% of the teachers did not believe so. This gave the impression that girls in secondary schools in Bureti Sub County had a liking for education and given all the necessary conditions for education, they could do well in their educational pursuits. 62.25% of the sampled counselor teachers thought that girls with school fees problems were active in class while 37.5 did not believe so. In other words, despite the constant disruptions of their learning due to school fees problems, they still found education to be important. From the study it also emerged that 100% of the sampled counselor teachers believed that work at home interfered with girls' studies. This could be linked to sex stereotyping by the society whereby a girl was expected to play the role of a mother in the family. In such a situation a girl was expected to do all the domestic chores like cooking, fetching water and firewood, baby sitting, milking cows and even washing family clothes. These chores were constraints to a girl child's educational pursuits (Koech 1999). This was further supported by earlier findings that a number of school girls find themselves out of school to attend to some other social activities

IV. CONCLUSION

From the study, it emerged that there were key social factors that had negatively affected girl child secondary school education in Bureti Sub County. These were based on the parents' societal demands and attitudes. These social issues also bordered with cultural expectations of the society and the parents' perspective of girl child education in the district. These social factors were established as follows:

TYPE OF SCHOOLS

First the type of school attended by the girl child. From the study it was apparent that the type of school affected the participation of the girl child in secondary school education. Among the categories of secondary schools identified in the district were; mixed day, mixed day /boarding and girls boarding secondary schools. It was established that most of the secondary schools found in the Bureti Sub County were mixed day and mixed day/boarding secondary schools and carried the biggest population of the girl students in the district. Such categories of schools did not meet the demands of the girl child in terms of basic facilities and hence negatively affected the participation of the girl child in secondary school education.

OCCUPATION OF THE PARENTS

The second social factor that affects girl child secondary school education was the occupation of the parents. The study established that the most common occupation among the parents of the respondents was fanning. This created the impression that their level of education may be limited hence

their opinion and level of understanding on education could not facilitate well enough in making informed decisions that could improve girl child education in secondary schools. It could also mean that they were preoccupied with the laborious farming activities such that they had little time or interest in the education of their girl children.

PARENT'S INTEREST IN EDUCATION

Thirdly, parents' interest in girl child education was another negative factor as far their participation in secondary school education was concerned. From the study, it emerged that the way the parents viewed or valued education affected their input in the same. It followed that the more interest they had on education, the more willing they were to pay school fees and meet other demands related to girl child education.

GENDER STEREOTYPING

Gender stereotyping was the fourth social factor that had negatively the participation of girl child in secondary school education in Bureti Sub County. This was the idea that a girl child was of lesser value in the family and that her education or lack of it had little consequence in the family unit. This traditional thinking had negatively affected on the mental state of the girl child consequently affecting her participation in secondary school education

PREFERENCE OF SCHOOL

The fifth social factor had to do with girl child's preference of schools. This idea was about the choice of school for the girl child. Though most of the respondents were girls from day and mixed day /boarding secondary schools, majority of them, (83.5 would have preferred to be in a girls' boarding school lending credence to the thinking that they felt that they were not in the school of their own choice. It was a fact that most girls' boarding schools were more equipped and attractive than mixed day or boarding schools. This feeling of being in a school not of their choice might have negatively affected the participation of the girl child in secondary school education since students' attitudes translated to their educational latitudes.

EARLY MARRIAGES AND STUDENT PREGNANCIES

The sixth social factor according to the study that affected girl child participation in secondary school education was early marriage and student pregnancies. Early marriage meant that a girl student completely abandoned school in order to take up marital responsibilities. This automatically delinked the girl child from her educational pursuits from the study. It was established that a number of girls in secondary schools in the sub county became victims of early marriages. Girl child pregnancy also meant that a girl dropped out of school as her condition at that time made it difficult to continue with her education. Some may be re admitted to school while others may not. This therefore affected their participation in secondary school education.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Social factors played a major role in determining the participation of the girl child in secondary school education. These social factors included the level of education of the parents which directly affected the quality of educational decisions they made which in turn affected the participation of the girl child in secondary school education.

The stereotype thinking of the parents towards girl child education determined how much or less they are willing to pay for the education of their daughters. It is also instructive to note that the attitude of the girl child towards a particular school affected their educational pursuit. This was evident from the research that though most parents had tried to provide study rooms and learning materials for their girl children, students would still prefer to be in a girl's boarding school. This could be due to other demands from their parents like domestic chores and other family related activities that may exert a lot of pressure on girls particularly those who were not boarders.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings obtained from the study, the following recommendation should be acted upon by the relevant authorities:

- ✓ The government should provide financial support or any other form of assistance to needy girl children in secondary schools in the sub county so as to ensure that they complete their full cycle of secondary school education.
- ✓ The government and the local leaders should provide well equipped and affordable girls boarding, secondary schools to cater for the needs and the preferences of the girl children in the sub county. This is based on the finding that there was a high demand for girls boarding secondary schools in the sub county.
- ✓ The government and local leaders should spearhead the fight against early marriages, early pregnancies and sexual harassment and intimidation of the girl child in the sub county. This is to eliminate girl child absenteeism and drop out from secondary schools in the sub county

School managements should endeavor to provide guidance and counseling programmes designed to educate the girls on social issues and challenges in particular view of equipping them with the skills necessary for their age bracket. This will ensure that they do not fall victims of circumstances that will make them drop out of school or perform dismally in their schoolwork. Such guidance and counseling programmes should include topics on social relationships, peer pressure, drugs and drug abuse, dangers of premarital sexual relationships and early marriages.

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