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Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Dropout rate among girls in public day secondary schools in Mukaa sub- county, Makueni County, Kenya

By

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Abstract

The retention of the students within the education system is a great challenge to all education stakeholders. In this regard, the girl-child has been faced by the problem of dropping out from school. The study seeks to find out the socio- economic factors influencing dropout rate among the girls in public day secondary schools in Mukaa Sub-County, Makueni County in Kenya. The researcher aimed at coming up with findings and recommendations which would create awareness among the administrators and policy makers from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST).This would help in formulating educational policies to minimize this problem in the future. The study was guided by one objective, to investigate the influence of cultural norms on girls' dropout rate from public day secondary schools in Mukaa sub-County,Makueni County ,Kenya, . The research used descriptive survey design. The research design was the most appropriate for investigating the dropout rate among the school going children because this type of research design allows both quantitative and qualitative methods to be used. The sample for this study was determined by use of Fisher's formula $n = \frac{Z^2pq}{d^2}$.The target population included 30 public day secondary schools in Mukaa Sub-County. A proportionate random sample of 15 schools was selected for the study from the 3 zones that form Mukaa Sub-County. The respondents' was made up of 61 girls and 15 Form 4 class teachers. A minimum correlation coefficient of 0.70 was recommended for the study. Data was collected through administration of questionnaires. Data collected was coded, cleaned and categorized manually by the researcher and processed by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). It was then analyzed using frequency distribution tables, percentages, bar graphs and pie charts

Key words: Retention, Drop out, Stakeholders, Coefficient, Policies

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Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Education is the backbone of economic development in our society but the drop out of girls from schools constitutes a serious problem and loss in a country's budget in education especially when secondary education opportunities is expected to increase. The school dropout problem caused negative economic development and resulting to waste of talents and the incompetent labor force in most parts of the world. Alika and Egbochuku (2009) argued that drop out from school among girls is a global phenomenon. According to World Bank report (2017), the dropout rate amongst secondary school girls in the US Latin Americans aged 16 to 24 is 30% compared with 12.9% for blacks and 8.2 % for whites. There are many reasons as to why Latina girls leave high school before graduation and these include early pregnancy, marriage, gender roles, stereotyping, family demands and economic status. According to EFA (2010) report, there were 72 million children out of school in 2007. By 2025, it is estimated that 56 million children will be out of school unless corrective measures are taken. About 54 percent of children out of school are girls. In Sub-Saharan Africa, almost 12 million girls may never enroll. In Yemen, nearly 80 percent of girls out of school are unlikely to enroll, compared with 36 percent of boys. Literacy remains among the most neglected of all education goals with about 759 million adults looking for literacy skills today out of whom two thirds are women.

Every secondary school in Kenya has its own culture and have been allocated the task of achieving social equality, overcoming material disadvantages and eradicating prejudice (Giddens, 2011), since the as whole eventually suffer as a result of dropping out of school. According to the latest survey in Mukaa sub- County, the rate of drop out in public day secondary schools for girls is more alarming than public boarding secondary schools, (Education Report, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

School dropout especially among girls still remains a major problem in Kenya's education system. According to Ricketts (2013), girl's dropout from secondary school can be traced from historical perceptive of colonial African period to African countries, while by then, some students attended schools that were run by the German government and which trained Africans to become interpreters, clerks, teachers and to be engaged in other administrative functions within the colonial government. Dropout of school rate is still a challenge especially among the girl child in public day secondary schools in achieving this goal. A report by UNESCO (2015) on secondary school dropout patterns in Africa indicates that Kenya's average dropout rate is 16.9%.

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There must be unknown factors that are unique to Mukaa sub-county which is contributing to higher girl student's dropouts in this sub-county. This situation motivates the need for the researcher to investigate the unknown factors for girls' high rate of dropping out of public day secondary schools. The empirical studies by Shahidul and Karim (2015), Mawere (2012), Grant and Hallman (2006), Ntumva and Rwambali (2013), Maziku (2013) and Kahise (2013) have showed causes and challenges on girl's dropout from secondary schools.

On the basis of the reviewed literature, the research gap was identified which revealed that there is no studies on girl child dropout rate in public mixed day secondary schools in Mukaa Sub-County, Makueni County, in Kenya. This study concentrated on investigating the gap on contributing factors to girls' dropout rate in public mixed Secondary schools in Mukaa Sub-County, Makueni County, in Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by one specific objective to investigate the influence of cultural norms on girls' dropout rate from public day secondary schools in Mukaa sub-County, Makueni County , Kenya.

Methodology

Methodology adapted was literature review using scientific method that tries to explain how to apply thinking in Education .In this scientific method a problem is defined ,data determined through critical literature review ,patterns are established and conclusions drawn.

Theoretical framework

This study was guided by three theories namely; participation - connection theory (Finn, 1989), Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1971) and Rumberger's theory of individual perspective (2009).

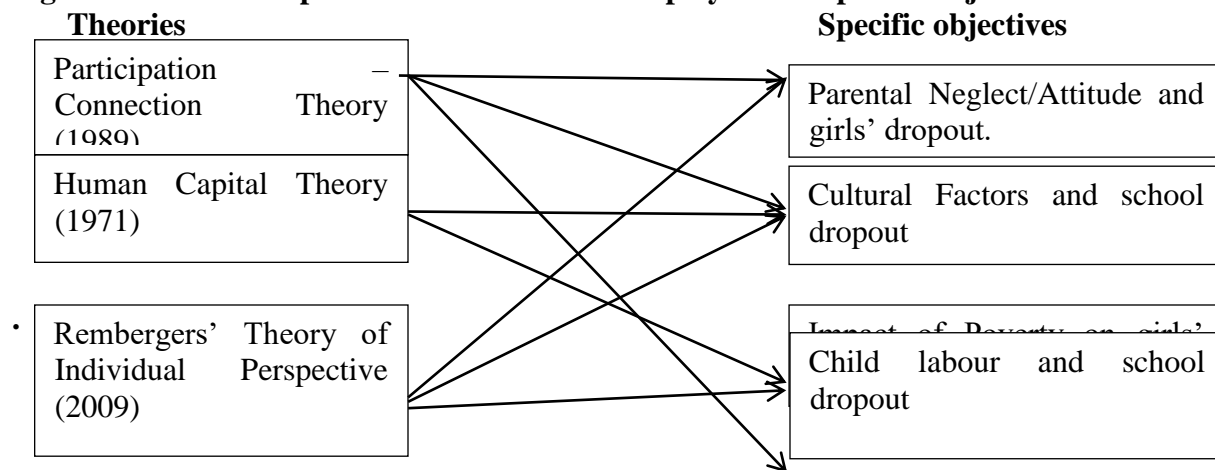
The participation - connection theory (Finn, 1989) is a model which suggests that as youth actively participates in school the more likely they are to feel a sense of connection or belonging to school. The greater a student's sense of connection to school, it is less likely that he or she will drop out from school. The theory is suitable for this study because the study examines factors which contribute to girl child drop out from public mixed secondary schools. The application of the theory to study would suggest that active participation of girl students in the classroom will make improvement against the predictor and precipitating causes that may lead to drop out of these girls.

Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1971) on the other hand education gives the women and those who engage in it capacity to change the attitude. For the women, education helps them to change their attitude towards their role in both the household and in the workplace. It gives them a wider range of options for economic activities (Zhan and Sherraden, 2013).This theory is appropriate for this study because educating girls can improve the socioeconomic level, nutritional level, and also cultural value. Protecting girls from dropping out of school increases their social welfare and participation in economic development. Increased productivity and improvements to the skills base in a country supports economic development, as well as social development.

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Lastly, Rumberger’s theory of individual perspective (2009) gives two perspectives that determine dropouts. These include; the individual perspective and institutional perspective. The individual perspective holds that the problem of dropout is located within the learners themselves like socio-economic status, race or ethnicity and language. The institutional perspective holds that the problem of dropout is within institutions like family, schools, resources, policies and practices. Rumberger’s theory put into account individual institutional perspectives that influence dropout. However, the current study only focused on individual family factors influencing dropout rate of girls.

Figure 1: Relationships between the theories employed and specific objectives.



Source: Field data 2021

Influence of cultural norms on girls dropout rate in public day Secondary Schools

In rural areas girls' dropout rate from school is higher because parents consider girls' schooling as of no benefit when they leave their own family after getting married.(Holcamp 2019). Mansory (2017) also revealed that early marriage is the foremost cause of early school dropout of girls in Afghanistan. A lot of research have highlighted on girls' age and education and found that when girls reach puberty, parents consider it is time for them to be married and tend to arrange the marriage instead of continuing schooling (Molteno et al., 2010). Some empirical studies argue that early marriage of girls is associated with dropouts in certain contexts. For instance, in societies where girls leave parental household after marriage, girls' dropout might be higher in that society (Ackers et al., 2011). Shahidul (2012) also found that in Bangladesh girls with lower socioeconomic backgrounds drop out from secondary school.

A study conducted by (Save the Children, 2015) indicates that cultural norms and beliefs constrain girls' education in many developing parts of the world. In these societies, traditional values and some religious beliefs constrain girls from making their own decisions and expressing their own opinions. Chege and Sifuna (2016) examined claim that many cultures favor education for boys more than girls. Kapakasa (2012) studied girls' persistence in school and found that initiation ceremonies (religious ceremony) have significant effect on girls' dropout rate when parents have more propensity to pay for the expenses of the ceremony than their daughters'

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education. Abena (2011) and Atayi (2018) observe that in Africa parents were more concerned about the role for girls at home and they augured that girls do not need education since they are supposed to take care of the children and prepare meals. Falkingham and Baschieri (2016) observed that in Tajikistan many girls attend only religious classes which provide relevant skills for future married life making them skilled wives.. However, traditional values can be different from location to location and in this respect, UNESCO (2010) indicate that traditional values are stronger in rural areas in developing countries compared to urban areas and people often do not allow girls to leave homes even for schools

Some of the girls are given to marriage against their wish and when they refuse, they are threatened with death. The children are given to marriage at a tender age in quest of dowry from the husbands. But how much is the amount and for how long does it last? The girls lament that because of the setbacks they still did not escape from poverty and their parents had nothing to show for the dowry received. Some parents justify the denial of girls of their right to education to prevent them from bringing shame to the family through early pregnancy. Yet others believe that women who are at the same level of education as the men are a disgrace to the community because more often than not, they will not get married and if they do, it will be to a foreigner. For such parents, early marriage is the best way to prevent this and at the same time preserve traditions.

A study conducted by Kahise (2013) on the effects of culture on access to secondary school education for girls in Kisarawe district in Tanzania revealed that parents still believe that marriage and other domestic responsibilities are the best option for female children. They also believe that sons are responsible for the care and welfare of a wife and the children in the family. This suggests that a daughter does not need secondary education because her future husband will look after her. This is why, when parents face critical economic problems, girl's education is rejected by expecting men to solve the problems.

Data analysis and discussion of findings

Influence of cultural norms on girls dropout rate in public day Secondary Schools

The first objective sought to establish the influence of cultural norms on dropout rates of girls in public day Secondary schools in Mukaa Sub-County

Table 4.1: Cultural values that lead to girl students dropping out from schools

	Freq	percent
Early Marriage	20	32.79
Early pregnancies	37	60.66
Peer pressure	16	26.23
Poverty	26	42.62
FGM	4	6.56
Male chauvinism	4	6.56

Source: Field Data

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Table 4.9 gives the cultural norms which lead to girl students dropping out of school as provided by the students. The table shows that 32.79 percent of the students agreed that the girl child drops out of school due to early marriage; 60.66 percent said is due to early/unwanted pregnancies; 26.23 percent said is due to peer pressure; 42.62 percent opined that is due to poverty; while only 6.56 percent of the students agreed the dropout is due to female genital mutilation (FGM) and male chauvinism.

Table 4.2: Two Sample T-Test with Equal Variance for cultural norms

Variable name and T-statistics	Girls dropout
Early marriage (T-statistics)	2.31
No mean	7.61
Yes mean	5.30
Early unwanted pregnancies (T-statistics)	2.57*
No mean	5.29
Yes mean	7.86
Peer pressure (T-statistics)	2.65
No mean	6.16
Yes mean	8.81
FGM (T-statistics)	2.25
No mean	7.00
Yes mean	4.75
Male chauvinism (T-statistics)	0.38
No mean	6.88
Yes mean	6.50

Note: * and ** indicates 5 and 10 percent level of significance respectively

Source:

After looking at the frequency distribution of the various indicators of cultural norms, the researcher conducted the two sample t-test for girl's dropout on each of the binary measures as shown in table 4.10. Of particular importance is the mean dropout for girls who reported early or unwanted pregnancies with a value of 7.86, while those who didn't support had a mean dropout for girls of 5.29. The mean difference between the two groups was 2.57 and was statistically significant at the 5 percent level of significance. This indicates that the cultural norm of early/unwanted pregnancies has a greater influence on girl child dropout from secondary schools.

All the school principals agreed that cultural values could affect girl child education and consequently dropping out of school. In terms of some of the cultural values common in the surrounding and how they lead to school dropout, the principals mentioned early marriages and teenage/early pregnancies, with one of the school principal clarifying that, '*girls tend to be drawn to early marriages which consequently lead to school dropout due to the belief that girls*

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after being educated will eventually get married hence losing family resources’. This is similar to findings by Molteno et al., (2010) that parents consider it is time for them to be married and tend to arrange the marriage instead of continuing schooling. Yet another school principal added that is due to, *‘the belief that girls should not be educated thus lack of value on girls compared to boys on education and hence the parents are not committed to them’*.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the study findings the following conclusion can be drawn:

Cultural values of early pregnancies and early marriages have an influence the girl child dropout due to the belief that girls after being educated will eventually get married which according to some parents it’s a waste of family resources.

Recommendations

Emanating from the study findings and the conclusions thereof, this study recommends that:

- i). In order to reduce cases of school dropout rate among the girls there is need to create mass awareness on the importance of educating a girl child by sensitizing the local community and the girl child working with the local leaders on the significance of education for all children regardless of gender.
- ii). Girls should be guided to grow both academics and family duties as they important in life to make them to be hardy for the challenges awaiting them in the future since they will have to fit in the societal values and family after school.
- iii). There is need for keeping girls in school by giving the girls scholarship and soliciting for their fees from various stakeholders to complete their secondary education, and taking care of their personal needs in hygiene through assisting them with sanitary towels. .

Suggestions for Further Research

- i. Future studies may be conducted to ascertain the girl dropout rate for providing and sustenance of the boy child.
- ii. There is need for a study to be conducted on the influence of sanitary towels on academic performance and graduation rates.

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