

**Effects of Economic Factors on Girls' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Mandera South Sub-County, Mandera County, Kenya**

By

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**Abstract**

The purpose of the study was to investigate effects of economic factors on girls' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mandera south sub-county, Mandera county, Kenya. The main assumption of the study was that education is vital for every citizen because it facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and skills for betterment of a society. Additionally, educating girls results in several socioeconomic benefits that are beneficial to the entire society, such as increased economic productivity, higher family income, delayed marriages, decreased fertility rates, and improved infant and child survival rates. The purpose of the study was to assess the effect of economic factors on girls' academic performance in Mandera South Sub-County public secondary schools. The study was guided by two theories; Academic Mediation Theory and Social Control Theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study targeted 11 school principals and 640 form four girls in public secondary schools in Mandera South Sub County. The study used Slovin's formula to sample 246. The girls were selected using stratified random sampling. The study used questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data. A pilot study was conducted to test questionnaires' validity and reliability. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 28. Data was presented in tables and figures. Findings showed that there is a strong significant relationship between economic factors and girls' academic performance ( $r=0.654$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The study concludes that; Majority of girls fail in exams due to economic status of their parents. The parents who are low-income earners are not able to pay school fees on time. The recommendation is that the school management board should initiate income generating and learning programmes in the school to help needy girls in terms of provision of basic needs this will ensure that girls from poor families will be retained in school at all times.

**Keywords:** Kenya, Mandera, Economic factors; Family income; Child Labor; Education Costs; level of quality education

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**Background**

Education is vital for every citizen because it facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and skills for betterment of a society. Additionally, educating girls results in several socioeconomic benefits that are beneficial to the entire society, such as increased economic productivity, higher family income, delayed marriages, decreased fertility rates, and improved infant and child survival rates (USAID, 2008). As a result, it is crucial to make every effort to ensure that girls do not fall behind boys in terms of education. The causes of educational inequality are seen to have varied throughout the world. Some are related to the home, the school, and the socio-cultural environment. According to UNICEF (2015), issues like inadequate restrooms in schools and a hostile learning environment where girls may experience violence, exploitation, or corporal punishment hinder the achievement of parity, particularly in secondary schools. According to Jayachadran (2018), parents may benefit more from investments made in a son's health and education because he will remain a member of the family, as opposed to a daughter who will physically and financially leave the home upon marriage. After all, patrilocality, the practice of married couples living close to or with the husband's family, is practiced by many cultures, such as those in countries like Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. This type of belief implies that if parents were required to choose between sending their son or daughter to school by paying tuition or providing resources, they would choose to send their son. It is understood that skipping classes or other school activities hurts a student's academic performance.

According to UNICEF (2015), only 2 of the 35 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have gender equality. According to the report, even though gender parity has improved, there are still obstacles and bottlenecks that prevent it from being achieved, particularly among marginalized children and secondary school students. These obstacles and bottlenecks include school fees, strong cultural norms that favor boys' education, inadequate sanitary conditions in classrooms, and unfavorable learning environments where girls may experience violence, exploitation, or corporal punishment. Additionally, there are not enough female teachers in the classrooms. Lewin and Sabates (2018) found that 15 per cent of girls from rural households in Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Niger do not have access to education and those who are enrolled in school perform poorly than boys.

The Government of Tanzania and Non-Governmental Organizations have been struggling to empower women and girls through providing education with the focus of eliminating gender gaps in the access to education and academic performance as stipulated in the second and third Millennium Development Goals. In Tanzania, inequality in access to education and poor academic performance in secondary schools was caused by various factors including poverty, insufficient school infrastructure namely dormitories and hostels, absence of toilets and

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distinctive rooms for mature girls, long distance from school to home, lack of sexual education and early pregnancies (Benedictom, Piliyesi, & Anyona, 2020).

Kenya faces gender parity in KCSE performance across the country. According to Etelej (2015) out of 483,630 candidates examined in KCSE in 2014; 259,746 of them (or 54%) were men and 223,884 (46%) were women. The number of males that achieved C+ and above was 88,299 (59%) and 61,418 (41%) females. Similarly, 69.4% of males achieved A plain in comparison to 30.6% of females with the same grade. The gender gap in education has been addressed through a variety of interventions. These initiatives and strategies include documents like the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005, The National Plan of Action on EFA (2003-2013), and The M.o.E Strategic Plan (2006-2011). A National Task Force for Gender and Education as well as a Ministerial Task Force on Girls' Education have both been established by the government. Other such programs include the re-admission of girls who become pregnant while enrolled in school, gender sensitization and advocacy, and affirmative action in secondary school bursary allocation.

To eradicate gender disparities and advance gender equality in education, the gender and education policy, which was finalized in 2006, directs all work done by stakeholders in the field of education. Makewa et al. (2014) found that female teachers are insufficient to promote girls' academic achievement because there is only one female teacher for every 36 female students, compared to one male teacher for every four male students. In Mandera South, schools have more male teachers than female implying that girls lack female teachers whom the girls can look up to as role models. Furthermore, even in ASALs, the topic of boy-girl relationships has not been fully addressed. It is against this background that the study sought to establish the effects of social-economic factors on girls' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mandera South Sub County, Mandera County, Kenya.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Kenyan government has made enormous efforts to achieve gender equality. The first policy on gender parity was developed in 2007 which was the Gender Equality in Education (2007). Since its launch in 2007, there has been a wider and deeper understanding of the concept of gender as opposed to the perception that it is essentially a girls' and women's issue. The 2019 National Policy on Gender and Development which is seen as a step towards mainstreaming of gender issues in Kenya was recently drafted in an effort to offer the guidelines on drafting of a national gender law. Despite the efforts to reduce gender parity in education, girls in public secondary schools in Mandera South Sub County continue to perform worse than boys despite all of the government's efforts to improve gender equality in education (M.O.E, 2021). Despite learning in the same environment, having the same teachers teach them, and using the same facilities and resources, the girls' lower performance is observed in the Sub County.

The analysis of KCSE results for the sub-county reveals a gender gap identified by the analysis of the 2021 KCSE results (the most recent available analysis- by gender). The government has put a lot of effort into improving gender parity in academic performance, but in Mandera South Sub-county, the efforts have not yielded the desired results. According to the Ministry of Education (2021), boys were more likely than girls to earn grades that allowed them to enroll in universities in Kenya. For instance, 8.3% of the population that attained grades that

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allowed joining universities were girls while boys made up 10%. More girls than boys, 12.7%), as opposed to, 8.5%, received high grades nationally. The same situation was revealed by an analysis of the Mandera South joint end-of-year examination whereby in public secondary schools, more boys 67% of boys versus 33% of girls attained grades that allowed them to enroll in universities as regular students (M.o.E 2015). This study hence sought to find out whether social, cultural, and economic factors affect girls' academic performance in Mandera South Sub County public secondary schools in Mandera County, Kenya.

### **Research Objective**

To establish the effects of economic factors on girls' academic performance in Mandera South Sub-County public secondary schools.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Academic Mediation Theory**

The Academic Mediation Theory was developed by Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan (1960). The theory emphasizes that every factor involved in a student's life influences how well he or she does in school; the grades attained, or what he or she gets out of his or her work ethics, influence his desire to attend school (Verbeek, 2014). Many studies have shown that gender disparities greatly influence whether or not children more especially the girl-child will finish school. If the student does well in school, the individual will most likely continue with school and if one does so consistently poorly in school, the person will wish to drop out more likely.

Research has shown that gender imbalances are one of the strongest predictors of the girl-child access to education and academic performance. This theory examines the mediation effect of gender disparities on other factors, such as deviant affiliation, personal deviance, family socialization and structural strains, associated with girl-child education. Essentially, it looks at how gender disparities interact with and affects the relationship between socio-economic factors and other factors. Academic Mediation Theory focuses on the agreement of getting a solution based on access to education and academic performance of a girl-child. Notably, for a girl-child to access to education, the co-corporation work of three parties namely parents, teachers and students themselves was essential.

#### **Social Control Theory**

Social Control Theory was developed by Travis Hirschi (1969). According to Pratt, Gau and Franklin (2011), the theory proposes that people's relationships, commitments, values, norms, and beliefs encourage them not to break the law. Thus, if moral codes are internalised and individuals are tied into and have a stake in their wider community, they will voluntarily limit their propensity to commit deviant acts. This theory is based on the premise that individuals' refrain from anti-social behaviours because they form bonds with pro-social values, pro-social people and pro-social institutions. The existence and strength of these bonds is positively related to social control which ultimately discourages people from adopting selfish and aggressive behaviours in order to pursue their primitive and hedonistic drives.

Overall, the Social Regulation Theory of Hirsch asserts that humans are not born with a conscience, but rather that through contact with important people and places in our lives, it is

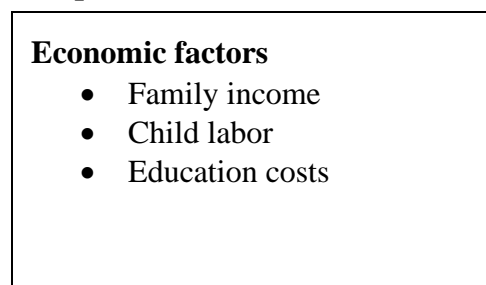
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formed over time. Morals and ideals are taught to us by our parents, faith figures and colleges. Our parents, schools, courts and police are teaching us laws and social norms. Our religious leaders and communities instill in us religious values that affect our actions and choices tremendously as well. Parents enroll their kids not only to teach them responsibility and how to engage with their peers in schools and extracurricular sports, but also in an attempt to occupy some of their spare time so that they do not waste it getting into trouble.

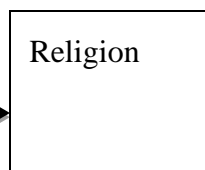
According to the Theory of Social Regulation, children who do not have these factors in their lives eventually end up committing deviant or criminal acts. The theory of social control is applicable to the present study, since social status entitles one to inherit aptitude through education. Social Regulation Theory observes, according to Pratt, Gau and Franklin (2011), that the provision of formal equity and access to education aims at placing everyone at the same level and ensures that the result is justified. In Kenya based on the theory, in an effort to improve academic performance, the government has made primary education free for all and greatly subsidized secondary education. The key obstacles to girl-child academic performance in are social barriers, high levels of poverty and poor cultural practices.

### **Conceptual Framework**

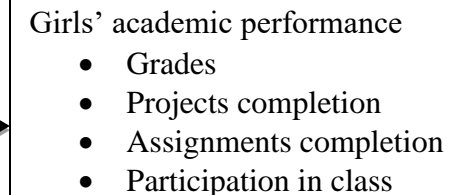
#### **Independent variables**



#### **Intervening variable**



#### **Dependent variable**



### **Review of Empirical Review**

Extreme poverty in families make them unable to take their children to schools or unable to maintain them in school and they are always sent home due to lack of school fees. A large number of children from poor families are forced to drop out of school before acquiring relevant life related skills. School levies includes cost of remedial classes, motivation fee, salaries of BOM teachers, and infrastructure fund among others. Many children are forced to miss classes because they are at home now and then collecting money. Household income is linked to a range of factors such as when children start school, how often do they attend, whether they have to temporarily withdraw and eventually dropout (Daudi, 2016). Miruka (2018) found that inconsistency in bursary disbursement puts students from poor families at risk of missing classes as they are sent home for fees and consequently perform poorly. Though a few students from low socioeconomic background may excel in studies yet for many, the experience undermines learning potential, disempowers and stigmatizes them.

Kainuwa and Yusuf (2013) studied influence of parents economic status on the Children's Education in Nigeria. The researchers found out that the opportunity costs of schooling are associated with labor shortage, resources and services lost due to sending children

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to school. Child labor is essential to existence of many rural families in Nigeria. The children are involved in domestic work, agricultural work, selling farm products in the market and working as nannies to younger siblings at the expense on acquiring education. Poor rural send their children into the domestic labor market in exchange for regular cash income. Ouma (2018) sought to establish the influence of parents' economic status on enrolment and participation of children in pre-primary schools in Bunyala sub-county. Findings revealed that was majority of children not enrolled in schools were girls and parents' occupation significantly influenced the ability of parents to pay school fees. Gitonga (2015) investigated factors influencing girl child's participation in secondary education in selected secondary schools in Nyahururu Division of Laikipia County. Findings showed that the main factors hindering access to secondary education were lack of school fees due to poverty, lack of moral support from family member and teachers' poor attitude to female students which negatively affects girl-child education.

Owuor and Musani (2016) investigated economic factors affecting girls' performance in mixed secondary schools. It was established that economic factors affecting girls' performance were poverty levels, system of giving bursaries, and ignorance of available resources. The recommendations made were increased bursaries, inviting resource persons to talk to girls, providing basic needs and organizing parents meeting to discuss various issues affecting the girl student. Nyawira (2015) carried out a study on the influence of the secondary education bursary fund on retention of students in public secondary schools in Kiambaa Constituency, Kiambu County. The study established that the amounts awarded to the students was too little to enable them remain in school throughout the study period hence affecting their performance negatively. It also established that there was no consistency in allocation and that the allocations were not in line with the school calendar hence being of little help to the students in having them retained in school leading to poor performance. The study recommended that the main criteria that should be emphasized during allocation is the poverty level of the student and other considerations can follow after.

### **Research Methodology**

The researcher adopted a descriptive research design. For the study, the researcher targeted the principals and form four girls in the public secondary schools in Mandera South Sub County. The target was 640 girls and 11 principals. The researcher used purposive sampling technique to obtain the required number of the school principals. Slovin's formula was used to get a sample of 246 girls that were sampled using stratified random sampling. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students while interview guides were used to collect data from the principals. The sample was conducted with 25 form four girls and 2 principals. The study used content and construct validity. The researcher employed Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient to measure questionnaires' reliability. Data was analyzed using SPSS Version. The study data included descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean) while inferential statistics were (correlation and regression). Findings were tabulated.

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### **Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

The study aimed at establishing the effect of economic factors on girls' academic performance in Mandera South Sub-County public secondary schools. Respondents were asked to tick on the extent to which economic factors affect girls' performance. Findings are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Extent to which Economic Factors affect Girls' Performance**

<b>Economic factors</b>	<b>NE</b>		<b>LE</b>		<b>ME</b>		<b>GE</b>		<b>VGE</b>		<b>Mean</b>
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	
Family income	14	7.8	19	10.6	4	2.2	92	51.1	51	28.3	3.79
Child labor	13	7.2	8	4.4	2	1.1	124	68.9	33	18.3	4.40
Education costs	3	1.7	6	3.3	8	4.4	116	64.4	47	26.1	4.47

**N=180**

Source; Field Data (2023)

Results show that the girls indicated that family income affect girls performance to a great extent (Mean =3.79), child labor to a very good extent (Mean =4.40), and education costs affect girls performance to a very great extent (Mean =4.47). Findings imply that families' inability to cater for girls' school needs affect their academic performance.

This finding was also supported by a principal (Principal 1) who said that:

Some of the community members take advantage of the poor children since they provide cheap labor instead of supporting them in academics through sponsorship. Girls from this school are involved in small businesses in order to get money for their basic needs. In a bid to get money, some girls engage in irresponsible sexual behaviours which leads to pregnancies and eventual dropout. When girls drop out they are employed as house girls in urban areas. Poor families marry-off their children to get wealth ((Principal 1, Interview, September 13, 2023).

Findings imply that poor families may not be able to pay school fees on time and the girls may be sent at home to collect school fees. Absence from school means that the girls miss out on lessons hence affecting their performance. Some of the girls are involved in economic activities that interfere with their school programs. Such students may also be tired and no time for revision which helps to do recap of concept taught in class. Findings are in support of Huisman, Rani and Smits (2010) that family economic status played a key role in enrollment in schools and better primary schools ensure more educational participation of girls. Nyawira (2015) also established that the amounts awarded to the students in terms of bursaries was too little to enable them remain in school throughout the study period hence affecting their performance negatively.

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**Table 2: Agreement Level of influence of Economic Factors on Girls’ Performance**

Statements	SA – Strongly Agree		A- Agree		U- Undecided		D – Disagree		SD-Strongly Disagree		M
	SD		D		N		A		SA		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Inability of parents to invest in girls education affects their performance	15	8.3	15	8.3	3	1.7	49	27.2	98	54.4	4.11
Girls whose parents earn high income have brighter children than their counterparts in the low-income bracket	10	5.6	30	16.7	7	3.9	111	61.7	22	12.2	3.42
Inability of parents to afford extra expenses such stationary make some girls to stay at home	12	6.7	22	12.2	9	5.0	26	14.4	111	61.7	3.88
Girls fail to attend school due to uniform costs associated with schooling	7	3.9	13	7.2	3	1.7	49	27.2	108	60.0	4.32

**N=180**

Source; Field Data (2023)

Findings show that majority of the girls agreed that; inability of parents to invest in girls education affects their performance (Mean =4.11), girls whose parents earn high income have brighter children than their counterparts in the low-income bracket (Mean =3.42), inability of parents to afford extra expenses such stationary make some girls to stay at home (Mean =3.88), and girls fail to attend school due to uniform costs associated with schooling (Mean =4.32). Findings imply that economically unstable parents are not able to support their girls education. They may not be able to buy school uniforms, learning materials, or pay fees on time. Such parents may also be unable to meet other education costs required by school management. Shortage of capital hinders the parents from providing school requirements for girls and most of the parents in may not be employed or have stable income so they may only be able to basic needs. Findings support Owuor, and Musani (2016) that economic factors affecting girls’ performance were poverty levels, system of giving bursaries, and ignorance of available resources.



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**Table 3: Correlation Analysis**

Variables		Performance	economic factors
<b>Performance</b>	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	
<b>Economic factors</b>	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.654** .000	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)  
Source; Field Data (2023)

Results show that there is a strong significant relationship between economic factors and girls' academic performance ( $r=0.654$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The findings are in support of Glick and Sahn (2016) that there is a strong significant correlation between a family's financial strength and girls academic performance

**Table 4: Regression Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant/Y Intercept	4.976	.468		4.579	.000
Economic factors	.900	.187	.619	4.852	.000

Source; Field Data (2023)

Girls' academic performance =  $4.976 + 0.900(\text{economic factors})$

Therefore, a unit change in economic factors change would cause a change in girls academic performance by a factor of 0.900. The t statistics show that economic factors had the greatest effect on girls academic performance ( $t=4.852$ ,  $p= 0.000$ ).

### Conclusions

Majority of girls fail in exams due to economic status of their parents. The parents who are low-income earners are not able to pay school fees on time. This leads to the school administration sending the students home to collect school fees and they spend a lot of time at home hence losing out on academics. Girls have more needs as compared to boys and lack of money for academic and personal needs force them to spend time out of school to look for manual jobs while others get married.

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### **Recommendations**

Communities should be empowered to start off income generating activities to alleviate poverty and enable families increase their income and have the ability to support their female students in secondary school till completion. The school management board should initiate income generating and learning programmes like poultry keeping in the school to help needy girls in terms of provision of basic needs this will ensure that girls from poor families will be retained in school at all times.

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