



GIRL-CHILD DROP-OUT AND CLASS REPETITION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the causal factors of drop-out and repetition among girls in secondary schools in Kisumu County. The study targeted 1448 girls who enrolled in Form one in the year 2004 and completed Form four in 2007. Out of the 49 Schools that admitted and registered girls for KCSE therefore 15 mixed schools and pure girls' schools in Kisumu County were sampled. The study used the *Ex-Post Facto* research strategy. Stratified sampling method was used to select schools and participants respectively. The KCSE results records, class registers and admission records were used to supplement the data was collected by use of questionnaires. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study established that most girls dropped out of school and repeated a class in Form two and three, underscoring the significance of class level in school drop-out and repetition. The study established that performance of girls who rejoined school after staying out of school for sometime ranged between average and very poor. Socio-economic factors such as culture, family type, student attitude and peer influence had major influences on drop-out and class repetition among girls in secondary schools of Kisumu County, western Kenya. The study recommends concerted effort by all stakeholders in education to retain the girl-child in school, intensify guidance and counselling especially for Forms 2 and 3, creating of awareness among parents, sponsorship, use of women role models and legislation to motivate and keep more girls in school and improve their academic performance.

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INTRODUCTION

Women are central to the development process in many parts of the world (Azabed, 1995). In Africa, women comprise over 50% of the adult population, produce 80% of food, are involved in 90% of food processing, raise children, maintain the household, fetch water and fuel, tend small livestock, and trade in commodities (Bushra, 1988). Despite their enormous contribution, women are presumed inferior, relegated to domestic chores and their education is not valued by many societies in Africa (Narayan, 2000). Studies have shown that education of the females has profound effect on national development as lack of women education has been linked to poor sanitation, poor health and increased child mortality (Wallace, 1991). Female education has proved to have more influence on child development than male education (Azabed, 1995).

The disparities between girls' and boys' in their access, retention, quality and benefits from education continue to exist with little or no concerted efforts to intervene (Wachira, 2007). This inequality is reflected and reinforced by traditional, modern laws and institutional practices. Cultural practices that were inherited from the

pre-colonial past and developed under the ages of colonialism placed numerous obstacles to women's enhancement. World Bank (2012) report indicates that investing in girls is both the right thing to do and smart economics.

In Kenya, provision of quality, relevant and equitable education to an increasing number of children, youth and adults has been a major challenge (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The challenge has been caused by the disparity between the rate of economic growth and the growth of the population. This mismatch has delayed the achievement of education for all, while attempts to increase the numbers have compromised the quality of education (Bushra, 1988). The current population of Kenya is 38,610,097 million people and 50% of this population is reportedly made up of females (Republic of Kenya, 2010). This means then that there should be equal number or more secondary schools for girls. Unfortunately, pure girls secondary schools are few while in mixed secondary schools boys enrolment is far much higher than that of girls. The study established enrolment trends of the girl-child in Kisumu County, Western Kenya, determined the causes of repetition and drop-out of the girl-child, and suggested possible solutions.

METHODOLOGY

The sample

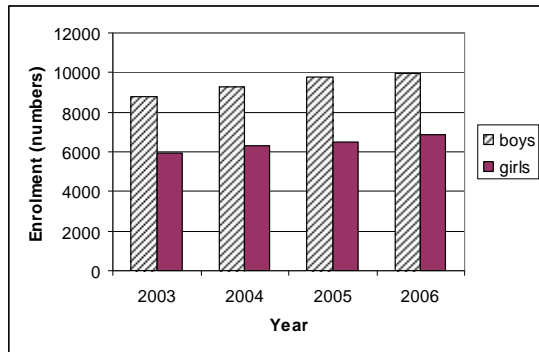


Figure 1 Enrolment trends of girls and boys in Kisumu County

The target population comprised girls who enrolled in Form One in the year 2004 and sat for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) in the year 2007. The schools were stratified according to type: four pure girls' boarding schools, one mixed boarding secondary school and ten mixed day district schools. The selected schools formed 30.6 % of the total 49 schools which enrolled girls and had registered students for the KCSE in the year 2007. The respondents were selected using stratified sampling method in the sampled schools. The sampled respondents were made up of 15 head-teachers, 15 guidance and counselling teachers, and 50 class teachers of the schools selected for the study. The study traced girls who left secondary school without completing the secondary school cycle (four years) and all girls who spent more than one year in a given class using school documents like admission and class registers, together with documents from Kisumu district DEO's office.

Instruments

Validity was established using the inter-rater judgement from the experts to establish the stability of the items. Reliability was estimated using test- retest during piloting and correlation coefficient obtained for the two scores was 0.76. Data was collected using questionnaires and document analysis: like school records, K.C.S.E examination results, class registers and admission registers. The questionnaire used closed-ended items with Five point Likert scale on possible causes of drop-out and repetition. The respondents were given five options on the Likert scale as follows; strongly agree (5 points), agree (4 points), undecided (3 points), disagree (2 points), strongly disagree (1 point) from which to choose one that best suited their opinion of the given statement. The teachers were asked to give suggestions on reduction of drop-out rates and repetition in secondary schools using open-ended items to provide more room for self expression. Gender of the respondents, their designation, subjects taught and head teachers period of stay in their stations were indicated in the personal details section of the questionnaire.

Data analysis

Collected data was coded and converted into percentages and frequencies. The frequency of the factors considered to be causing drop-out and repetition in Kisumu County secondary schools were analysed using measures of central tendency like the mean and Chi-square (χ^2) was used to analyse categorical data generated from the frequencies. SPSS version 17.0 was used to analyse the quantitative data at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance.

RESULTS

Between 2004 and 2007 the enrolment of the girl-child in Kisumu district in Kisumu County remained at 39% compared to boy-child at 61% (Figure 1). Out of the 10 mixed schools sampled, eight recorded higher boy-child enrolment (Figure 2). Schools S and T located in Kisumu town, an urban set up recorded a higher girl-child enrolment (Figure 2). There were more girls in Forms one and two but the number drastically reduced in Forms three and four. The study established that 6% of the girls dropped out of school in Form one, while 48% dropped out in Form two, 40% dropped out in Form three and 6% of the girls dropped out in Form four (Figure 4). This means there is high drop-out rate in Forms 2 and 3 than there are in Forms one and four. The girl-child registration in KCSE ranged between 36%-40% between 2004 and 2007 in Kisumu County (Figure 3). The performance of girls who rejoined school after staying away for some time was rated by 4% of the teachers as good, 66% of the teachers rated such girls' performance as average, 20% of the teachers rated these girls' performance as poor and 10% of the teachers rated their performance as very poor (Figure 5).

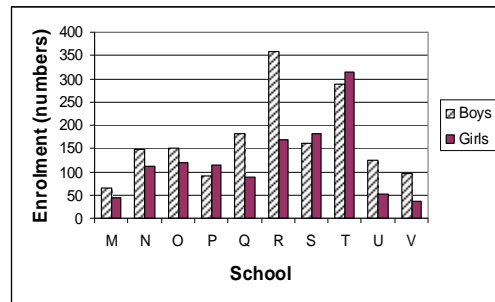


Figure 2 Enrolment of the girl child in the year 2006 compared to the boy-child in the mixed schools sampled in Kisumu County.

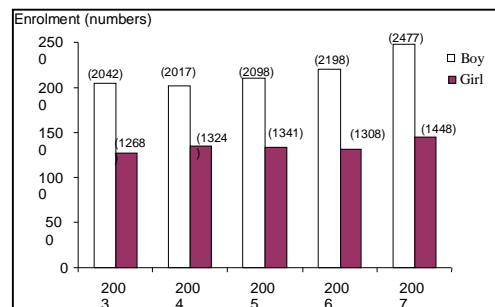


Figure 3 Kisumu County KCSE registration by gender. Numbers in brackets represent the number of candidates

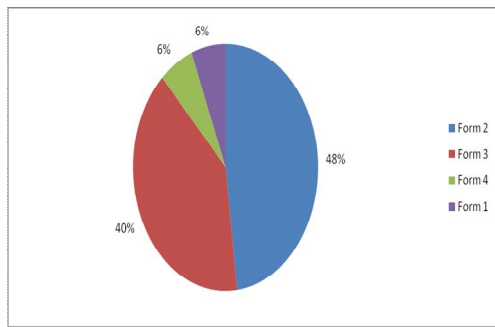


Figure 4 The girl-child drop-out rate per class. Numbers in brackets represent the percentage drop out rate.

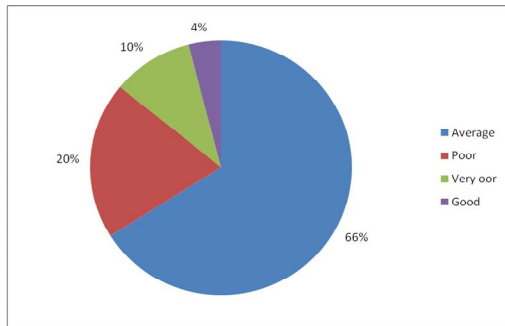


Figure 5 The performance of the girls who rejoined school after being away from school as rated by teachers.

Causal factors of wastage and drop-out

Table 1 Home factors causing drop-out and repetition of girls in secondary school

Home Factors	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Traditions	05	03	14	16	12	50
Socialisation	02	02	02	19	25	50
Early Marriages	08	15	08	12	07	50
Lack of fees	00	03	02	20	25	50
Parents Sickness/Death	03	04	07	15	21	50
Deferred entry	02	06	06	11	25	50
Discrimination	04	02	03	22	19	50
Total	24	35	42	115	134	350

Causal factors of repetition and drop-out were classified as home, school, student and curriculum factors. The home factors affecting girl-child education were categorized as traditions, socialisation, early marriages, fees, and parent’s awareness, sickness/death of parents, deferred entry, and discrimination (Table 1). Home factors had significant effect on drop-out and repetition among girls in secondary schools sampled. The calculated value of $\chi^2 = 90.02$ was significant because it is greater than the critical value obtained of $\chi^2 = 36.42$ at $df = 24$ and $\alpha = 0.05$. The school fees factor had the greatest influence on drop-out and repetition in secondary schools.

Table 2 Student factors causing drop-out and repetition among girls in secondary schools

Student Factors	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Employment	12	17	07	11	03	50
Peer Pressure	02	05	06	21	16	50
Pregnancy	05	09	02	20	14	50
Attitude	20	03	04	01	50	
Total	41	51	18	56	34	200

The student factors were summarised as girls leaving school to seek employment, peer influence, pregnancy and attitude of the girls towards education (Table 2). The student factors had a significant effect on drop-out rates and repetition of girls. The calculated value of $\chi^2 = 72.4$ while the critical value obtained of $\chi^2 = 21.13$ at $df = 12$ and $\alpha = 0.05$, with peer pressure having the greatest influence on drop-out and repetition.

The school factors causing drop-out and repetition were classified into mixed environment, the administration style which pegs promotion from one class to next on performance resulting in forced repetition, and some girls dropping out altogether. School factors were found to have significant effects on drop-out and repetition with calculated value of $\chi^2 = 19.71$ and critical value of 15.51 at $df = 8$ and $\alpha = 0.05$. Forced repetition had the greatest impact among the school factors.

Curriculum factors causing drop-out and repetition were classified into, nature of curriculum, discipline and poor performance. Curriculum factors had a significant effect on drop-out rates and repetition among girls where the calculated value of $\chi^2 = 54.01$ is greater than the critical value of 15.51 at $df = 8$ at $\alpha = 0.05$. This means curriculum factors have significant influence on drop-out and repetition with discipline having the highest influence on drop-out and repetition among the curriculum factors.

DISCUSSION

Drop-out and repetition of girl-child compared to boy-child is higher in Kisumu County secondary schools. Eshwani (1993) found similar results for the whole of Kenya’s education system. Drop-out and repetition of girl-child is attributed to socio-economic factors. Though female population in Kisumu County is 50.8% slightly more than males who are 49.2% (GOK, 2010), there are few pure girls’ secondary schools in Kisumu County and this makes the rest of the girls to join mixed day secondary schools. This can be attributed to negative attitudes of parents toward girl-child education and many are not willing to pay high boarding school fees, but they would rather take their daughters to affordable day secondary schools. It is often thought among the African societies, that a woman with ‘too much’ education might fail to make a ‘good’ wife as she could not be used to housework and might even consider herself above it (Tim & Allan, 1992).

The gross under representation of the girl-child in rural schools located in Kisumu rural set up is aggravated by the perennial floods experienced in that locality. Poverty index is 56% (GOK 2008), while HIV and AIDS prevalence is 19% (NACC, 2009). This means that funds to take girls to school are not available and as earlier noted whenever household resources decline due to HIV and AIDS the girl-child education is sacrificed leading to many dropping-out and others spending more than one year in one grade (repeating classes). In Kenya, HIV and AIDS prevalence rate is highest in Nyanza province 14.9%, while Kisumu County has a prevalence rate of 19% (NACC, 2009). This has adversely influenced girls’

drop-out rate and repetition because when finances decline girls are the first to be withdrawn from school while others have to defer entry into secondary school (UNAIDS, 2009). According to provincial records 29% of the students in Nyanza secondary schools are orphans' (Provincial Education Office, 2006). Many girls have found themselves taking care of their ailing parents and siblings. This contradicts the World Bank (2012) which states that investing in girls is both smart economics and the right thing to do. The study concurs with the World Bank (2012) that educating girls is one of the strongest ways not only to improve gender equality, but to promote economic growth and the healthy development of families, communities and nations. Despite tremendous progress in getting girls into school, the global community must commit to making sure education counts and that it reaches the most marginalized girls who need it the most.

Low enrolment, high drop-out and repetition of classes by girls in rural schools compared to urban schools could be attributed to high poverty levels, parents' ignorance and traditions. High level of poverty in the County has adversely affected girls' participation in secondary school education sector. The poverty index in Kisumu County is slightly over 56% (Government of Kenya, 2008). Given the scarce resources parents would rather pay school fees for the boys and not girls, who are considered as outsiders because they join other house-holds after marriage. Among the Luo community, a girl was referred to as "Ogwang" a derogatory term meaning a wild cat that would leave home anytime (Ominde, 1987).

So to many fathers with scarce financial resources, paying school fees for a daughter would be a gesture of philanthropy, available only to the rich (UNICEF, 1992). Many parents who are experiencing financial constraints enrol girls in day schools where it is cheaper to maintain them and at the same time the girl can continue offering the much needed labour at home.

Urban schools have higher enrolment of girls because parents are more informed and they understand the value of education for both girls and boys. In the urban set up girls are exposed to women role models who are holding responsible positions in the society and this has made the girls to be motivated hence positive attitude towards school. In the rural areas, teachers could be role models for girls. Unfortunately, the teaching profession in this County is dominated by men. There are also more girls' enrolled in secondary schools within the municipality of Kisumu than there are in Kisumu rural setting. The system of administration in mixed day schools treats boys and girls as equals and this disadvantages the girl-child who has so many household chores to contend with beside her schoolwork.

Reasons for drastic reduction in girls in Forms three and four are attributed to administrative styles and policies on promotion to the next class which is pegged to academic performance in the previous class. This policy has been adopted by many secondary schools in Kisumu County where schools have a "yellow-line" which means

a particular pass mark that a student must attain to be promoted to the next class. This means students are not promoted from one class to the other automatically. Fourth year in secondary school cycle is very critical because the students have to sit for their KCSE examination. KCSE results are used to grade schools, thus head teachers register candidates for the KCSE who have the potential to enhance the overall school performance. Fourth year being the final year in secondary school cycle students with huge fee balances are mostly not registered for KCSE and girls who fall in this category are forced to repeat a class or drop-out altogether. High repetition rate of 48% and 40% in Forms two and three respectively could be attributed to peer influence and poor fee payment.

The study established that girls who spend a lot of time out of class due to poor fee payment are unable to catch up with the rest of the students hence poor performance. This also results in repetition of class or drop-out altogether. The study agrees with findings of FAWA (2002) and Muganda (1997) that poverty is a major cause of drop-out and repetition of the girl-child in the secondary school sector.

Kenya secondary school curricula are silent on girls who drop out of school for one reason or the other. Nderitu (1987) found in Gichugu division of Kirinyaga County, Kenya that many girls who were readmitted were not able to cope with the curriculum and so they dropped out once again. UNICEF (1992) recommends reform in Kenya curricular to re-orient interest and needs of girl-child. Further, there is need to change education policies in Kenya which are general and tend to favour the boy-child rather than girl-child. As Wachira (2007) puts it, education of girls is one of the most powerful forces of development in low income countries. Many non-governmental and international organisations have tried to uplift the education of the girl-child but they have not achieved the expected results and this means that more need to be done to deal with gender disparity.

Table 3 Suggested solutions given by teachers to reduce drop-out and repetition

Suggestions	Respondents
Intensified counselling	31
Creating awareness among parents	16
Bursary/sponsorship	12
More girls boarding school	10
Role models	4
Legislation	3
Others	2
Total	78

Recommendations

From the above findings, the following recommendations were made;

- I. The curriculum needs to be modified to cater for the needs of the mother students by relaxing readmission rules because many schools do not like readmitting them in the same school arguing

that they are set a bad precedence for the other girls.

- II. Family life education to be re-assessed to empower girls with positive self-image, assertive skills and sensitize parents on the value of girls' education not only to the family but the community and nation.
- III. Girls who are weak academically to be uplifted by being given extra tuition so as to improve academic performance and boost their self esteem.
- IV. Teachers to be trained in guidance and counselling and be facilitated through funding and being given study leaves by the ministry of education to pursue counselling courses.
- V. Poverty eradication programmes to be put in place because poverty in this particular County has contributed to drop-out and repetition of girls in the Secondary school sector.
- VI. HIV and AIDS have aggravated the problem of drop-out and repetition and the study recommends National Aids Control Council (NACC) to have special programmes for girls orphaned by AIDS pandemic in this particular county.
- VII. A rescue movement be formed to protect and support girls who have dropped out of school to help such girls acquire coping strategies therefore make necessary adjustments and be able to survive out of school.

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