



Barriers to Girls' Participation in Free Day Secondary Education in Kenya

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Abstract

While the Kenyan government made secondary education free for day scholars since 2008, most girls do not participate in Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) due to various barriers. This study sought to examine the barriers to girls' participation in Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in Baringo Central Sub County, Kenya. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The sample included a hundred and thirty seven (137) respondents (including principals, teachers and students) who were selected from ten (10) day secondary schools in Baringo Central Sub County. Questionnaire was the main data collection instrument which was used. Quantitative data were analyzed with the help of a statistical application, namely SPSS. The results were reported using frequencies and percentages. The study revealed that girls' participation in FDSE was low owing to various barriers including school related barriers, home related barriers, cultural, personal and environmental related barriers. The study concluded that while school, home, cultural, personal and environmental related barriers to education contributed to girls' participation in free secondary education, there were other underlying barriers that included poor girl child education policy implementation framework. The findings of this study provide information to all stakeholders in the education sector that could be useful in ensuring success of the free day secondary education programme. The government, through the Ministry of Education, could use the study results to examine and therefore address the issue of girl child access to secondary education.

Keywords: Free day secondary education, Girl child education barriers, Girl child schooling, school access barriers, home school barriers, cultural school barriers, personal school barriers, environmental school barriers.



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1. Introduction

Despite the fact that the gender gap has lessened significantly over the last 15 years in most countries of the world, particularly with the high priorities placed on girls' education, the girl child enrollment at secondary education level in developing countries has remained low. The problems affecting the girl child's participation in education include but not limited to child labour, poverty, lack of sponsorship, quest for wealth, truancy, family conflicts and children engagement as house helps (World Bank, 2008). In their study, Simatwa and Dawa (2010) found that a permissive environment coupled with poor role models inculcate a negative attitude towards education for the girl child. A study conducted by Chimombo (2009) revealed that low income for parents and lack of role models for girls to emulate cause girls to drop out of school. Studies on access and retention in primary and lower secondary education in Ghana show that although the FCUBE made an overall enrolments increase, children from poor households continue to be underrepresented in enrolments (Akyeampong, 2009; Rolleston, 2009).

Akyeampong (2009) and Rolleston (2009) made it explicit that not only indirect costs hinder access by the poor but also opportunity costs substantially affect the chances of poor children to enrol in and complete basic education. In Argentina, access, retention and transition equally faces a myriad of challenges as indicated by Otega (2012) in his study based on addressing social gaps in society through education. He observed that personal challenges experienced by individual learner, particularly girls from low social family background were to blame for failure to obtain substantial education, since rent ion rate was low.

The initial goal of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) was to allow students who had no chance to access education to attend school in order to contribute to the development of the country and to fulfill and reaffirm the vision of the world declaration on Education for All (Jomptien, 1990). In Pakistan, Balochain Education Fund, provided fees to students who were unable to pay fees in the slums, those from urban and able families would subsidize the cost of girl's education channelled directly to schools. This led to an increase in enrolment by 33% of girls. The free education in Britain is financed up to secondary level, parents only ensure that their children attend school and the government is responsible to avail education facilities (Moon and Mayes, 1994). According to UNESCO (2003) there are situations in countries of Europe and Asia where textbooks present different gender roles of women, predominantly undertaking domestic activities at home. For example, in Romania text books depict women as school villagers, fruit or flower sellers, whereas men are viewed as astronauts, policemen, physicians, actors, conductors and masons. These have greatly affected the girls' participation in school. In Canada, the government provides fees for those students who are not able to pay fees, which is an integral part of education system. This is done to ensure that the child is not denied participation in education.

The universal right to education has been affirmed by the world's governments for more than 50 years, most recently by the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the 191 member states of the United Nations in 2000. However, some 115 million children

among them 62 million girls are still denied an opportunity to participate in education. In Uganda, free education was introduced in 2006 by the government aiming to increase the number of students enrolling in secondary education level (UNESO, 2007). According to a study conducted by Bilkisu (2012) on education in northern Nigeria, the national summary statistics recorded girls' enrolment rate as low as 22% which was caused by parents' unwillingness to send their daughters to school due to gender discrimination in the family. In Mogadishu, local non-governmental organizations engage in educating girls and more so those who have come from poor family backgrounds and those unable to pay school fees and through such efforts, 40% increase in girls' enrolment in secondary schools has been realized (Mogadishu Times, 2010).

According to Graham, (2002) the enrolment figures in secondary school for girls in Zimbabwe have continued to decline in relation to that of boys. For example, in 1987, Matabeleland South, had 45.5% girls in form one compared to the national average of 43.6%, but by form four, they were 36.6% against the national average of 38.9%. African Child Policy Forum (2006) found that majority of gender based violence within schools in Africa is perpetuated by male peers and male teachers are also responsible. Donkey Project for fetching water in Eritrea was introduced to help girls minimise their energy and time wasted for their education (World Bank, 2008).

The Constitution of Kenya (2010), chapters 4 article 53, states that every child has a right to free and compulsory education. It also forbids discrimination by religion, race, ethnicity and sex in all areas; education being inclusive. The government of Kenya has placed a lot of emphasis on education as a way of empowering citizens economically, socially and as a tool for national development. A report by Koech (1999) reveals that there are persistent constraints that hinder girls from effective participation in education in Kenya. Jacky (2011) observes that girls face a lot of challenges while in institution of learning and are readily frustrated when they experience financial difficulties and consequently drop out of school. She believes that, due to the unique financial needs of girls, society should be ready to spend much more to keep them in schools, she cited that lack of funds and preference of boys' education has contributed to low enrollment of girls in schools. Ohba (2009) found that cultural activities are among the problems affecting the girl child's school enrollment and participation in arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) areas. Aosa (2012) notes that, in communities where social-cultural ties were still strong, women were continuing to face discriminations such that they were often viewed as for marriage in their tender ages a factor that put to focus their low access to higher levels of learning in most public institution. Despite the introduction of FDSE in 2008 by the government of Kenya, the girl child's participation in secondary education continues to be limited. Thus, the study sought to examine barriers affecting girl child participation in Free Day Secondary School Education in Baringo Central Sub County, Kenya.

2. Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design that adopted a quantitative method. This design was suitable because it is useful in describing the characteristics of a large population; it makes use of large samples, thus making the results statistically significant

even when analyzing multiple variables. The study targeted ten (10) mixed public day secondary schools in Baringo Central Sub County and consisted of a sample of ten (10) Principals, ten (10) teachers and a hundred and seventeen (117) students. The sample for the study was selected using non-probability and probability sampling procedures. These procedures included purposive sampling for principals and teachers and systematic sampling for students. The instruments used for this study were questionnaires. These included questionnaires for principals, teachers and students. To ensure validity of the instruments, the researcher sought expert evaluation from the Faculty of Education, Research and Evaluation Department at Catholic University of East Africa. Split Half method was used to estimate reliability of instruments where a value of 0.85 was obtained, thus making the instruments to be considered as reliable. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The processed quantitative data were reported using frequencies and percentages and summarized using tables.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

The demographic characteristics of the teachers included sex, age bracket, duration spent in present school and their academic qualifications where 90% of the respondents were male and only 10% were female. Three quarters (75%) were between ages 36-45 years, slightly less than a quarter (20%) were over 45 years and only 5% were below 35 years. Basing on duration spent in the present school, nearly two thirds (65%) of the respondents had spent more than 4 years, 20% had spent 2-4 years and 15% had spent less than 2 years. On top academic qualifications attained by the respondents, those at masters and bachelors level accounted 40% each while other qualifications accounted 20%. The sex of students' respondents in the study consisted of 58% girls and 42% boys.

3.2 Barriers Influencing Girl Child Participation in FDSE in Baringo

3.2.1 School Related Barriers in FDSE

The study sought to establish the views on various school related barriers that could affect girls' participation in FDSE. The participants were asked to indicate whether books, sanitary facilities and lack of mentorship programmes affected their participation.

Table 1

School barriers to girls' participation in secondary education

Item	SA	A	D	SD
Books are not enough	50%	17.4%	6.7%	3.9%
Sanitary facilities not available	68.1%	8.4%	8.7%	14.9%
Mentorship programmes not available	20.5%	23.2%	5.3%	51%

Key: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, D-Disagree, U-Undecided, SD-Strongly Disagree; n=137

Slightly more than two thirds (67.4%) of the respondents indicated books were not enough. In regards to the availability of sanitary facilities, 76.5% indicated that these facilities were not available in schools. With reference to mentorship programmes, slightly over half (51%) of the respondents indicated the programmes were not available.

3.2.2 Home Related Barriers

The study aimed to find out how home related barriers influence girl child participation in FDSE in Baringo. The participants were asked to indicate their extent of agreement on whether parents absent girls from school, parents prefer educating boy than girls and girls attend home activities before reporting to school.

Table 2

Home related barriers affecting girl child participation in day education

Item	SA	A	D	U	SD
Parents absent girls from school	67.7%	21.3%	3.9%	1.6%	9.4%
Parents prefer educating boys	17.3%	14.2%	20.5%	3.1%	46.5%
Girls attend home activities	52.7%	20.7%	8.4%	1.7%	16.5%

Key: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, D-Disagree, U-Undecided, SD-Strongly Disagree; n=137

Slightly more than two thirds (67.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that parents absent girls from school. With reference to parents prefer educating boys than girls, nearly half (46.5%) strongly disagreed with this statement. Slightly more than half (57.4%) agreed with regard to girls attend home activities before going to school.

3.2.3 Cultural Barriers

The study also sought to investigate the views of respondents on cultural barriers. They were to rank the extent to which early marriages influence girl child participation in FDSE. In regard to influence of early marriage on girl child participation in FDSE in Baringo, slightly more than half (54.1%) indicated that it affect their participation but 30.4% indicated it does not.

3.2.4 Personal Barriers

The study further sought to establish out personal barriers that influence girl child participation in FDSE in Baringo. The responses were based on the extent to which the respondent agree with the statements that early pregnancy and lack of role model influence girl child participation in FDSE. Slightly more than half (55.2%) positively concurred while 23.2% strongly disagreed that early pregnancy among secondary school going children influence their participation in FDSE. Over two thirds (68%) of the respondents indicated that lack of role models influence girl child participation in FDSE.

3.2.5 Environmental Barriers

In order to find out on whether environmental barriers affect girl child participation in FDSE, The participants were to indicate if the distance to school was long or not. More than three quarters of the respondents (85%) indicated distance to school was long while only 15% indicated it was not.

4. Discussion

The findings of the study showed that more than two thirds of the respondents indicated there were no adequate resources in schools. 67.4% indicated books were not enough and 76.5% indicated sanitary facilities were not available. This concurs with an earlier study conducted by Akyeampong (2009) and Rolleston (2009) made it explicit that not only indirect costs hinder access of the poor but also opportunity costs substantially affect the chances of poor children to enroll in and complete FDSE education. A study of access patterns in Malawi also concludes that access to education in the country continues to reflect household wealth (Chimombo, 2009). Thus, despite direct fees being abolished, these studies clarify that the abolition of fees has not been enough to ensure access to education for the poor. He established that more funding allocated to rural day secondary schools to boost resources also curtail drop outs, as well as assisting in the completion of outstanding infrastructure like libraries and laboratories. Majority of the school principals (80%) in the study indicated that there are inadequate spaces in class rooms. This observation agreed with a study conducted by Chabari (2010) which found that the major challenge faced in FDSE is overcrowding in classrooms. However, not in all representative schools were the physical resources inadequate.

According to the study findings, home related barriers affected girl child participation in FDSE in Baringo. Nearly three quarters (73.4%) of the respondents indicated girls attend to home activities even before they report to school. Most parents do not prefer sending their daughters to school in fear of losing support at home. Another study by World Bank (2008) asserted that the main challenge facing girls is that of being given most of the household work than boys. In addition, a study by Scharff (2007) revealed that girls are expected to help their mothers with household work before going to school. However, two thirds of the participants (67%) disagreed that parents prefer educating a boy child than a girl child in Baringo. This contradicted with a study conducted by Jacky (2011) who found that due to lack of funds, parents prefer educating boys than girls. According to Lloyd and Brandon (1992), more siblings in families affect girls' participation in school. They added that in such cases, families' first priority is given to boys' education, while girls are involved in home chores. This could be attributed to variation of socio-economic status among community members in Baringo. The low income levels among most families in Baringo discourage parents from taking their children to school as well as settling home chores without involvement of their children.

The findings of the study showed early marriage influence girl child participation in FDSE in Baringo. This coincide with a study done by Ohba (2009) which asserted that girls in Samburu are allowed to attend school and are withdrawn out of school before completing their studies. This is done by their fathers who do not want to waste their

resources in educating a girl child who will eventually be given out for marriage. Another study done by Mwambui (2005) revealed that in Giriama girls are married while they are still young and that there are wide spread beliefs that women's place is in the kitchen. Another study by Ohba (2009) showed that cultural activities are among the problems affecting the girl child's schooling in ASAL areas.

According to Chege and Sifuna (2006) in their study on girls and women's education in Kenya, girls are viewed as an important source of income for their families in terms of bride price and household production. However, 30% of the respondents indicated that early marriage does not influence girl child participation in FDSE. This is an indication that cases of early marriage in Baringo are sporadic.

The study further found that over a two third of the participants (68%) indicated that lack of role model among girls influenced their participation in FDSE. This concurs with a revelation of a study conducted by Chimombo (2009) that indicated lack of role models for girls to emulate led girls to drop out of school. Slightly more than a half (55.2%) of the respondents' views showed that early pregnancies among secondary school going girls in Baringo remains a cause to school dropout among girls. This corresponds to a study carried out by Molosiwa and Moswela (2012) which indicated that early pregnancy among school going girls is an international crisis that influence the social economic wellbeing of societies and families as it remains a cause of female students' dropout from school. Another study done by Musonga (2014) found that nearly a half of the girls who enroll in form one in Bungoma County, Kenya, drop out before they complete secondary school education due to unwanted pregnancies. These implied that there are underlying factors that predispose school going girls to early pregnancy.

A big proportion of the study respondents indicated that environmental barriers influence girl child participation in FDSE. More than three quarters (85%) of teachers indicated long distance from home to school discourage girls' participation in FDSE in Baringo. The finding match with a study done by Chacha, 2012 on parameters as access, transitions and retention of girls across educational levels in Gwasi noted that personal characteristics, family networks, households chores, long walk to school hinders girls from exercising their full participation in school also negate the call for retention of girls through levels of learning. However, some of the students who were adjacent to schools in Baringo did not participate in FDSE.

5. Conclusion

Lack of girls' participation in Free Day Secondary Education in marginalized areas cannot be attributed only to school, home, cultural and environmental barriers but also to lack of sound policy provisions and implementation framework. This study has implications in terms of informing gender mainstreaming policy provisions in education.

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