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SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GIRL CHILD DROP OUT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF MAGADI SUB COUNTY, KAJIADO COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Education equality is a key component of development. There is a growing concern on the inequality of education despite it being a basic human right. Gender biasness in children investment in education among households have demonstrated skewedness towards boys thereby denying access to education for girls. The economic survey of 2012 indicates that 30 percent of primary school pupils In Kenya fail to transit to secondary school. This study sought to establish the socio-economic factors that contribute to girl child drop out in primary schools in Kenya. The findings indicated that traditional cultural practices influenced the dropout rates among girls in primary schools with girls in traditional communities tending to be negatively affected in terms of dropout rates. Parental illiteracy, early pregnancy and poverty were also found to be major causes of girl dropouts in Kenya. The study concluded that socio- cultural and economic factors are major contributors of dropouts among girl child in primary schools. The study recommends sensitization measures among traditional communities on the value of girl child education and the rights of children be strengthened.

Key words: Drop out; Education; Girl child; Socio-Economic factors

INTRODUCTION

Education is a basic human right enshrined in the constitution of many countries including Kenya. However, inequality in access to education among male and female pupils has been reported to be a cause of underdevelopment at every stage of a nation (Shahidul, 2012).In Kenya, Free primary education (FPE) and Free Tuition Education (FTE) programmes both in primary and secondary schools were initiated in response to the increasing demand for education, to promote access to education to all children and also as part of compliance to the human rights acts (Mwanza, 2014). Despite the move to improve access to education through such initiatives like FPE and FTE, more than two thirds of children not receiving primary education in developing countries are reported to be girls (Shahidul, 2012; Muthaka & Wangombe, 2013).

According to the World Conference on Education of 2001, all children, particularly girls, must have access to and complete quality education by the year 2015. Similarly both boys and girls have equal right to be educated irrespective of the gender. Available literature indicate that girls' dropout rates are higher compared to boys' in most parts of the world (UNESCO, 2012).Premarital sex, early pregnancies, early marriages, low school participation and performance have been attributed to

the rampant school dropout rates among girls (chege&Sifuna, 2006; Muhindi, 2013; Mwanza, 2014). In addition, Socio cultural factors have also been cited as a major cause of droputs among primary pupils in Kenya (Mudemb, 2013). Boys according to Muthaka and Wangombe (2013) and Chimombo (1999) and have greater chances of continuing in their education compared to their girl counterparts. Similarly, studies by Holmes (2003) found girls to attain less education in addition to dropping out earlier compared to boys.

Dropout rate does not occur through a single factor but rather a composition of several factors (Shahidul, 2012). However, socio-cultural factors are said to highly impact girls' dropout rate though those factors also contribute to boys' dropout rate but to a lesser extent (Holcamp, 2009). This study established the socio-economic factors that accelerated the dropout rates among girls in primary schools in Kenya.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The study was conducted in Magadi Sub County of Kajiado County. Five primary schools were randomly selected from the sub county to participate in the study. Simple random sampling was used to pick 152 respondents comprising of 80 school continuing pupils drawn from standard eight, five primary school class teachers, five head teachers, twenty parents/ guardians of girl dropouts, two education officers and 40 girl dropouts. Questionnaire containing both the open and closed ended questions were used to collect data from the continuing and drop out girls while interview schedule was used on the class teachers, parents/guardians, head teachers and education officers. A pilot study was carried out in Kiserian Sub County in the same county. The data collection instruments were amended accordingly to improve reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
In order to establish the socio economic and cultural factors responsible for dropout rates among girls in primary schools, respondents were asked to suggest reasons why girls drop out of school. The findings are presented in table 1.

Table 1
Frequency of the Reasons for early withdrawal from school by the dropout respondents

Reason	Frequency	percentage
Poverty	16	17.4
Cultural practices	10	10.9
Parental illiteracy	36	39.1
Unwanted pregnancy	16	17.4
Famine	02	2.2
Other factors	12	13.1
Total	**92**	**100.0**

The results in table 1 indicates that most dropouts (39.1 %) withdrew out of school due to illiteracy of their parents. This could perhaps be contributed by the fact that such parents develop negative attitude towards schooling. The preference rate of boys to girls among the illiterate parents could be a pointer to the other cause of girl dropout since such parents value boy to girl child. Poverty and unwanted pregnancies were also significant factors (17%) which contributed to girl child drop out. Cultural practices was also significant(10.9%) contributing to drop out of girls in Magadi Sub County. However, famine was found not to contribute much to the dropouts

(2.2%) perhaps because most schools in the county benefited from school feeding programme. The findings show that girls drop out of school mainly due to socio economic and cultural factors key among them being low parental literacy level prompting such parents not to motivate and educate their girls because of ignorance.

The reasons for the drop outs of the girls in the perspective of Head Teachers, Class Teachers and Education Officers were sought. Table 2 summarizes the results.

Table 2
Frequency of the Reasons for early withdrawal from school by Head Teachers, Class Teachers and Education Officers

Reason	Frequency of Head Teachers	Frequency of Class Teachers	Frequency of Education Officers	Total	Percentage
Illiteracy	4	4	2	10	22.22
Cultural practices	5	4	2	11	24.44
poverty	5	3	2	10	22.22
Unwanted pregnancy	3	2	1	06	13.33
Other factors	3	3	2	08	18.77
Total				**45**	**100.00**

Majority of the respondents (24.44%) are of the view that cultural practices are responsible for girl childdrop out in primary schools while illiteracy and poverty are the second major cause of the drop outs with 22.22% each.Unwanted pregnancies (13.33 %) also accounted for the girl child the drop out. In addition, other factors were also significant (18.77%) in influencing the dropout rates among primary school girls. These factors were said to include; lack of parental interest and support, repetition, chronic absenteeism, poor school environment, home chores, lack of role models and the long distance to schools all of which influence the dropout rates among the girls in primary schools. It appears that a combination of these factors have led to the increased rates of drop outs among the girls.

Parental reasons for drop outs among girls
Parents were further asked to provide their opinion on the factors responsible for the dropout of girls in primary schools. The results are presented in table3.

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	09	30.00
Cultural practices	06	20.00
Illitracy	03	10.00
Unwanted pregnancy	07	23.33
Famine	03	10.00
Other factors	02	6.77
Total	**30**	**100.00**

Table 3 indicate that majority (30%) of the respondents attributed poverty to the high incidences of dropouts among the girls. Unwanted pregnancies and cultural practices influenced significantly the dropout rates with 23.3% and 20% respectively. The results are in agreement with what was reported by the Head Teachers, Class Teachers and Education Officers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Socio-economic factors are the major contributors of girl child dropouts among primary schools girls in Kenya particularly among the traditional communities like the Maasai. Parental illiteracy affects the girl child investment in education. Similarly, early pregnancies and poverty contribute to high rates of dropouts among the primary school girls in Kenya. This study recommends sensitization of parents particularly among the traditional communities on the value of girl child education besides emphasizing on education as a basic human right among parents and other stakeholders. The study further recommends that Economic reforms aimed at raising the income levels of communities and reducing poverty levels be initiated at community level to enable communities meet the cost of education for their children. Further, as a basic human right, education should be made free in order to bridge the gap of inequality and access to education.

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