

Influence of Girl Child Involvement in Commercial Sex Exploitation on Students' Completion of Secondary Education in Msambweni Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract

Female students' completion rate of secondary school education is a concern in developing countries where generally women participation in socio economic development of these nations is wanting. A number of issues have been cited by various scholars as the causes for meager participation of female learners in middle level education. In Africa, mixed results arise from different social, cultural and economic factors influencing the female students' education. In Kenya, in order to ascertain the effect of various aspects on girl child education, various studies have been carried out. In Msambweni Sub County, commercial carnal abuse of minors is rampant putting the sub county in a wanting status. The different practices of commercial sexual abuse of minors consist of sexual abuse by tourists and child prostitution that have emerged to be on the rise as a result of the trending social beliefs, attitudes and practices. The core intention of this study was to find out girl child's involvement in commercial sex exploitation and its influence on learner's completion rate of education at secondary school level in Msambweni Sub County. The research was driven by four objectives which focused on girl child involvement in child sex tourism, early marriages, teenage pregnancies and child prostitution and the influence on students' completion rate of secondary school learning in Msambweni Sub County. This study employed a descriptive research design targeting all tutors and learners in public mixed and girls' secondary school learning institutions in Msambweni Sub-County and county quality assurance officer for education Kwale County. The research also used a logical sampling technique to choose the respondents. Data collection was done by use of questionnaires consisting of both closed and open ended questions together with the use document analysis schedule. The results were evaluated using a statistical data analysis software notably Statistical Package for Social Sciences-SPSS. Presentation of results was by use of charts, frequency tables and percentages. Several respondents (72%) concurred with the fact that the different forms of CSEC are evidently rampant in Msambweni Sub County. From the findings of this study it has been established that girl child involvement in commercial sex exploitation of children interrupts, delays or denies them the opportunity to complete secondary education. The researcher recommends that relevant programs be developed and facilitated by both government and non-governmental bodies to create awareness on the long term benefits of completing secondary education over the perceived short term benefits of involvement in CSEC.

Key Terms; *Commercial sexual exploitation of children, Child sex tourism, Child prostitution, early child marriage, Teenage pregnancy*

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1. Background to the Study

According to, (Right to Education Initiative, 2018), women remain left out in accessing education offered in education organizations and that, at the lower level of secondary education teenagers adding up to 60 million worldwide, twenty nine million being girls while thirty one million being boys do attend school. Moreover, according to (UIS/GEM Report Policy Paper 27/Fact Sheet 37, 2016: p. 1), as cited in (Right to Education Initiative, 2018), of the 142 million youth that do not attend school at the upper level of secondary education, girls and boys are 48.7% and 51.2% respectively In Africa (Plan International's Regional office of Eastern and Southern Africa, 2015) shows across sub-Saharan Africa, in the few countries with available data on girls' completion rate of secondary education, very low scales such as 3%, 17%, 25%, and 29% in Niger, Malawi, Ethiopia and in Uganda respectively are demonstrated (Plan International's Regional office of Eastern and Southern Africa, 2015). In Kenya, (Indeje, 2017) reveals that Kenya has virtually realized total gender parity in education nevertheless, much more needs to be done to integrate gender issues into all aspects of policy and planning. As cited in (Kenya National Examination Council, 2019), of the 660,204 students who completed secondary school in 2018 by attaining the Kenya Certificate of Secondary School Education (KCSE) 51.29% were male while 48.71% were female. Greater disparities arise in the completion rate of female students' secondary education across the country with greatest completion rates realized in counties such as Nakuru, Kiambu, Kakamega Nairobi and Bungoma, while counties

in the marginalized parts of Kenya recorded the least completion rate. Among the counties that recorded minimal completion rate of female students' secondary education is Kwale County with a completion rate of 0.525 % of the 48.71% female students (Kenya National Examination Council, 2019).

1.1 Statement of the problem

According to (US Department of State, 2021), In the year 2020, a report by an international Non-Governmental Organization revealed that there are more than 35,000 sufferers of commercial sex exploitation in Kenya and that children account for 19000 of them. According to (Mwadambo, 2014), in Kenya, 2,000 to 3,000 girls and boys living in the coastal parts of Diani, Kilifi, Mombasa and Malindi are sexually abused yearly by sex tourists. (National Council for Children's Services, 2010), cites that in as much as all children are susceptible to sexual abuse, the more affected are girls. (Mwalago, 2015), further reveals that many girls in Ukunda in Kwale County rarely enjoy the fruits of education because the environment they live in force majority of them to be school drop outs as a result of teenage pregnancies, early matrimony, child sex tourism and child prostitution. (Mwalago, 2015), reveals that interventions, policies and strategies such as award of scholarships and provision of targeted support to female students among others have been put in place to improve on the female learner's education in secondary schools in Msambweni sub county. (The National Council for Children's Services, 2013), also cites prevention measures that have been tried out such as the ratification of the code of conduct by big hotels for fortification of kids from carnal abuse in the vacation industry. Despite these interventions, female students' completion rate of secondary school education in Msambweni Sub-County remains to be very low.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives below steered the research.

- i. To examine girl child involvement in child sex tourism and its influence on completion rate of middle school learning in Msambweni Sub County.
- ii. To evaluate how girl child's involvement in child prostitution influence completion rate of middle school learning in Msambweni Sub County.

1.3 Research questions

The objectives above were realized by the research study by answering the following questions;

- i. How does girl child's involvement in child sex tourism influence completion rate of middle school learning in Msambweni Sub County?
- ii. In what ways does girl child's involvement in child prostitution influence the completion rate of middle school learning in Msambweni Sub County?

1.4 Significance of the study

1. Findings of this study are important in realizing the need for the amendment of marriage laws in relation to the official marriage age and the penalties to be implicated on the perpetrators of the laws. They are also an additive to the existing information on the commercial carnal abuse of minors in relation to female students' completion rate of secondary school education. This is useful for researchers and other scholars during their research work.
2. Findings of this study may also be helpful to donors and government agencies who would wish to step in to facilitate programs on sex education in prevention of teenage pregnancies and rehabilitation of existing student mothers back to school in Msambweni Sub County. Educational planners and policy makers are also able to have adequate and accurate data and facts when planning for the female students' learning in Msambweni Sub County.

1.5 Scope of the study

The research study targeted female students' completion rate of secondary education in relation to commercial sex exploitation in Msambweni Sub County. The different practices of commercial sex abuse consist of sex tourism involving minors, child prostitution, early child marriages and teenage pregnancies. The study also targeted secondary school teachers and the county quality assurance officer for education Kwale County for data collection. The research study was carried out in the year 2022.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Girl Child Involvement in Child Sex Tourism and Female Students' Completion rate of Secondary School Education.

(Gerulaityte, 2018) , cites that child sex tourism is thriving in nations like Colombia and in Asia while in developing countries, (Bhalla, 2018) reveals that millions of women are driven into commercial sexual exploitation by poverty and discrimination making sex tourism a common activity. In Africa, there is a great occurrence of child sex tourism (CST) as its evident in (ECPATInternational, 2007) which further reveals that of the most affected countries in Africa, the Gambia, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, and Ghana are considered to be the more prevalent CST destinations. According to (Mwadambo, 2014), in Kenya, approximations advocate that as many as 30,000 girls with ages 12 to 14 years are enticed into private villas and hotels to be sexually molested. A United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report as cited in (Mwadambo, 2014) shows that as girls from destitute families fall victim to CST, school dropouts in the region increase tremendously. Other indicators of child sex tourism in female may include but not limited to, absenteeism from school, sexually explicit profiles on social networking sites and mysterious appearance of luxurious gifts, clothing, or other expensive items.

2.2 Girl child involvement in Child Prostitution and Female Students' Completion rate of Secondary School Education

According to (Choi, 2011) , in sub-Saharan Africa sexual interaction compelled by material exchanges is common and that of the sexually active adolescent girls 75% acquire a present or cash at their first sexual activity as revealed in a research that was conducted in Mwanza, Tanzania. In Uganda most girls are encouraged by their mothers to obtain school fees and other supplies through offering themselves for sex (Jones & Norton 2007) as cited in (Choi, 2011). According to (Bhalla, 2018) the extent of child prostitution is as well as prevailing, apart from being publicly acknowledged, in urban and rural areas along the coastal regions of East African nations, leaving the local authorities and non-governmental organizations fighting to stop the unlawful trade. In Kenya, (Mwadambo, 2014) , cites that in the coastal areas of Mombasa, Malindi, Diani and Kilifi 12 to 18-year-olds participate in fornication and it is approximated that 10000 to 15000 girls residing in these areas get sexually oppressed. In Msambweni sub county, (Adhoch, 2010), reveals that an increasing number of parents encourage their children to "get out there and get their own income" which includes exchanging sex for money.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Theory of Student Integration

(Tinto, 1975)'s theory of student integration model as cited in (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011); theorizes that learners who socially integrate into an institution community are more likely to graduate due to an increase in their commitment to the institution. (Tinto, 2016) also argues that of the among the experiences that shape student motivation to persist, the three that play a key role in student motivation include, students' supposed value of the curriculum, self-efficacy, and sense of belonging. In this study, graduation was marked by completion rate of the secondary school education by attaining the Kenya Certificate of Secondary School Education. To stimulate a higher level of completion, institutions need to understand how student experiences nature their persistence to completion of secondary education. In this study, student experiences were hypothesized to have been influenced by the different practices of commercial carnal abuse marked by sex tourism and prostitution involving minors, early marriages and teenage pregnancies. For instance (Mwalago, 2015) reveals that in Kwale County, the biggest challenge in the community is the belief that when one impregnates a girl the only option is to get married, which could influence the persistence to completion rate of the female students who experienced early pregnancies.

2.4 Conceptual framework

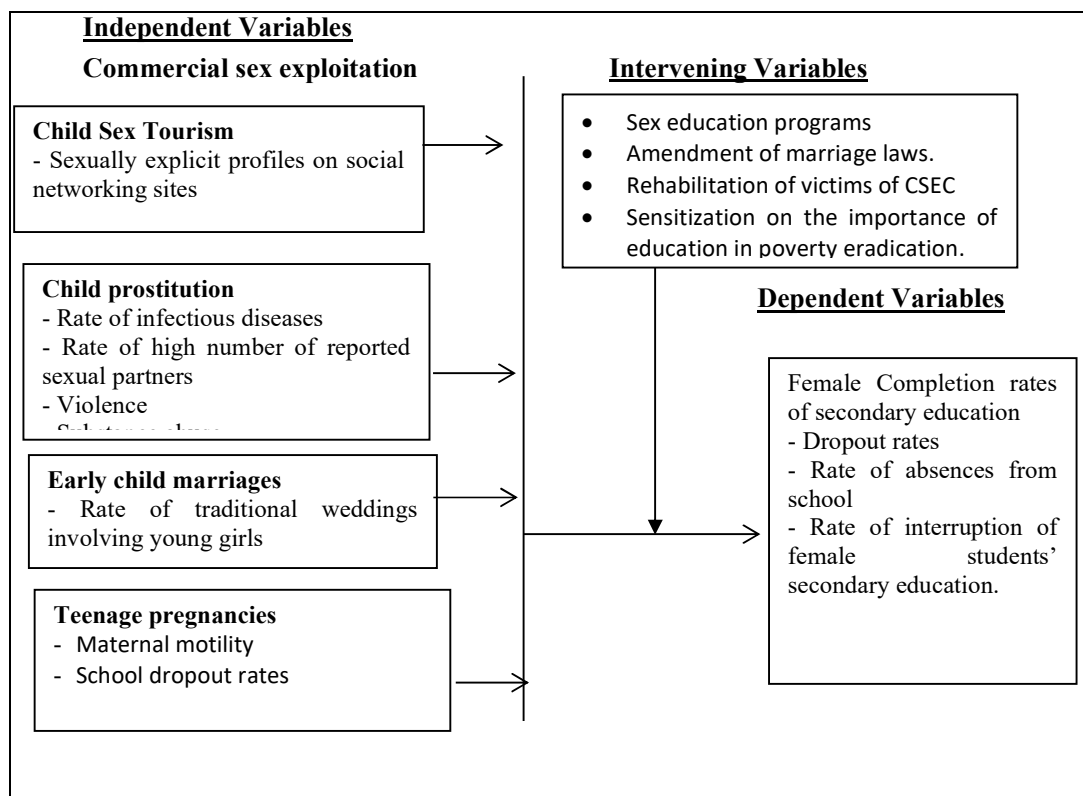


Figure 0.1 Interaction of Independent, Dependent and Intervening Variables

Source : Researcher,2022

3. Research methodology

This study utilized a mixed approach with a focus on the descriptive survey research design. The main purpose of the study was to obtain useful and detailed information on the involvement of girl child in the selected practices of commercial carnal abuse of minors and the influence on female students' completion rate of secondary school education in Msambweni Sub County. The researcher was able to gather qualitative and quantitative data that included various variables for analysis which was codified along a spectrum in numerical form. This quantifiable data included number of female students who dropped out of school in 2021. The researcher was also able to describe types of information such as gender or forms of relations in a group situation.

3.1 Research Design

This research study engaged a descriptive research design in which both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used due to the large target population. This research design offered a wide aptitude, which guaranteed an extra precise sample that gathered the aspired results that were used to draw conclusions and make imperative resolutions. The researcher gathered quantifiable data from huge number of respondents by asking specific questions using questionnaires and document analysis. The researcher also collected qualitative data by relying on the views of the respondents using questionnaires and interview schedules.

3.2 Target Population

This research study took place in Msambweni Sub County which is a sub county of Kwale County. The research targeted all teachers and students in public mixed and girls' secondary school learning institutions in Msambweni Sub-County. The research study also comprised of the County Quality Assurance officer of the ministry of education Kwale County.

3.3 Sampling design

3.3.1 Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling in selecting the head teachers, the guiding and counseling heads of department and the County Quality assurance officer of education. For the class teachers the researcher employed a stratified random sampling procedure to choose the respondents in order to guarantee an equitable representation of variables for the study. The stratification was according to the levels of secondary education known as forms. There are 4 forms at secondary school level of education. Within each form, selection of one respondent was done by simple random sampling. Given that the nature of the topic of the study was sensitive the researcher used snowballing sampling technique to sample the students where the existing subjects for the study that is the guiding and counseling heads of department recruited students who later recruited their acquaintances for the purpose of the study. The researcher chose to use snowball sampling method on the students because their population is indefinite therefore it is hard to choose and gather them as samples for the research. This sampling technique continued, until the time the researcher had adequate data to analyze and to extract conclusive results that helped them make conversant decisions.

3.3.2 Sample Size

The researcher purposively sampled 4 public girls' secondary and 4 public mixed middle school learning institutions in Msambweni Sub County due to accessibility to the schools. Proportionate, purposive and stratified random sampling technique was used to select 8 head teachers, 8 heads of guiding and counseling department, 1 county director of education and 32 class teachers from the target population. The proportionate sampling technique was based on the fact that there are more class teachers than the other respondents. Exponential discriminative snowball sampling was used to sample the students. In this technique, each class teacher provided multiple referrals however; one subject only was selected from each referral through a multistage random sampling technique due to the large student population with different levels of learning. This guided the researcher to come up with a sample size of 128 of the students.

3.4 Piloting Study

A pilot test was run using a population of 10% of the target population since the research involved interviews and focus groups. This was done in Matuga Sub County because it is an area with similar characteristics to the location of study since Msambweni and Matuga Sub counties are in the same County (Kwale County). Other master's students and supervisors were also involved in discussing the questionnaires. The role of the pilot study was to pre-assess the consistency of the responses on the questionnaires so as to improve on the reliability of the instrument.

3.5 Testing for Reliability

Reliability is the degree of an instrument of research in producing consistent outcomes or data after frequent trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). A procedure of analyzing reliability known as Cronbach alpha was employed in assessing the consistency of the responses during pilot study so as to improve on the instrument's reliability. The required threshold for reliability is 0.7. Each of the variables yielded Cronbach alpha of above 0.7 indicating that the data collection instrument was reliable.

3.6 Testing Validity

This is the authenticity of deductions that rely on research outcomes (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). Validity of the instrument was done by checking the questions in order to determine if they were prompting the types of responses expected. The researcher used specialists in the content measured by the instrument in judging the appropriateness of the items on the instrument. These specialists included lecturers in the school of education, other master's students and supervisors who were involved in discussing the research instruments. According to (Siegle, n.d) this type of validity is referred to as Content-Related Evidence or Face Validity.

4. Findings

Several respondents (72%) concurred with the statements on the evidence of the different forms of commercial sex exploitation as rampant behaviors in the area giving the extent to which they concur with the respective statements. However, on average, only 14% of the respondents differed with the statements similarly 14% of them were undecided while 1% strongly concurred with the statements.

4.1 Girl Child Involvement in Child Sex Tourism and Female Students' Completion rate of Secondary School Education

From the responses, it was evident that there are different ways in which girl child involvement in child sex tourism influence female students' completion of secondary education. 85% of both parents and students strongly concurred with the fact that most students involved in child sex tourism absent themselves from school most of the time. Secondary school girls who engage in child sex tourism also opt out of school for perceived better life with their tourist sexual partners as attested by 46% of both parents and students by strongly concurring. Both teachers and students were of the opinion that female students involved in child sex tourism perceive getting involved in these form of CSE for money and other incentives, as a quick and easier way of earning a living therefore prefer engaging in them than going to school. Similarly, 46% of the parents and students strongly agreed that most girls involved in child sex tourism have sexually explicit profiles on social networking sites. Child sex tourism with reference to this study is the transactional sex involving children under the age of 18 years and tourists from out Kenya.

From the questionnaires it was revealed that of the total female students' school drop outs in the year 2021 in Msambweni sub county, 22 % was as a result of involvement in child sex tourism. A high representation of the respondents (97%) agreed with the fact that the different forms of commercial sex exploitation negatively influence female students' completion of secondary education.

Table 0.1: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0.014	0.093		-0.153	0.000
	Child Sex Tourism	-0.059	0.007	0.91	8.509	0.000

a Dependent Variable: Those who completed KCSE

Source: Field data 2021

The findings of the regression coefficients of model revealed that the number of children in sex tourism had a negative but significant influence on the female students' completion rate in secondary school education ($\beta = -0.059$, $p = 0.000$). This implied that a unit increase in number of children in sex tourism leads to a corresponding decrease on the female students' completion rate in secondary school education by 0.059 units.

4.2 Girl child involvement in Child Prostitution and Female Students' Completion rate of Secondary School Education

From the findings it was also revealed that some students with interrupted schooling report cases of high number of sexual partners according to 45% of both parents and students, while 64% of the parents and students agreed that students who engage in child prostitution show behavioral signs of violence and drug abuse. The county quality assurance officer of Kwale County in an interview revealed that parents fail to meet their obligations of providing for their children's needs which exposes the female students to the vulnerability of being lured in to engaging in child prostitution to fend for their basic needs and personal effects. The officer also pointed out that children from dysfunctional families also are at a high risk of getting involved in child prostitution since most of their parents also engage in such sexual activities in the presence of their children.

Table 0.2: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0.024	0.071		-0.341	0.000
	Number of children in child prostitution	-0.046	0.004	0.948	11.503	0.000

a Dependent Variable: Those who completed KCSE

Source: Field data 2021

The results of the regression coefficients from the model revealed that the number of children in child prostitution has a negative and significant influence to the female student's completion rate of secondary school education ($\beta = -0.046$, $p = 0.000$). This implied that a unit increase in the number of children in child prostitution leads to a corresponding decrease in the female students' completion of secondary school education by 0.046 units.

4.3 Summary of Findings

This research study mainly purposed to investigate the girl child involvement in commercial sex exploitation and its influence on the female learner's completion rate of middle school in Msambweni Sub County. Several respondents (72%) concurred with the fact that the different forms of CSEC are evidently rampant in Msambweni Sub County. However, on average, only 14% of the respondents differed, similarly 14% of them were undecided while 1% strongly concurred. Respondents (97%) agreed with the fact that the different forms of commercial sex exploitation negatively influence female students' completion of secondary education. The general regression model that was used for analysis was $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$. The results reveal that early pregnancy cases, child sex tourism, number of children in child prostitution and the number of children in early marriages had a negative and significant influence on female student's completion rate of secondary school education. Therefore, the general regression model will be presented as follows;

$Y = -0.011 - 0.016 \text{ early pregnancy cases} - 0.083 \text{ child sex tourism} - 0.089 \text{ number of children in child prostitution} - 0.046 \text{ number of children in early marriages}$

5. Conclusions

From the findings of this study it has been established that girl child involvement in commercial sex exploitation of children interrupts, delays or denies them the opportunity to complete secondary education or rather opting out of school for perceived better life with their tourist sexual partners by the involved female learners.

5.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations can be drawn from the findings of this study.

1. Marriage laws in relation to the official marriage age and the penalties to be implicated on the perpetrators of the laws should be amended so as to minimize girl child involvement in early marriage thereby allowing them the opportunity to complete their secondary education.
2. Donors and government agencies should step in to create and facilitate the implementation of policies on sex education in prevention of teenage pregnancies and rehabilitation of existing student mothers back to school in Msambweni Sub County.

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