

Influence of Selected Economic Factors on Girl child Participation in Secondary School Education in Bureti Sub county, Kenya

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Abstract

This study, carried out in Bureti Sub County, sought to investigate selected economic factors that affect girl child's participation in secondary school education in Bureti Sub county. The sub county had 62 secondary schools of which 15 were girls' schools while 30 were mixed secondary schools and 17 were boys' schools. The entire sub county had a total population of 12250 students and 406 teachers. The target populations were 5541 Female students and 62 secondary school teacher counselors in the sub county. Descriptive Survey research design was used in this study. A sample of 360 female students and 16 teacher counselors were drawn from 15 girls' schools and mixed secondary schools in the sub county using stratified sampling technique. Students and teachers' questionnaires were used to collect the required data from the respondents. Research Instruments were validated through pilot study and reliability of 0.75 was determined using the Cronbach's alpha procedure. Descriptive statistics; mean, frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the data while Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used for analysis. From the study, it was established that the most common factors that affected girl child participation in secondary school education were parents' level of income. These have led to a number of girls dropping out of school. As a recommendation, the government should aid education of the girl child through provision of bursaries as effort to ensure equal participation by all students irrespective of their gender..

Key words: Girl Child, Participation, Economic factors, Secondary school education

Introduction

Education is a basic human right without which human society will be adversely affected. According to a report compiled by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (IFPRI 2004), there are about 72 million primary school aged children and 226 million secondary school aged children still out of school worldwide of this, 60 percent are girls. The report further indicates that in Africa alone, there are 40 million children out of school while about half of all girls do not proceed beyond primary school. A report compiled by Center for Study of Adolescence (Moyoncho 2007) shows that in Kenya, the school completion rate for girls remains lower than that of boys in most parts of the country. This points out to the low participation of girls in educational opportunities in Kenya. Furthermore, a report by The Society for International Development (Bwire 2004), regional and gender disparities are evident especially in arid areas and pockets of poverty areas especially in urban slums in Kenya.

Traditional gender roles coupled with economic factors like poverty and child labor can have effect on a child's learning. They also may create an imbalance on the workload of boys and the girls, which may undermine their performance in school. Dakar World Education Forum (DWEF, 1991) proposed the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education by the year 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015 with focus on ensuring girls full access at all levels of education. Furthermore, The Children Act (2001) provides that every child shall be entitled to education; the provision of which shall be the responsibilities of the government and the parents. This is because in Kenya, education is linked to economic development, social mobility, and national unity. Therefore, it plays a key role in transforming the society and providing individuals with the necessary skills for survival.

However, Republic of Kenya (2004), economic survey indicates that the enrolment in schools is in favor of males. Girl child's participation in secondary school education has therefore been affected by factors that may be related to their economic background. By undermining the girl child's education, it will have a negative impact on their future lives in terms of employment opportunities, improved economic productivity and fundamentally the health of the family, nutrition and the schooling of the next generation. In Bureti Sub county (DEO 2007), enrollment in secondary schools is in favour boys. Furthermore, cases of school dropouts, absenteeism and low performance in classroom work are more common with girls than boys in secondary schools in the county

Statement of the Problem

Despite the effort by the Government of Kenya to provide access to education in the country, the girl child is still faced with constraints leading to low participation in secondary school education. Out of the many students who enroll each year in form one within the secondary schools in the country, a bigger number of girls as compared to boys, do not complete secondary school education. Some girl students who forego schooling completely may end up engaging in hazardous and non-productive occupations while at the same time resulting in loses of millions of shillings in terms of money invested by the government on education. This situation is complicated by the fact that a society or a country cannot achieve its full development goals if a section of its members are not educated. The implication of disadvantaging the girl child in education is the disqualification from important economic activities like formal employment, poor health conditions leading to lower probability of survival and even lower participation in political and national domain. The problem of low participation of girl child in secondary school is evidenced in Bureti Sub-County among other parts of the country. In the Sub-county, cases of absenteeism, school dropouts and inactivity in classroom activities are largely associated with secondary school girls than boys. Since very little study has been done, there was therefore need to investigate the economic factors that negatively affect the girl child's participation in secondary school education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the selected economic factors that influence girl child's secondary education in Bureti Sub County. Overall, it aimed at uncovering the very factors and activities in the home environment that have taken up child's school time and the actual contributors of these activities. The concern of the study was also to explain the rationale behind the scenario; the benefits of keeping the girl child out of schooling hour

Objective of the Study

The specific objective of this study was:

To establish the influence of selected economic factors on the girl child's participation in secondary school education in Bureti Sub County.

Methodology

A survey design was used in this study as it was the most appropriate. This design is economical and has a rapid turn around in data collection (Creswell, 2003). The survey design is also advantageous in the identification of attributes of a large population from a small group of individuals (Babbie, 1990). This design therefore was appropriate in the sense that the identifiable characteristics of the sampled population of the girls and teachers from the secondary schools in the district would give a significantly correct conclusion of the entire population under investigation. Therefore by use of survey method, the results obtained from the sampled population would be generalized to the entire population of the study, and even to areas outside the study area.

This research was conducted in secondary schools in Bureti Sub County in Rift Valley Province of Kenya and has a variety of secondary schools (i.e. Private, Public Mixed day and Boarding schools). The area under study was predominantly rural with some few emerging urban and market centers hence the information obtained could give an impression reminiscent of the Kenyan society; the urbanized and the rural as far as schooling participation is concerned .

From the Ministry of Education, Bureti Sub County Education Office (DEO 2007), the sub county had 62 secondary schools with 12250 students and 406 teachers. Out of the total population of the students, 6809 were boys and 5441 were girls. The target population therefore, was 5441 girl students and 406 teachers. The sample population was selected from 15 secondary schools in the sub county.

In their article in Educational and Psychological Measurement, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) have provided the following formula for estimating the sample size (S) needed. The sample size is relative to population size (N), a specified confidence level e.g. (95) associated with a Chi-square Statistic for one degree of freedom, and the designate degree of accuracy as reflected by the amount of sampling error d that can be tolerated.

Therefore the formula for getting the sample size is;

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP (1 - P)}{d^2 (N - 1) + X^2 P (1 - P)}$$

Where; S = required Sample Size, N = the given population size, P = population proportion assumed to be 0.5, d = degree of accuracy reflected by the amount of error that can be tolerated assumed to be 0.05,

X^2 = table value of Chi square for one degree of freedom relative to the desired level of confidence, which is 3.841 for 0.95

This meant 360 girls from secondary schools in Bureti Sub County were selected for the purpose of this research. Based on the same formula, out of the total 406 teachers in Bureti Sub County, 62 counselor teachers were the target population of which 16 formed the sample size for this study. This research study used Proportionate Stratified-sampling technique which is effective in producing the results. This sampling technique according to Kathuri (1993), "The researcher specifies all dimensions or variables then makes sure that every combination is represented by at least one case." Schools were stratified into three main categories; purely girls' boarding schools (15 in number), mixed and boarding schools (17), and day secondary schools (13) and therefore selection was done in the ratio of 1:2:1 respectively with full consideration of the geographical locations of the schools. Stratified sampling was also used to cater for the class (forms) difference among the students sampled. This means that at least a girl student was sampled from all the forms (Form 1-4) and in every stream in the sampled schools. Random sampling was used at the classroom level to select the respondents. The data for the study was collected using questionnaires (Students' Questionnaires and Counselor Teachers' Questionnaires) Questionnaires are documents that ask the same questions to individuals in the same predetermined order (De Vaus 1991). The Students and Teachers' Questionnaires were administered to the respondents; students and counselor teachers respectively. The sampled students gave their responses in the Students Questionnaire. This questionnaire sought to record information on the girl child's details including social and economic background, parental demands on the girl child, and their level of girl child's participation in school. The Counselor Teachers' Questionnaire generated information on teacher counselors' opinions on the level of participation of the girl child in secondary school education and possible causes of girl absenteeism from school. Girl child parental influence was measured using Likert five scale rating while the student respondents' opinions about the home and school environment were in forced-type responses; taking in view the level of understanding of the respondents. These types of questions helped them to be objective, specific and to avoid inconsistent responses.

The reliability of the study was also determined using the Cronbach's alpha procedure (Kathuri & Pals, 1993) and a coefficient of 0.75 was obtained. Once all the completed questionnaires were collected, the items were coded, tallied, tabulated and data analysis was done using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics involve the use of the percentages, means and frequencies. The percentages and frequencies were used to display the outcome of the study especially in quantifying the responses from the respondents (female students, and the teachers). These tools were particularly used in quantifying, giving ratio and frequency counts on parents' level of income, number of students missing exams/CATs, availability of study rooms/materials at home and causes of absenteeism among secondary school girls among others. Once the Percentages and frequencies were tabulated, the research data was translated into pie charts and graphs. The presentation of data in pie charts and graphs provided for effective qualitative analysis and discussion on the research finding

Results and Discussions

The level of education of the parents may in some instance act as an indicator of economic status of the parents concerned in the study. This is because in formal employments, an employee's earning is normally related to his/her level of education.

The more educated a person is, the higher the salary. Therefore education may be one of the key determiners of the parent's financial ability to educate the child. From the study, it was evident that most fathers of the student respondents had education up to secondary school (38.05%) while for their mothers; majority of them had education up to primary school level (40.6%). It means most of the parents only had basic education devoid of other training and skills. As earlier mentioned, the level of education of a parent may have a bearing on his/her income and it is therefore instructive to note that many parents in Bureti Sub County are likely to be trapped in low income bracket and may not really have sufficient financial endowment to educate their children in secondary school (Brunns & Mingat, 2003). This is in essence a negative factor as far as the education of the girl child is concern in the Sub County

The study also looked at the level of income of the parents. The responses from the students' questionnaires indicated the variation in the levels of income among the parents. These variations may be attributed to other factors like the parents' level of education (Hyman 2002). Furthermore, in ordinary situations and all other factors kept constant, the spending of an individual household is largely determined by the amount of disposable income. It therefore means that parent's expenditure on education of the child is constrained by their level of income.

The results of the study indicates that majority of the parents (31.6%) earn below Kshs. 3000 per month. Those who earned over Kshs. 15000 per month were only 2.5%. It gave the impression that most of the parents, both fathers and mothers earned income that was below the expected par which was therefore likely to affect negatively the education of their children. This is true considering the fact that in a household there were other competing needs that required the financial attention of the parents. These may include food, clothing shelter and many others. In a situation when all these needs may have risen, some parents may have opted to forego the education of their daughters so as to attend to the more pressing needs like food, consequently, the education of the girl child was possibly negatively affected. This coincided with the findings of the same study generated from the counselor teachers' responses that indicated that a number of the female students in the sub county missed classes/continuous assessment tests due to school fees.

The study established that majority of the girls missed classes due to school fees problems. Only 2.8% never missed school because of school fees. Comparing this scenario with the parental level of income, it could be understood that there was a relationship between the two; that if the parent's level of income was low there were chances that the ability to pay school fees was also low hence the possibility of the child to be sent out of school quite often resulting in absenteeism from classes, missing of continuous assessment tests and other important school activities by the student. This would eventually have negative effects on the overall participation of the girl child in secondary school education (Gachathi 1979). The study further sought to establish whether there were study rooms in the home of the respondents. These were rooms that were basically used during private study by the girl children when they were not in school. These facilities were supposed to be provided for by the parents or guardians of the girl child.

The results indicated that number of parents (57%) had study rooms for their girl children at home. It meant that the parents of the respondents were fully aware of the need to provide a conducive environment for their children to learn. As relating to other study materials many parents had tried to provide these items This was a positive indication of the parents' attempt to provide for the education of the girl child since a good number 57.2% had made the attempt of providing study materials, though there was still a reasonable number (43.8%) who had not done the same.

The research also sought to establish the availability of private study time for the girl child at home. This was the time when the girl child sat at home and concentrated on her school work. Time has an economic value; it is actually a resource and can be invested just like money; if it is spent well on education, it will yield some benefits in the future.

From the study, it emerged that not many girls had time for private studies at home. About 42.2% hardly had time for private studies at home. Another 29.2% had little time to do private studies while only 10.6% of respondents had a lot time to private studies at home. Given the fact that most of girls in secondary school in Bureti Sub County were day scholars, it was likely that a number of them still did not have time for private studies at home. There was a strong possibility that these girls engaged in other income generating activities (Higgins 1992). This was further compounded by the already existing problem of being out from classes and missing of continuous assessment tests due to school fees problems resulting in low participation of the girl child in secondary school education in Bureti Sub County. This aspect of unavailability of study time for the girl child was further supported by the teachers' views on girl child's academic work.

From the study it was evident that girls enjoy their academic work at school. This was justified by 93.75% of the teachers sampled while 6.25% of the teachers did not believe so. This gave the impression that girls in secondary schools in Bureti Sub County had a liking for education and given all the necessary conditions for education, they could do well in their educational pursuits. Another 62.25% of the sampled counselor teachers thought that girls with school fees problems were active in class while 37.5 did not believe so. In other words, despite the constant disruptions of their learning due to school fees problems, they still found education to be important. From the study, it also emerged that 100% of the sampled counselor teachers believed that work at home interfered with girls' studies. This could be linked to sex stereotyping by the society whereby a girl was expected to play the role of a mother in the family. In such a situation a girl was expected to do all the domestic chores like cooking, fetching water and firewood, baby sitting, milking cows and even washing family clothes. These chores were constraints to a girl child's educational pursuits (Koech 1999). This was further supported by earlier findings that a number of school girls find themselves out of school to attend to some other economic and social activities

Conclusions

From the study, it was also established that there were economic factors that affected girl child secondary school education in the sub county These included parents' level of education, and income, provision of study

materials and availability of study time. Firstly, the level of education of the parent could be a parameter for gauging their economic status. The more educated a parent was, the more likely that he/she was in a better position of employment and a higher income. This also happened vice versa. Conclusively, a girl child from an educated family had better chance of participation in secondary school education than the one from less educated family.

Secondly, the level of income of the parents was also an important economic factor as far as the girl child education is concerned. Girl children from wealthier homes were more likely to participate satisfactorily in their secondary school education than those from less wealthy homes. Thirdly, the provision of study facilities or materials at home played a significant role in girl child participation in secondary school education. These were key facilities like study rooms, books and source of reading light.

These were classified as economic because of the cost factor involved in the provision of such facilities. From the study, 42% of the respondents did not have such facilities while 43% of the respondents did not have study rooms at home. These limitations were likely to affect their overall participation in secondary school education.

Lastly, the availability of private study time was another cause of low participation by girls in secondary school education in the sub county. The study indicated that 42.2% of the respondents hardly had any private study time at home while 29.2% had little the same since time is an economic resource which is an important input in education, its absence or lack of it therefore affects negatively the participation of the girl child in secondary school education especially for those students who were in day secondary schools.

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn after the empirical inquiry on the economic factors that effected girl child's secondary school education in Bureti Sub County;

- i. Economically, most parents of the girls in secondary schools in Bureti Sub County were farmers by occupation. It therefore meant that they derived their source of livelihood from farming which is highly dependent on weather conditions. Therefore, sometimes they may not have generated reasonable income to support the education of their children. This explained the fact that majority of the girls' students were found in mixed day/ boarding and Mixed day secondary schools. This enabled them to benefit from the lower costs of education in such schools bearing in mind the Government's subsidy in secondary school education.
- ii. Most of the parents had education up to secondary school level though for mothers most of them did not go beyond Primary school level. Furthermore, for most of them their levels of income did not go beyond five thousand (5000) shillings per month, Which in itself was a setback in the endeavor to adequately educate the girl child given the assumption that there were other competing needs within the family for instance food, clothing and health care.
- iii. Practically, most parents would opt to forfeit the education of their children so that they could attend to more pressing family needs. From the study it could be concluded the presence of economic setbacks hindered the participation of girl child in secondary school education in Bureti Sub County
- iv. It was evident that many girls missed classes or exams due to school fees problems. Some of the girls while out of school ended up in other social challenges. That eventually created setbacks in the educational pursuit. This was a situation that required collective and concerted effort of all the stakeholders if the level of girl child's participation in secondary education in Bureti Sub County is to be improved.

Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained from the study, the following recommendation should be

acted upon by the relevant authorities.

- (i) The government should provide bursaries and any other form of assistance to needy girl children in secondary schools in the sub county so as to ensure that they complete their full cycle of secondary school education.
- (ii) Concerted effort should be made by the government and the local leaders to provide well equipped and affordable girls boarding, secondary schools to cater for the needs and the preferences of the girl children in the district This is based on the finding that there was a high demand for girls boarding secondary schools in the sub county.
- (iii) Parents should ensure that their girl children do not miss classes and continuous assessment

tests/examinations as this will affect their full participation in secondary school education. This can be achieved by ensuring that they make arrangements to pay fees promptly and work in liaison with the school administration to avoid the embarrassment of sending away the students due to school fees. Parents and schools administrations should devise means and methods of school fees payment that are effective and friendly to the students. These include work study programs and negotiated payments by installments. This would serve to minimize the number of times these students are sent home for school fees hence improve their participation in secondary school education.

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