

Influence Of Availability Of Support Services On Girl's Participation In Public Secondary Schools In Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of research was to determine influence of availability of support services on girls' participation in public secondary schools in Ganze Sub-County. The study used a mixed research methodology as both quantitative data and qualitative data was used to bring out complex issues that lead to girls' public secondary school involvement. Support services were found to be very important to facilitate girls being in school. This is because both teachers and girls agreed that provision of sanitary towels, clean toilets and proper hygiene including clean food and water are some of the support services available for girls in school that enable their being in school. However, it was observed that high poverty level among some families acts as a hindrance to some girls attending school because their families are not in a position to support them with necessities such as sanitary towels hence have to miss school for three to four days during each menstrual cycle. Parents were also noted to lack adequate skills or importance of providing psycho social support for teenage mothers to be back to school as these mothers were found to have the feeling of embarrassment making them to drop out of school. However, educational stakeholders such as political leaders, religious organization, school communities, Non-Governmental Organizations should come up with support services for girls while in secondary public schools such as provision of sanitary towels to make them comfortable while at school as some of the girls who come from poor financial backgrounds face challenges in accessing such essential support services.

Keywords; Support services, Girl's participation, Public secondary schools

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I. Introduction

Ensuring equal educational opportunities for boys and girls has been a major focus in Kenya. This is because girls' education is known to be crucial for their general growth. According to the most recent data, more than 3.7 million students were enrolled in Kenyan public and private high schools in the year 2022, up 5% from the previous one (Cowling, 2023). Therefore, education is an essential human right and a major force behind both individual as well as societal growth. It equips people with useful skills, knowledge, and a positive outlook, empowering them to support moral and emotional development, promote good governance, and add to economic output. Hence, pursuing education is often regarded as a pathway to personal growth, economic prosperity, and social mobility (Arkorful, Basiru, Anokye, Latif, Agyei, Hammond and Abdul-Rahaman, 2019). However, this means that effective academic programs can only be actualized in an environment which is conducive in terms of allowing for a holistic and well-rounded approach as regards ensuring that the learners not only gain from the academic spheres but also obtain life skills and social development.

Globally, average literacy rate for females was 82% where from 47% in 2009 China has risen to 67% in 2016 and India ranked at 65% only in 2018 from 47% in 2016 (Cook, 2020). Although such statistics have been recorded two years apart the time gap is small enough thus establishing comparability. Contracting this, the global average literacy rate stands at 89%. Also, India is far much below other neighboring countries like China where female literacy has been reported at 94.4% compared to 67% in India where the challenge seemed more in rural areas such as Rajasthan at 52.6% for females in India compared to their male counterparts at 82%. Literacy of Indian girls is still comparatively low but there are general improvements in literacy going up from 47% in 1980s reaching out to 67% in 2018 (Cook, 2020). In agreeing with Forsgren, Asia, Shelbly, Andrew and Nathan, (2019) in Ghana it is also possible to note that gender gaps tend to increase with each level of school attainment. These is because on the specific aspect of enrollment rates to the later classes in schooling, gender disparity that is evident in Ghana can be seen clearly. Even as enrollment ratios are virtually equal regarding the gender at the primary and junior levels at the senior high school level the national gender pitched estimate stands at about 68 girls to 100 boys in general completion rate. What this means is that there is a positive relationship between the

drop out risk and child's age and the risk rises much higher for girls than boys. According to recent surveys, there is still a gender disparity in Sub-Saharan Africa when it comes to high school graduation rates as more boys than girls typically complete their education. Only 21% of young women complete secondary education, compared to 28% of young males (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). Kenya, a significant participant in the area's educational landscape, is an illustration of this trend. Despite witnessing consistent growth in completion rates at both primary and secondary levels, Kenya continues to grapple with many students who still need to fulfil their educational journey. This ongoing challenge can be attributed to a range of interconnected issues affecting the quality of education outcomes, encompassing socioeconomic factors, school-specific conditions, and deficiencies in institutional management practices (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). Despite the strides made in recent years, girls' participation in secondary education in Kenya continues to face various challenges. These challenges include, critical institutional management practices, which directly impact the enrollment, retention, and overall experience of girls in secondary schools (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). Girls' access to quality education is a matter of human rights and social justice. Research studies reveals that education enable individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, and opportunities that results to a fulfilling life and contribute meaningfully to society (Umar, Wudil and Zubair, 2021). Furthermore, National development is also impacted on Girl child education. This is because, well educated mothers are more likely to make informed decisions about their health, family size, and overall well-being. According to Clementina, Piliyesi, and Anyona, (2020) women with access to education often have healthier and better-nourished infants and are more committed to their children's education, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty. Additionally, they enhance their household income by bolstering family productivity in agriculture and other economic endeavors, as noted in a 2005 UNDP report. They are more equipped to participate in the workforce and contribute to the country's economic growth.

Statement Of The Problem

Despite the efforts to improve girl child education in Kenya, significant barriers still hinder their participation in secondary education. These barriers include lack of essential support services, such as sanitary towels and proper washrooms, which are critical for addressing the specific needs of adolescent girls (Ombogo, Oino, Nyamwange and Lumayo, 2023). In many schools, the absence of these basic amenities leads to discomfort and embarrassment for girls during their menstrual periods, causing them to miss school days and over time, contribute to higher dropout rates. Issues related to school readmission also pose a challenge to girl child participation. According to Merayo and Ayuso, (2023), many girls face circumstances that require them to leave school temporarily, such as pregnancy or health-related reasons. However, the policies and frameworks for readmission is that such girls should be allowed to come back to school unconditionally but cases of dropout seemingly continue to be high as for example in many cases, parents may not fully appreciate the value of education for their daughters or may face socioeconomic pressures that compel them to prioritize other responsibilities over their daughters' schooling (Muli, Piliyesi and Koros, 2023). As per the report by the National Council for Population and Development, (2017) there were 92,030 teenagers in Kilifi County who were not attending school and Ganze Sub-County had the highest dropout case rate. However, data from education office in Ganze Sub-County for the period 2019 to 2023 indicate high dropout but low readmission of girls in public secondary schools as shown below in table 1 necessitating the need to determine how availability of support services influence on girls' participation in public secondary schools in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya?

Table 1 *Girls School Attendance in Ganze Sub-County Public Secondary Schools Between 2019 and 2023*

Schools'	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
Girls'	Form 3	Form 4	Form 3	Form 4	Form 3	Form 4	Form 3	Form 4	Form 3	Form 4
Enrolment	1169	1015	1087	964	1202	1081	1237	1121	1285	1169
Attendance	1131	977	1035	907	1137	1015	1173	1059	1220	1102
Dropout	38	38	52	57	65	66	64	62	65	67
Re-admitted	25	28	24	17	20	16	15	14	13	10

Source: Ganze Sub-County Education office 2023

II. Research Objective

To assess the influence of availability of support services on girl's participation in public secondary schools in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

III. Research Question

How does availability of support services influence girls' participation in public secondary schools in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya?

IV. Empirical Literature Review

Availability of support services and girls' participation in public secondary schools

The availability of support services, particularly emphasizing on provision of sanitary towels and access to clean and hygienic washroom facilities, is paramount in influencing and shaping the extent of girls' participation in secondary education (Merayo and Ayuso, 2023). This critical factor is intricately tied to a fundamental facet of girls' lives because menstrual hygiene and its profound implications for their educational voyage. According to Ombogo, Nyamwange and Lumayo, (2019) menstruation is a natural biological process experienced by girls and women universally but take on unique dimensions when considered within the context of girls' education particularly in resource-constrained settings. This is because for many girls, menstruation can become a formidable barrier that obstructs their educational progress. Therefore, inability to access sanitary towels and proper hygiene facilities within school premises can magnify the manifold challenges of managing menstruation (Sinha and Paul, 2018). In keeping with Akanzum and Pienaaah's (2023) research study showed that girls often grapple with discomfort, embarrassment and anxiety during their menstrual cycles which regrettably can culminate in their recurrent absence from school. Therefore, extensive research and numerous studies have consistently underscored the intimate correlation between menstrual hygiene and girls' school attendance patterns. This is because a study by Gautam (2022) showed that sanitary towels and establishing clean, safe and adequately equipped washrooms directly address this critical issue by eliminating one of the primary impediments that deter girls from regular school attendance.

However, the impact of providing sanitary towels and hygiene facilities extends beyond mere attendance. This is because it creates a positive and enabling school environment for girls, creating a ripple effect that permeates the entire educational ecosystem (Merayo and Ayuso, 2023). Schools prioritizing menstrual hygiene convey a powerful message to girls hence their needs and well-being are acknowledged, respected and accommodated. This in turn fosters an inclusive, welcoming and supportive learning environment wherein girls can direct their energies toward academic pursuits without the added burden of menstrual-related distress. In response to the pressing need to address this challenge, various initiatives, organizations and governments have recognized the importance of menstrual hygiene management as an integral part of girls' education (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). This has therefore resulted in organizations undertaking efforts to ensure the provision of sanitary towels, hygiene education and clean safe washrooms within school premises. These initiatives empower girls to stay in school and contribute to their health and well-being.

In United Kingdom Plan International carried out a study which shown that a large percentage of girls at 64% at the age bracket of 14 to 21 years of age happen to miss school partly or even a full day due to menstrual cycle while 13% missed a full day. However, in India 1 girl in every 5 girls normally drop out of school due to menstruation (Myra, 2022). But for Sub-Saharan Africa Myra, (2022) observed that 10 girls miss school every month although in Ethiopia 50% of girls in secondary schools misses between 1 to 4 days school time in every month while in Kenya was estimated that on average girls lose 4 days in a month totaling to 165 days over four academic years in secondary schools (Myra, 2022). What all this means is that availability of support services such as sanitary towels and clean toilets has a great impact on girls' participation in secondary schools' education hence the need for the study to assess the impact of these services on girls in Ganze Constituency public secondary schools and its impact on their participation.

V. Research Methodology

The study used a mixed research methodology as both quantitative data and qualitative data was used to bring out complex issues that lead to girls' public secondary school involvement. The study employed an ex-post facto research approach to examine the relationship of different independent variables with girls' enrolment into secondary education. The study targeted some vital stakeholders in public secondary schools in Ganze Sub-County comprising of 18 principals who offer administrative leadership and governance in these schools, 18 guidance and counselling teachers, 523 teachers who are in charge of classroom teaching and are very important in carrying out educational policies and practices 2, 250 girls who were the core subjects of the study and 1500 form four parents, (Ganze Sub-County Education office, 2023). The study targeted some vital stakeholders in public secondary schools in Ganze Sub-County comprising of 18 principals who offer administrative leadership and governance in these schools, 18 guidance and counselling teachers, 523 teachers who are in charge of classroom teaching and are very important in carrying out educational policies and practices 2, 250 girls who were the core subjects of the study and 1500 form four parents, (Ganze Sub-County Education office, 2023). By use of Slovin's formula, a sample of 2 principals, 2 guidance and counselling teachers, 44 teachers, 191 girls and 127 form four parents hence a total of 366 participants was obtained.

VI. Research Findings And Discussions

Report on Influence of Availability of Support Services on Girl's Participation in Public Secondary Schools in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

Teachers and girls were subjected to questionnaires in order to establish influence of availability of support services on girls' participation in public secondary schools and results tabulated in form of frequency tables and percentages as demonstrated below.

Table 1 Report on Teachers Questionnaires on Influence of Availability of Support Services on Girls' Participation in Public Secondary Schools.

Key; SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree, F-Frequency, %-Percentage

Test Items		SA	A	U	D	SD
Provision of sanitary towels in schools enhances retention of girls in public secondary schools	F %	24 57.14	10 23.81	4 9.52	2 4.76	2 4.76
Adequate classrooms help girls' retention in public secondary schools	F %	3 7.14	5 11.90	2 4.76	9 21.43	23 54.76
Food water hygiene sanitation has enabled girls' completion in public secondary schools.	F %	21 50.00	11 26.19	2 4.76	5 11.90	3 7.14
Institution has laid strategies to ensure that there is successful transition of girls in secondary school.	F %	15 35.71	19 45.24	3 7.14	3 7.14	2 4.76
Clean toilets for girls' education in school increases school attendance for girls in secondary schools.	F %	20 47.62	13 30.95	2 4.76	3 7.14	4 9.52
To what extent do you agree that availability of support services influence girls' participation in public secondary schools.	F %	26 61.90	8 19.05	3 7.14	3 7.14	2 4.76

Source; Researcher, 2024

Table 1 shows that more than half of the teachers at 57.14% (24) strongly agreed that provision of sanitary towels in schools enhances retention of girls in public secondary schools while 23.81% (10) agreed, 9.52% (4) were undecided but those who disagreed were 4.76% (2) as well as those who strongly disagreed at 4.76% (2). However, majority of the teachers slightly more than half of teacher participants at 54.76% (23) strongly disagreed with the statement that adequate classrooms help girls' retention in public secondary schools, 21.43% (9) also disagreed while those who were undecided made up for 4.76% (2) as 11.90% (5) agreed and 7.14% (3) strongly agreed. In addition, half of the teachers at 50.00% (21) strongly agreed that food water hygiene sanitation has enabled girls' completion in public secondary schools as it creates a good nutritional and physical environment for learning while at school, 26.19% (11) also agreed while those who were undecided were at 4.76% (2) and teacher respondents who disagreed contributed for 11.90% (5) while those who strongly agreed with the statement were a small number of teachers at 7.14% (3). Teachers were also asked whether their schools have laid strategies to ensure that there is successful transition of girls in secondary school from one class to another and consequently to universities and colleges where 35.71% (15) of teachers strongly agreed that their school has strategies, 45.24% (19) agreed, 7.14% (3) remained undecided same as to those who disagreed at 7.14% (3) and a small number of teachers at only 4.76% (2) strongly disagreed with that statement. However, a good number of teachers strongly agreed that clean toilets for girls' education in school increases school attendance for girls in secondary schools at 47.62% (20) and those who agreed made up for 30.95% (13) although 4.76% (2) were undecided close to total number of teachers who disagreed at 7.14% (3) and 9.52% (4) strongly disagreed. Moreover, when general view of teacher respondents was examined that availability of support services has influence on girls' participation in public secondary schools more than half of teachers at 61.90% (26) strongly agreed, 19.05% (8) agreed, 7.14% (3) were undecided, 7.14% (3) also disagreed while only 4.76% (2) of teachers strongly disagreed. Moreover, girls in public secondary schools were also subjected to research questionnaires on their views on availability of support services and their participation in public secondary schools in Ganze Sub-County whole obtained results were tabulated as shown in frequency table below.

Table 2 Report on Girls' Questionnaire on Influence of Availability of Support services on Girls' Participation in Public Secondary Schools

Key; SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree, F-Frequency, %-Percentage

Test Items		SA	A	U	D	SD
Provision of sanitary towels in schools enhances retention of girls in public secondary schools	F %	106 58.89	37 20.56	16 8.89	12 6.67	9 5.00
Adequate classrooms help girls' retention in public secondary schools	F %	14 7.78	20 11.11	12 6.67	14 7.78	120 66.67

Food water hygiene sanitation has enabled girls' completion in public secondary schools.	F %	100 55.56	30 16.67	17 9.44	15 8.33	18 10.00
Institution has laid strategies to ensure that there is successful transition of girls in secondary school.	F %	40 22.22	54 30.00	70 38.89	11 6.11	5 2.78
Clean toilets for girls' education in school increases school attendance for girls in secondary schools.	F %	78 43.33	60 33.33	20 11.11	16 8.89	6 3.33
To what extent do you agree that availability of support services influence girls' participation in public secondary schools.	F %	102 56.67	28 15.56	32 17.78	9 5.00	9 5.00

Source; Researcher, 2024

Just as it was observed on teachers' responses more than half of girls in public secondary schools as 58.89% (106) strongly agreed that provision of sanitary towels in schools enhances retention of girls in public secondary schools. Provision of sanitary towels in schools enhances retention of girls in public secondary schools. However, 20.56% (37) agreed, 8.89% (16) were neutral, 6.67% (12) disagreed while 5.00% (9) strongly disagreed. On adequacy of classrooms a higher number of girls at 66.67% (120), those who disagreed were 7.78% (14) disagreed, 6.67% (12), 11.11% (20) agreed, while 7.78% (14) strongly agreed. As it was noted by teachers also a good number of girls at 55.56% (100) strongly agreed that food water hygiene sanitation has enabled girls' completion in public secondary schools. However, 16.67% (30) agreed, 9.44% (17) were undecided, 8.33% (15) disagreed and 10.00% (18) strongly disagreed. On school has laid strategies to ensure that there is successful transition of girls while in secondary schools the highest number of girls were undecided at 38.89% (70), 22.22% (40) strongly agreed, 30.00% (54) agreed, 6.11% (11) disagreed, 2.78% (5) strongly disagreed. On the other issue of clean toilets for girls' education increasing their school attendance 43.33% (78) strongly agreed, 33.33% (60) agreed, 11.11% (20) remained neutral, 8.89% (16) disagreed while a small number of girls at 3.33% (6) strongly disagreed. Also, girls' views were taken on that availability of support services influences girls' participation in secondary schools 56.67% (102) strongly agreed, 15.56% (28) agreed, 17.78% (32) were undecided while 5.00% (9) disagreed and 5.00% (9) strongly disagreed. From these statistics both girls and teachers to an extent agree that there is need for provision of support services for girls while at school as it enables them to participate in school.

Inferential Findings on Influence of Availability of Support Services on Girl's Participation in Public Secondary Schools in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

Frequencies for teachers and girls were further analyzed in order to establish relationship that exist between adopting availability of support services and girls' participation in public secondary schools as shown in table below.

Table 3 Analysis of teachers' and Girls' frequencies on influence of availability of support services on girls' participation in public secondary schools.

Key; SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

Category	SA	A	U	D	SD
Teachers (X)	26	8	3	3	2
Girls (Y)	102	28	32	9	9

Source; Researcher, 2024

Above teachers and girls' frequencies were further subjected to Karl Pearson correlation coefficient analysis as shown in table below in order to establish the kind of relationship that exist between availability of support services and girls' participation.

Table 4 Karl Pearson Analysis of frequencies of availability of resources and girls' participation in secondary schools.

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
26	102	676	10404	2652
8	28	64	784	224
3	32	9	1024	96
3	9	9	81	27
2	9	4	81	18
ΣX= 42	ΣY = 180	ΣX ² =762	ΣY ² =12374	ΣXY=3017

Source; Researcher, 2024

$$r = \frac{N \sum XY - \sum X \sum Y}{\sqrt{[N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2] \{N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2\}}}$$

$$r = \frac{5(3017) - (42 \times 180)}{\sqrt{\{5(762) - (42 \times 42)\}\{5(12374) - (180 \times 180)\}}}$$

$$r = \frac{15085 - 7560}{\sqrt{2046 \times 29470}}$$

$$r = \frac{7525}{\sqrt{60295620}}$$

$$r = \frac{7765.025435}{7525}$$

$$r = 0.969088905$$

The margin of error was set at 0.05 where the range of **r** was taken as **-1** to **+1** where the value of **r** is close to zero there was a weak relationship but when the value was close to **-1** there was a strong negative relationship and when close to **+1** there was a strong positive relationship. Therefore, the **r** calculated was **0.969088905** indicating that there is a strong positive relationship between availability of support services and girls' participation in public secondary schools.

Thematic Analysis of Findings on Influence of Availability of Support Services on Girl's Participation in Public Secondary Schools in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

Parents participated in focus group discussion guide while principals and guidance and counselling teachers participated in interview schedules in order to obtain qualitative information from respondents. However, during focus group discussions it was noted that by respondent;

“High level of poverty among some of the parents makes them face challenges in paying school fees for their girls while at school making some of the girls to drop out of school. Additionally, some families tend to have poor attitude towards girls' education that normally demotivates them also making them to drop out of school.”

In keeping with words of the respondents above it is clear that lack of support services such as payment of school fees as well as motivation from parents and other stakeholders to study are some of the contributing factors to girls dropping out of school. These, findings they however agree with other observations made during interview discussions that;

“Some parents become uncooperative in situations where their daughter gets pregnant while at school. This is because, when the girl delivers some parents are not willing to be left with the baby at home for the girl to continue schooling making the girl to give up on their schooling hence ending up dropping out of school”

From these discussions it is clear and in support of quantitative findings that in order to provide opportunities for girls to participate in education there is need to provide support services such as sanitary towels, moral support, financial support along with care services for babies of teenage mothers in order for them to be able to attend classes.

VII. Conclusion

Support services were found to be very important to facilitate girls being in school. This is because both teachers and girls agreed that provision of sanitary towels, clean toilets and proper hygiene including clean food and water are some of the support services available for girls in school that enable their being in school. However, it was observed that high poverty level among some families acts as a hindrance to some girls attending school because their families are not in a position to support them with necessities such as sanitary towels hence have to miss school for three to four days during each menstrual cycle. Parents were also noted to lack adequate skills or importance of providing psycho social support for teenage mothers to be back to school as these mothers were found to have the feeling of embarrassment making them to drop out of school. Financial support services for girls' daily undertakings were also established as an important role for the parent because secondary schools' girls are not working and they may be in need of essential personal effects to make them comfortable while at school. Moreover, on the relationship that exist between availability of support services and girls' participation in public secondary schools it was established to have a high positive relationship of **r = 0.969088905**. Therefore, in order to have girls in school and complete their studies it is important for all educational stakeholders such as political leaders, well-wishers, religious organizations among others to come in hand and provide necessary support services to girls in schools such as sanitary towels, financial support in terms of bursaries to enable girls obtain education in a more comfortable way while at school.

VIII. Recommendations

Educational stakeholders such as political leaders, religious organization, school communities, Non-Governmental Organizations should come up with support services for girls while in secondary public schools such as provision of sanitary towels to make them comfortable while at school as some of the girls who come from poor financial backgrounds face challenges in accessing such essential support services.

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