



Teaching and Learning Spaces in Kenya: An Analysis of the Experiences of Girl Children in Taita-Taveta County

Nambiri O. Jane*, Indangasi Henry and Ontita Edward
University of Nairobi

*Corresponding author's email address: janenambiri@gmail.com

Abstract

Education is not only one of the main pillars in the millennium development goals (MDGs) and Kenya's Vision 2030, but also a pillar upon which the other millennium goals stand. For instance, gender equality – another of the goals – is considered in education as a means to enabling equality between men and women. For this reason, equity in education takes the setting of an enabling environment for the effective teaching and learning for children as crucial. Indeed, the teaching and learning spaces within which children's education takes place has a big role in determining whether and how their learning happens. Kenya has, since 2000, endeavoured to promote universal primary education that targets to accord equal opportunities for both the boy and the girl child with the ultimate aim of eliminating disparities that have hitherto existed between the two. This paper undertakes to capture the experiences of the girl child in their interaction with the teaching and learning spaces (home and school), in their venture of earning an education. In particular, a search into the experiences of the girl child is critical in gauging the quality and conduciveness of the environment in which their learning takes place. This is specifically, in an attempt to unveil what could either enhance, or, impede equal access to education for the girls. This paper particularly takes interest in rural areas, where emphasis on girl child education is known to be low. Using Taita-Taveta County as the case study, the paper employs the feminist research method approach to give an exposition to the experiences of the girl child as they go about the learning process.

Keywords: Girl child, Education, Girls' experiences, Teaching and learning spaces, Equal access

INTRODUCTION

Wholesome education is life-changing for both young men and women; to help them develop their full potential, thereby putting them on a path to success in their life. Educating a girl in particular, can kick-start a virtuous circle of development, given the centrality of a mother in the family setup. The necessity of investing in the education of girl child is crucial because a girl in the society is more than just the individual; she is about the future of her family, her community and the nation at large, (Mokua, 2013). A girl child who is the future mother is also the custodian of the societal and family values. Thus, while seeking the stability of a society, the woman stands first. Basing on the realities of life, the girl as the future mother stands at the centre of the development of a child: from the period of conception, to nursing the child into a responsible person. Indeed, it has often been argued that educating a girl is one of the best investments that a country can make for the community in general, and family in particular, (Schultz, 2001). For instance, it is expected that an educated girl will later marry, bring up healthier children, earn enough money to invest back into her family and community,

thus, playing a practical active role in the leadership of the community and country. The stability of the child for that matter depends more on the mother. It then requires that the mother herself be stable – the kind of stability that comes with wholesome training. This is the type of training that lays emphasis on a balance in the utilization of the teaching and learning spaces, which Mokuia (ibid), identifies as home and school.

It is acknowledged that Kenya has over the past few years, recorded large gains in girls' education, (UNICEF, 2017). Indeed, UNICEF (ibid) advises that with shared goals and collective action—among governments, international organizations, civil society, media, and the private sector—educational prospects for girls around the world can change. Research, however, continues to show that there are hotspots in the world, (including Kenya), where girls are not getting quality education, the most affected being rural areas (Sperling et al., 2016). This realization prompts a search to find out how Kenya as a country is fairing in creating a conducive environment for the education for the girl child. This paper, particularly, attempts to respond to Sperling et al. (ibid) revelation that emphasis on girl child education in rural areas is low. Using Taita-Taveta County as a representative rural area, selected randomly, this paper investigates the following questions, among others: What are the experiences of the girl child in the teaching and learning spaces (home and school) in the county? How do the experiences, either enhance or impede access to education by the girl child? What should be done to address the possible impediments to full access to education by the girl child in a context such as represented by Taita-Taveta County?

METHODOLOGY

The major purpose of this study was to capture the live stories of the girl child, in which they told their own experiences in the teaching and learning spaces in which they operate. This was in cognizance of the fact that those experiences impact on their education. The study took a feminist research approach to engage gender dynamically as a category of inquiry into this research process. The approach employs feminist lens, which according to Akinyi et al, (2018), highlight the relationship between gender practices and conventional research practices; based on the argument that the traditional research methods are biased towards men's experiences. This means that researches into education are likely to interpret success in view of what it means for boys, or if fairly, the general picture. This paper, therefore, interrogates the spaces within which the girl child operates with the view of determining how these could impact their education.

This study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The approach considers the diversity of the girl child experiences through exploration of the teaching and learning spaces in the Taita-Taveta context. The use of a qualitative approach proved to be most appropriate for capturing of the nature of girl child experiences. The approach provided insights into our interrogation of cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriages, mostly supported by the men. The feminist lens helps to put into perspective the existing stereotypes of women (Akinyi et al., 2018). Precisely, the approach examines the socio-cultural and political situation at the levels of household, community and the general public, and how this impacts the girls' access to education. The assessment further investigates the implementation of, and/or lack of relevant government supervision and support the condition of the girl child education in Taita-Taveta County.

In considering the social, economic and cultural environment for the girls, this paper discusses the challenges that may appear to disadvantage the girl child in her pursuit of

education. The paper has used a methodology that attempts to capture the experiences of the girl child in their learning spaces by interviewing them face to face. This way, the girls were accorded the opportunity to voice their experiences and to also demonstrate what they say by their silences. Indeed, giving them a voice to speak about their social life from their perspective ultimately allowed the girls to contribute towards the understanding of what they undergo.

Besides, the paper sought the voices of women about the situations they find themselves in or tend to be excluded from and how this is likely to affect the girls. For instance, the women voiced their experiences of life in their interaction with their daughters in the home spaces. They expressed their views on, say, early marriages; teenage pregnancies; and menstrual challenges the girls faced, among other issues. This, as earlier hinted, was done based on personal interviews, focused group discussions, participant observation, life stories and oral testimonies. The research used a cross-sectional survey design that combined both secondary data from document analysis and primary data from the field. The secondary sources provided the status of education and aspects of experiences of girls in education, while the qualitative aspects provided the detailed reasoning behind the revealed experiences of the girls in their pursuit of education. The approach was, in other words, bottom-up. Akinyi et al. (ibid), describe the approach as:

Bottom-up approach in a sense takes into account the practices and perceptions of the target beneficiaries, i.e. the girl child. This bottom-up approach is beneficial in the sense that it is based on an enhancement, rather than a deficit (p.14).

Of course, right from the initial stages, the goal was to learn as much as possible about what the respondents think and have to say in relation to the experiences they encountered in their teaching and learning spaces. Their responses, matched with what was observable, became the basis for the researchers' recommendations for the facilitation of education for the girl child.

Meanwhile, the efficacy of the data collected was as a result of the diversity of the sources of information and the techniques used. The study selected samples as presented by the matrix below:

Table 1: Sampling Matrix of the Respondents

Categories	Target Population	Sample	Sampling Techniques
Counties	47 Counties in Kenya Rural Counties in Kenya	Rural/Urban Counties (1 Rural)	Stratified Sampling Random Sampling
Taita-Taveta County	Taveta, Voi & Wundanyi Sub Counties	Rural Sub-County (Wundanyi).	Purposive
Teachers	All Teachers of basic education Taita-Taveta County.	4 per school (male& female:5x4:20 teachers	Purposive Random Sampling
Pupils	All pupils of basic education Taita-Taveta County.	Primary Lower: 8(4 boys & 4 girls) Primary Upper: 8(4 boys & 4 girls) 16 x 5:80 pupils	Stratified Sampling Purposive Random Sampling
Parents	All parents of basic education in Taita-Taveta County.	4 per school (2male &2female); 5x4= 20	Stratified Sampling Purposive Random Sampling
Schools	All schools from Taita-Taveta County	5 Primary Schools in rural areas of Taita-Taveta County: Ngolia, Paranga, Kishushe, Nyachea, and Mghamboni.	Stratified Sampling Purposive Random Sampling

Source: Field data, (2020)

The above were the selected respondents and locations for the study. For location we stratified Kenya's 47 counties into rural and urban and randomly selected Taita-Taveta as a rural county. The purpose of stratifying was to ensure that we have common characteristics in the population data. Once in Taita-Taveta, we purposively selected Wundanyi as the most rural of the three sub-counties in the county. We then used random sampling to come up with the five primary schools in Wundanyi. For the population, we used a mixture of stratified sampling to get the strata, purposive sampling to reach the levels of the required population and random sampling to select the individuals to be included to avoid biasness. In order to protect the confidentiality of our respondents we have withheld their identities. Baez (2002) underscores the need to protect research participants from harm. Such need was particularly critical in this study given the sensitivity of the information sought and the age of the majority of the respondents.

The Experiences of the Girl Child

This section incorporates a number of responses captured verbatim from some of our respondents.

Gender Role Stereotypes

Girls in Taita-Taveta grow up in a culture that prefers boy children and extols the superiority of the male gender. One woman respondent, for example, commented thus:

Male children are taken as the sustainers of the family lineage, holders of the central, often, most important positions of authority, and are inheritors of immovable properties. Thus, parents give preferential treatment to boys over girls. They send boys to school so that they could be breadwinners, while girls are hoped to move to another home through marriage. Consequently, investing in them means investing in another home. (Field data, 2020).

The above views start to give us a hint on what to expect in relation to girls. Culture seems to dictate who does what, who has access, who is in control of what resources, who is the most visible and finally who is in the spaces available in the family (Kabira et al., 1997, p. 11). Apparently, one is defined through their gender (Idang, 2015).

About work in the home, we confirmed great demand on the girl child's labour in the home space. Meanwhile, the division of the very labour is gendered in nature. According to a community worker that we interviewed:

Domestic chores are for the female gender. These include such duties as preparation and processing of food, fetching water and firewood, cleaning and washing, weeding and caring for others, among other things. Meanwhile the boys are tasked with farming, herding animals and running errands (Field data, 2020).

Apparently, the allocation of duties targets to keep women and girls within the home sphere. Besides, the allocation appears to leave totally no time for the girls, while a boy in a home without animals has all the time. The situation is easily summarized by one girl respondent aged 14, as follows:

I am normally given more responsibilities than my brothers. I am given different kinds of tasks. I work within the home while my brother works outside. I spend most of the time doing the house hold duties at home like fetching water, collecting fire wood and cooking, among others. The work is heavy and takes all my time. I cannot even do my school assignments. And because my parents are very poor, they sometimes want me to contribute to the family income (Field data, 2020).

On further inquiry about the division of labour, we learnt that due to the gendered division of labour, boys, especially the older ones, cannot assist in household chores. The cultural beliefs and values about which activities are suitable for men and which for women appear to draw strict lines. A typical Duty-Rota for a girl in Taita-Taveta County is summarized below by Miriam, a 13-year-old girl:

I am an only girl in the family who goes to school and am in Standard 7. I am the eldest and the other two school going children are boys, 12 and 11. My younger sister has not yet enrolled in school, though she is 7 years old. Before going to school I normally fetch water, sweep the house, and prepare breakfast for the family – this takes me about 2 hours. My school is about 5 km away. So, I always go to school late. After school, I do all the housework (as my mother is pregnant and sickly). I have also to prepare supper for the family and after dinner I wash the utensils. At times I sneak out to go and play night dances especially on the eve of releasing the initiates. I love attending the celebrations. (Field data, 2020).

From Miriam's narrative, one realizes that the work burden for girls is heavy, perhaps too heavy to also expect her to equally do her schoolwork. Miriam is likely to master her presence in the home space but lose out in the school one, thereby, fail to balance her growth in both spaces. Without good grounding in school, Miriam is not likely to

end up with a life sustaining career. She is in fact likely to drop out of school so as to continue helping at home. This perhaps confirms ILO (2010) observation that girls still remain behind the boys in enrolment, retention and completion. In contrast, Miriam's brothers who find all the time they need for their schoolwork are likely to complete school and to pursue a career for themselves, making them able to support their lives.

The need to understand the experiences of the girl child in their home space came out as crucial because of the way they affect the ability of the girls to keep at school and to excel. Girls are first socialized in the home space since parents are the primary educators of children. This implies that education starts at home and so do the barriers against girls' education. The African belief system is revealed in values, customs and traditions that influence what communities think as acceptable and favourable options for girls. This has great significance for either empowering or limiting the girls' opportunities and life chances that come with, for instance, school education, ILO, (ibid).

In other words, the home space has implications for the girl's learning. We found it common that many girls are denied education, due to their responsibilities in their families. Notably, different forms of labour, carried out in the home or outside, tend to push a number of girls out of school and into working for wages at an early age. Indeed, evidence suggests that child labour and school participation are incompatible, and that the more onerous the labour, the greater the negative impact on the children's school space.

Family Income

From the very outlook of a number of homesteads in Wundanyi region of Taita- Taveta that we visited, one notes that poverty levels are high. When we went deeper into interaction with the families, we noted many families could not afford to provide for their children. In a scenario such as this, the girl child is at a greater disadvantage because of the extra needs in her life. As a result, some girls allow themselves to be lured into sexual acts in exchange for money or material support from both boys and adult men in the community. During one focused group discussion with the girls, one girl respondent, for instance, lamented thus:

Some girls end up sleeping with several men to get money...The men cheat you with ten shillings and sleep with you, and when you become pregnant, they leave you. As a result, some girls have ended up aborting and even some have died in the process. Some girls cannot even tell the father of the child, since they had so many sexual partners. Many have dropped out of school (Field data, 2020).

This revelation during the group meeting was indeed quite an accurate state of affairs. We had earlier been informed of cases where some of the girls looking for financial support got involved with men and became pregnant at tender ages of twelve or even thirteen. Caught in such a scenario the girls opted to get married, perhaps due to the awareness that their families would not support them with their babies. As a result, early marriages are a common trend in the county. Even where a girl may not necessarily get pregnant, the general trend is for the girls to look towards getting husbands, with the need to go to school coming second. Often, some continue going to school only as long as they have not yet got a serious marriage proposal. It came out that in fact many parents lived on the hope that their daughters would sooner than later find men to marry them. As one parent, a retired teacher explained to us:

For many parents, early marriage for their daughters serves three reasons: first, they have got rid of the burden of carrying a dependant; two, they hope to get some economic boost through the tokens given by the son-in-law; and three, they are sure that their daughter will not miss a husband like it has become a trend with girls today. In fact, some parents try to discourage their daughters from going to school, partly because this makes them delay to get husbands, but majorly because majority believe that school educated girls do not make good wives. (Field data, 2020).

One girl who impressed us greatly with her maturity of thought, revealed to us the contrasted view of life on the part of the girls and that of their parents. She remarked:

We girls sometimes view marriage as a business whereby we are sold as commodities, while our parents view our education as a barrier to the quick material gain from bride wealth (Field data, 2020).

The girl's remark shades important light on the parents' attitude towards their daughters' education, particularly as influenced by their perception of daughters as family wealth. And as learnt, the marriage trade-off tends to become more pronounced as the girl approaches the age when she would traditionally be expected to get married.

Meanwhile, the boys stand a higher chance of accessing education. We investigated how income essential for schooling was distributed between boys and girls, how labour in the home spaces was divided and how this affected the teaching and learning for the girl child, in relation to the boy child. It was revealed to us that where the family income could not support all the children at school, the little that became available was given to the boys. And during situations of economic crisis, the girls were the most vulnerable to exploitation as cheap and docile labour. Many families seek ways of augmenting their meagre resources, and hiring out girl children to work as maids appears to be the easiest option. The girls may be sent off to work, mostly in urban centres just to boost the family's income. Apparently, women's domestic roles in the home automatically become the identity of the girl child.

From the girls' own narrations, perhaps the most challenging experience is that related to menstruation. Menstruation requires hygiene management, but since a majority of school girls cannot afford sanitary towels, the experience becomes a source of fear, shame, teasing and confusion. As a result, many of the girls miss school while some drop out of school altogether for lack of information on how to effectively manage their menstruation. Apparently, the school environment is worse in this regard. Many schools lack waste disposal facilities and of course they don't supply sanitary products to their girl pupils. Some of the reasons the girls gave for missing school during their menstruation were unpreparedness, pain, discomfort and fear of leakage. Unfortunately, it is common knowledge that menstruation in many communities, Taita-Taveta included, is discussed in muted tones. So, the issue continues to affect the girl child in ways unprecedented. Indeed, according to one respondent, her '*first menstruation was the most embarrassing period in her life*'.

We also made structured observations, of the toilets in the five sampled schools. We observed components of child friendly schools as proposed by the government. Focus was on provisions such as: availability of gender separated toilets that are lockable, child friendly water taps, child friendly toilets, and bins for waste disposal. We found out that some of the toilets had no doors and some of the walls had holes through which one could easily be seen from outside. This as we learnt, bore continuous embarrassment for the girls that often made the school experience abhorrent.

Sexual Violence against Girls

Another issue that this study found to be of concern to the girls was sexual abuse. This was observed to occur at home, sometimes on the way to school and even in the school spaces. The abuse was said to come in different forms: from defilement; unwanted touching; to verbal sexual harassment. The abuse was notably perpetrated by people known to the girls, for example, teachers, relatives, neighbours and peers. Sexual abuse posed a big concern about the safety of the girls, particularly in the home space. Incidentally, a good number of the respondents confirmed that incest was part of sexual abuse that girls experienced, the perpetrators being mainly; close male relatives who lived with or near the girls. Meanwhile, it may sound unbelievable, but some of the cases of incest involved the fathers of the girls. And it was confirmed by those we talked to that cases of incest had been on the rise in the recent times in the region.

We got interested in finding out why cases of incest appeared to be on the rise. One respondent, and administrator in the area gave different reasons. Some instances of incest were blamed on poverty. For instance, whole families shared single spaces or tiny houses in which everyone squeezed without leaving any space for personal privacy. That often, fathers have to jump over their daughters sleeping on the floor, as they weaved their way to where they themselves slept. And as he observed, the tiny spaces within which entire families operated encouraged too much mingling and body contact. Meanwhile, the habit of mothers being frequently out of the house would also be to blame. This allowed too much time and space between the fathers and their daughters.

Perhaps corroborating what the previous respondent had said, another respondent attributed the frequent absence of the mothers to early marriages. She went ahead to elaborate thus:

By the time the girls get married at, say, age eleven, twelve or thirteen, they have not exhausted their desire to live with their parents. So, even when they are married, they will always look for every excuse to go back to their parents. Meanwhile, since some of them at such an age are not really prepared to get married, they never come to fully develop commitment to their husbands and the homes to which they go with a child's mentality. Soon, some perhaps get bored and they then want to taste a different life, this at a time they already have got children who are growing up. Mark you, many didn't really choose to get married, leave alone choosing the men they are married to. Consequently, sometimes when the fathers come back to an empty house, they get tempted to turn to their daughters for fulfilment of their conjugal desires.

These observations seemed to make sense, for we established that a majority of incest cases occurred in the absence of the girls' mothers, where a father turned to his daughter for emotional sustenance and sometimes the relationship turned sexual.

We sought to find out from the administrator what the community was doing to address the cases of incest. The administrator explained that the greatest impediment to addressing the issue of incest and other cases of sexual abuse on girls was the "family kangaroo courts" where such matters were discussed, decided, resolved and hushed. So, the cases didn't reach the criminal justice system. As already hinted to, this has continued due to causes of stemming from cultural, traditional, and religious practices that have historically skewed power relations in favour of men.

The question of sex among school going children, whether in Taita-Taveta, or in other regions in Kenya, is a matter of great concern. The cases, we may argue, have a direct bearing on inequitable access to education by girls. Indeed, the cases go to explain

some of the trends that have been observed lately. There appeared an eruption of pregnancies among girls in the time the learners were at home due to Covid 19. Each of the 47 counties in Kenya reported cases of teenage pregnancies, with up to 4000 cases occurring in single counties for example Machakos County, (The New Humanitarian Report, 2020). The matter caused finger pointing, with local leaders being blamed, while the latter threw the matter to the children's parents. That tens of thousands of teenage pregnancies can be reported within a year is a painful matter. While this is a reminder that children are engaging in sex, whether voluntarily or not, it is also a pointer to the waste happening to the girls, since many of those who get pregnant are not always likely to continue with school.

Distance to School

Another matter that came up during our discussions with girl learners in Taita-Taveta County was the distance to school for some of them. Majority of the children have to walk long distances to school. In some cases, the journeys are insecure. Though, sometimes insecure for the boys as well because of wild animals, it is a double challenge for the girls, who are sometimes harassed by men and their boy counterparts. A girl respondent, for example, sharing her experiences on her journey to school, said:

I am always afraid when I go to school. It feels insecure to walk alone due to increased wildlife. Roaming elephants frequently attack people. On several occasions they have invaded some villages like Talio. I am also scared of rapists who hide in the bushes to time girls from school. Many cases have been reported (Field data, 2020).

It goes without saying that the long distances to school coupled with the general insecurity in the villages could be a big impediment to girls' access to education in Taita-Taveta County. Indeed, some parents complained of insecurity in the region, which had forced them on several occasions to escort their children to school and to pick them in the evening. This, as they said makes them unable to concentrate on providing for their families. Some of the parents were now threatening to withdraw their children from school, while others had already done so. The schools most affected were Mlundinyi, Ngolia, Mbulia and Kighombo, among others. One respondent complained saying:

Our village has become part of the Tsavo National Park such that elephants freely move around attacking people. The situation has disrupted the programmes of the school going children. Pupils are now forced to report late to school and go home early. But also, while at school they still study with fear as there are reported cases of elephant invasion in some schools (Field data, 2020).

With the many unfavourable conditions militating against girl children and denying them a conducive environment within which to work and to express their potential, the question to ask is not even whether they can access quality education; but rather, if they can access any education at all. This is because the very chance of accessing an education, itself faces big huddles.

Aggregated Learners' Satisfaction in Utilization of the Teaching and Learning Spaces

After capturing some of the experiences that the girl child goes through in the two spaces within which learning takes place, we decided to conclude with a quantitative assessment of their views. We made an aggregated response table with the items to be assessed. The responses were to serve as a measure of their satisfaction about the situations they experience, or lack of it. For each item the learners were required to

strongly agree (SA); agree (A); be undecided (U); disagree (D); or strongly disagree (SD). A tick (☐) was to be placed to indicate the level that best represented the respondent's opinion.

Key: Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Undecided (U) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD).

Table 2: Responses on the level of satisfaction in the utilization of the learning spaces in Taita-Taveta County (n=80)

Item	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
School Space Activities					
I do school assignments every day	4(5)	10(13)	1(1)	60(75)	5(6)
I have some time to play at school	5(6)	5(6)	-	10(13)	60(75)
I find challenges on my way to and from school.	62(77)	10(13)	1(1)	2(3)	5(6)
Both girls and boys have equal opportunities to be in school.	10(13)	20(25)	1(1)	9(11)	40(50)
Home Space Activities					
I carry home school assignments every day.	78(97)	2(3)	-	-	-
I am able to complete my school assignments from home every day.	11(14)	20(25)	-	9(11)	40(50)
Both boys and girls do household chores.	-	-	-	60(75)	20(25)
I get enough time with my parents every day.	20(25)	20(25)	1(1.25)	20(25)	19(23.75)

Source: Field data, (2020)

The above table shows that learners almost always carry assignments home, i.e. 97%. But perhaps due to some of the challenges highlighted in their experiences above, such as much household chores, or poor housing (maybe without electricity), a majority either don't finish the assignments, or just don't do them. Meanwhile, a majority (62%) find challenges on their way to school, all the respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with any prospect of boys helping with household chores. If household chores are left to the girls alone, this may leave little or no time for them to either play, or do schoolwork.

CONCLUSION

This paper looked at the experiences of the girl child in the teaching and learning spaces in Taita-Taveta County, and what bearing these experiences could have on the girls' access to quality education. The instruments used in the study were an observation checklist, interview guides and open ended questions. Data was collected from the girl child, women and men (particularly teachers, parents and administrators), and on a few cases, the boy child (especially in relation to security). Using feminist methods, the study observed and interrogated the teaching and learning spaces for the girl child. The study also interviewed key informants as well as organizing and participating in focused group discussions. Data collected was compiled, tabulated, analysed and presented along with conclusions and recommendations.

The study found that the girl child in her home space continues to experience challenges that negatively impact on her potential to access quality education. Some of the challenges relate to belief systems, poverty, violence and negative cultural values. These include the view that girls are a source of wealth, with marriage as the ultimate goal. Consequently, investing in the education for the girl is simply investing in someone else's home. So the family's meagre resources would rather be invested in the boy child. Apparently, while Kenya touts itself as a champion of universal free

education, the facts on the ground – particularly where the girl child are concerned – reveal that the government’s efforts at free education could bear little fruit. These, until measures are put in place to address some of the huddles that stand in the way of a conducive environment for girl child education. For now, girl child education faces low concentration and dropout because of the conditions that the girls operate in. Indeed, many of the girls end up marrying early due to pressure from the society, or because they became pregnant.

The study draws conclusions that the greatest impediments to education for girls in Taita-Taveta County are some of the cultural values and beliefs, as well as the people’s perceptions on the role of women in society. These, coupled with unfavourable economic conditions impact negatively on girl child education. Besides, the girl child experiences other forms of challenges that range from female circumcision, rape, insecurity, stereotypes, menstrual stigma, long distance to and from school and lack of proper parenting. These experiences greatly impinge on the rights of the girl child to get an education. The punch line is that girls in Taita-Taveta County face challenges that impede proper learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One major recommendation is that the Government of Kenya should consider putting in place active policies as well as mandate special bodies to protect the girl child against cultural values and beliefs that impede them from successfully pursuing education. About the patriarchal lens that influence the culture that continue to disadvantage women, an effort needs to be made to preach change, while teaching the society about the benefits of working together without gender discrimination. Equally important, the environment, within which the girls live and schools, needs to be secured to eliminate the fear and risks associated with their journey to school. There is the need to have safe spaces for girls to experience, feel safe and be empowered within their school, home and other interactive spaces. In so doing, the girls will be saved the embarrassment of dealing with demeaning situations that cause them phobia to attend school. Measures to be taken include, being supplied with sanitary towels as well as enabling a conducive schooling environment, and being sensitive to their unique needs. In addition, there is need to increase the number of female teachers per school in order to increase the base of the number of teachers that girls can confide to on matters of sexual maturation. The teachers would also serve as role models to the girls. In a nutshell, the government needs to commit more support to improving the conditions of learning in rural settings for children in general and the girl child in particular.

REFERENCES

- Achoka, J. S. K., Odebero, O. S., Maiyo, J. K., & Ndiku J. M. (2006). Access to basic education in Kenya: inherent concerns. *Educational Research and Review*, 2(10), 275-284, October 2007. Retrieved on May, 13, 2015. From: <http://www.academicjournals.org/ERR> ISSN 1990-3839 © 2007 Academic Journals.
- Akinyi, M. G., Oando, S., & Olande, M. (-----). *Tackling barriers to girls education in Kenya analysis of violence against girls' in education*. Retrieved October, 24, 2020. From: https://kenya.actionaid.org/sites/kenya/files/tackling_barriers_in_education_report.pdf.
- Amadi, M. A., Role, E., & Makewa, L. N. (2013). Girl child dropout: experiential teacher and student perceptions. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(5); March. Retrieved on May, 13, 2015. From: Available online at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235990282_Girl_Child_Dropout_Experiential_Teacher_and_Student_Perceptions.
- Baez, B. (2002). Confidentiality in qualitative research: reflections on secrets, power and agency. *Qualitative research. SAGE Journals*. 2, 35–58. Retrieved on November, 05, 2020. From: journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1468794102002001638.

- Foo, M. (2014). *Why should we invest in girls' education?* Retrieved October, 24, 2020. From: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-should-we-invest-in-g_b_5668753.
- Idang, E. G. (2015). *African culture and values*. Retrieved on October, 27, 2020. From: http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1561-40182015000200006
- ILO, (2010). *Micro factors inhibiting education access, retention and completion by children from vulnerable communities in Kenya*. Retrieved November, 1st, 2020. From: file:///C:/Users/home%20user/Downloads/Kenya_Out_of_School_Children_Report.pdf
- Kabira, M. W., & Masinjila, M. (1997). *ABC of gender analysis*. Nairobi. FAWA.
- Komora, M, G. (2013). *Challenges facing the education of the girl child in Kenya: A case study on experiences and views of girls in Galole constituency of Tana River county, Kenya*. Retrieved on August, 2016. From: <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/95266/mwanahamisi%20komora.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- Mokua, O. (2013). Educational gender parity: challenges of the Kenyan Girl. *Journal of women's entrepreneurship and education*, (3-4), 109-125). Retrieved on July, 27, 2019. From: <https://www.library.iien.bg.ac.rs/index.php/jwee/article/view/117/113>.
- Ouma, J. N., Indangasi, H., & Ontitia, E. (2020). Wholesome education for the girl child in selected counties in Kenya: An assessment of the teaching and learning spaces. (Unpublished PhD Thesis). University of Nairobi.
- Republic of Kenya. (2007). Vision 2030. Retrieved October, 24, 2020. From: https://kfcg.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/vision_2030.pdf.
- Sperling, G., Winsthrop, R., & Kwaul. C. (2016). What works in girls' education? Retrieved October, 24, 2020. From: <file:///C:/Users/home%20user/Desktop/Ongeri/Research/DVC.%20Academics/What-Works-in-Girls-Educationlowres.pdf>.
- Schultz, P, T. (2001). *Why Governments Should Invest More to Educate Girls*. Retrieved October, 24, 2020. From: <file:///C:/Users/home%20user/Downloads/SSRN-id286592.pdf>.
- The African Charter on the Rights. (1990). *The African charter on the rights and welfare of the child*. Retrieved on May, 13, 2015. From: https://www.unicef.org/esaro/African_Charter_articles_in_full.pdf.
- The New Humanitarian Report (2020). Kenya's teen pregnancy crisis: More than COVID-19 is to blame. Retrieved November, 5th, 2020. From: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/07/13/Kenya-teen-pregnancy-coronavirus>.
- UN, (2015). *The millennium development goals report 2015*. Retrieved on November 1st, 2020. From: [https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf).
- UNESCO. (2017). *Education for sustainable development goals*. Retrieved December, 18, 2018. From: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444>.
- UNESCO. (2017). *Situation analysis of children and women in Kenya, 2017*. Retrieved October, 24, 2020. From: <https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/136/file/SITAN-report-2017-pdf.pdf>.
- Wanyama, P. M., & Chang'ach, J. K. (2013). *Education reforms in Kenya for innovation*. Retrieved, August, 5th, 2016. From: http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_3_No_9_May_2013/13.pdf.