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Influence of Socio-Cultural Factors on Boy-Child Access to Secondary School Education in Sameta Sub-County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

In the recent past, the boy child has been under several problems which are mainly as a result of the behaviours and traditions in the society. There has been an extensive and broadening problem and numerous challenges facing the boy child in secondary schools in Kenya. According to the United Nations Organization’s 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights, education is a basic right to all individuals who fall within member countries. However, there has been a lot of focus on girl child leading to marginalization of boy child. This is equally the case in the study area. The purpose of the study was to assess the socio-cultural issues faced by the boy-child in his pursuit for secondary school education within Sameta Sub-County, Kisii County, Kenya. The study was based on a cross-sectional exploratory study design using qualitative data collection methods. In-depth interviews, questionnaires, case narratives and key informant interviews were used as main methods. Data was analyzed by use of both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study established that economic challenges, social challenges and social-cultural challenges negatively and significantly influence access to education by the boy child. The study recommends that; the parents, the community, the government and other civil organization should not Marginalize and criminate boy child but consider them for financial support so as to enable them access education; guiding and counselling programmes in schools should be enhanced among boys to help them overcome psycho-social problems and other social challenges and that the Governments should pursue pro-boys policies that enhance boy child access to education.

KEYWORDS

Boy-child, challenges, education, access, sociocultural.



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Background to the Study

According to the United Nations Organization's 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights, education is a basic right to all individuals who fall within member countries. Not forgetting, Kenya is a party to the same, hence, all citizens are entitled to the education human right irrespective of their family background, age, sex, or ethnicity courtesy of the declaration. Additionally, Kenya is equally a signatory and close contributor to the success of the international protocol that was responsible for the establishment of Education for all (EFA) initiative in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990.

It is equally worth amplifying that Kenya is also a signatory and part of the 2000 World Education Forum (WEF), an initiative that was implemented in Senegal to ensure that education is fostered between both the girl-child and boy-child. Education is a fundamental entity as much as the development of Kenya's welfare is concerned. It empowers individuals and offers a nation the strength it requires to move forward. Additionally, education is a powerful and a unique equalizer, aiding many to get out of the poverty disease. In relation to the same, some of the government's eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include education, specifically, universal primary completion as well as gender parity in both secondary and primary schools across the country. To add on, education has a direct, noble, and proven induction on a range of goals associated with child and reproductive health as well as environmental sustainability. As such, it is worth amplifying that education fosters national productivity, economic growth and empowerment, and values of social cohesion and democracy (Uger, (2007).

Uger, (2007) further argues that in Kenya, the boy-child faces many threats as he is abandoned and many of the rarely successfully complete their secondary school education. The situation is more worrying as (Uger, 2007) points out that some of those who manage completing their secondary schooling barely joining tertiary learning institutions due to financial, social, and political challenges, hence end up being wastes in the society. Even in the case of school dropout, the rate at which boys drop out of school is much higher as opposed to that of their female counterparts. The issue further escalates to street children in the country. A research conducted by (Tumwebaze, 2011) indicates that in every five street children out there, four of them are male.

Robbery and crime is also an escalating factor that is affecting boy child education in secondary schools as the boys begin feeling that they should earn more income as opposed to when they complete their studies and secure themselves employment opportunities. According to Sameta Location area chief, the boys are at times forced and lured to join the criminal sphere as a result of being orphaned as well as being coerced into joining by their elder brothers as they are already established in the illegal gangs. These boys at last end up in dropping out of school in order to practise their new masters, hence losing their brilliant chances of attaining a good education and life later in life.

Stigmatization has also become a challenge for some of the boys in secondary school education. Most of those stigmatized is due to orphanage especially as a result of HIV/AIDS. As such, the boys are often exposed to the inhumane and cruel act of stigmatization more so by their peers in the school and home environments. In many cases, the peers do not have a clue on how the disease is spread and how the ones the stigmatized get affected. The victims are often isolated and set aside; a factor that lead to them feeling insecure hence opt dropping out of school since they can hardly accommodate the massive pressure from their peers. Erulkar&Matheka (2007) are of the opinion that poverty is still ranked as the highest reason as to why the boy-child education in Sameta Sub-County does not

succeed in secondary school education. With limited or no income totally, boys in the region are often expected to help their families in hustling so as to bring food on the table on a daily course. The task for looking for an income is difficult for the young youths to manage in collaboration with completing their secondary school education; hence, many of them end up dropping out of school in order to focus on looking for an income.

It is necessary for the society to put a hand in ensuring that the boy-child is educated irrespective of the fact that it has laid much attention on educating the girl-child. For a very long period of time now, the boy-child's education needs in Sameta Sub-County have been neglected as the majority is focused on the girl-child's betterment. Due to such, there has been massive school drop-out rates among boys as girl-child secondary school education enrolment keeps increasing especially in Kisii County as a whole. Presumably, it has been a long-term notion that the boy-child is the sole provider of the family; a factor that has lured many high school students focusing more on economic activities at their young ages hence losing focus in their education. In other words, there is a mounting pressure on the patriarchal nature of the society specifically on the boy-child's life. Subsequently, due to the ill notion in the Kisii community concerning masculinity, men who do have the ability of meeting all societal expectations end up being ashamed, hence begin engaging in economic activities from tender ages on a bid to remain societally relevant while affecting their education on the other hand. As a result, the need to change the notion in question is urgent for purposes of ensuring that the boy-child is encouraged to complete his secondary school education as this will secure his later life to explore and exploit his full potential in the contribution of the society's growth and development.

Statement of the Problem

According to the United Nations Organization's 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights, education is a basic right to all individuals who fall within member countries. Not forgetting, Kenya is a party to the same, hence, all citizens are entitled to the education human right irrespective of their family background, age, sex, or ethnicity courtesy of the declaration. Additionally, Kenya is equally a signatory and close contributor to the success of the international protocol that was responsible for the establishment of Education for All (EFA) initiative in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. However, there has been a lot of focus on girl child leading to marginalization of boy child. This is equally the case in the study area. Previous research conducted by Oxfam concentrated more on investigating the problems or challenges surrounding the girl-child's education hence alienating the challenges facing the boy-child's secondary school education. Additionally, Guchuhi (1999) together with Tumwebaze (2011)'s researched shed light that there are immense challenges facing the education sector in Kenya. However, much of their research is based on informal settlements hence creating a dearth of information in the rural areas. As a result, it was considered essential in this study to evaluate and emulate the shortcomings that hinder full realization of secondary education goals more so among the rural setting around Sameta Sub-County especially among boys which is the focal point of this study.

Literature Review

A boy child's secondary school education is best viewed from a tangled web of socio-cultural, economic and physical factors that excludes them from education. Schools may participate in this especially if boys are viewed from the point of poverty and low class and unwanted beings from a low class society, and because of these they are not viewed as partners, but as burden (Burman, 2008).

The education bureaucracy excludes by failing to adequately support teachers in addressing student issues; and governments exclude by failing to pursue pro-child policies (Burman, 2008). Reaching

children on the margins of society is a difficult and costly task which needs to be tackled with imagination. Today's excluded children become tomorrow's marginalized youth. Many reached children enter adolescence unequipped with the basic skills necessary to fully join society. At over one billion, there are more young people aged between 15 and 24 in the world than there have ever been - and the numbers are growing. Since Government has been slow to embrace informal education, non-governmental organizations provide most of the schooling to children in need. However, the lack of working partnerships between all the stakeholders such as parents, government, NGOs and teachers has seen secondary school education of the boy child rather difficult and hence the following impacts. But for real advances to be made, more effective partnerships between non-governmental organizations and Governments must be built (World Bank, 2003).

There are a number of impacts especially with regard to the boy-child when denied secondary school education. Some of these factors are as a result of socio-cultural factors such as in the absence of parents, the boy-child takes over the mantle of the guiding the family into better prospects (World Bank, 2003). Other reasons that result to these factors include economic instability, physical disability, etc. These impacts include:

2.4.1 Boy child labour

Despite the paucity and fragmentation of accurate and up-to-date information on the nature and magnitude of child labour, available statistics indicate that, in Africa, about 41% (80 million) of the children aged 5-14 are involved in exploitative and hazardous forms of work which not only compromise their health, safety, dignity and morals, but also deny them the right to grow, develop and enjoy their childhood. And of this number, 15% are said to be boys (World Bank, 2003).

In Kenya, an estimated 3-4 million boys between the ages of 6 and 14 are not in school but are spending their childhood working under conditions which often impede their overall development. In Sameta Sub-County, the most common forms of child labour are, working in industries or companies, whereby small children of age 14-17 are employed to do manual jobs such as loading and unloading transport vehicles. Working in homes; this is also common whereby young kids are subjected to a lot of work in people's homes as house help boys. Other boys end up being used to collect plastic and other forms of garbage which are then sent industries for recycling, others work as water vendors, construction workers, tradesmen, porters in carrying heavy loads, and as hawkers in neighbouring towns and shopping centres (World Bank, 2003).

There are causes of child labour; lack of parental love. Lack of parental love might end up causing disharmony in the family thereby ending up making the home to be rather un-conducive to them. They will then escape from home. This will lead them into finding a place which will be conducive to them thereby becoming labourers. Also if one parent or both died and the other family members or relatives show no concern to the left kids then they will be forced to go looking for jobs to earn a living instead of focusing on their secondary school education.

Among unmarried adolescents, 21 per cent of them are boys within the secondary school age bracket and have already had sexual experiences as early as below ten years old. Most of the boys end up engaging in sexual activities because of peer influence and also as a result of forced sex (Pandey, 2003). The latter is normally done with the promise of cash and therefore they end up doing it for the money. Majority of inappropriate engagements are normally committed in Sameta Sub-County and the reason for this is that most of these boys are exposed to in-doctrinal behaviour that subjects their sub conscience to such behaviour and so they grow knowing that it is the right thing to do. 43% per

cent of boys experience coerced first sex. Coerced boys experience sexual relations at significantly younger ages and with significantly younger partners, compared to girls for whom sex is consensual.

In Sameta Sub-County alone, 68% of boys engage in unprotected sex and the most probable reason is that they do not know the effects or even the consequences of their actions. This is because they don't have the basic knowledge that can be provided through basic education. Conversely, 7 per cent of boys and 6 per cent of girls might not name one mode of HIV transmission. Only 41 per cent of boys might know that condoms are effective in preventing HIV/AIDS transmission (Pandey, 2003). Likewise, knowledge about sexually transmitted infections (STI) is significantly low.

According to Pandey (2003) much has been said and done to save the girl child in several countries across Africa and including the world; vulnerabilities such as being orphaned and poverty have been tackled by concerned parties to save the girl child particularly while the boy child is left ignored and prone to many vices such as violence and drugs among others.

The girl child has received a lot of support from various organizations around the world (Kanayi, 2009). In particular Zambia has an organization called the Forum for African Women Education in Zambia (FAWEZA) which has helped girls around the country; the organization partnered with USAID to build hostels for girls in the region while the boy child was left neglected and had to cycle long distances to get to school thus the educational opportunities provided to girls is better compared to that given to the boys. The boy child due to walking long distances gets to school feeling tired and left out (Kanayi, 2009).

Recently in Ghana the former first lady Nana Rawling called for measures and endeavours to be put in place to educate the boy child in as much as the girl child is educated states Owusu (2010) since this will ensure that all the children equally get to explore their potential contributing to growth and society advancement; much has been done for the girl child and what is done for the boy child seems to be lagging behind.

According to Pandey (2003) the boy child should be encouraged to take part in secondary education so that a balance is struck on the population that is educated and since the drastic result of not educating the boy child leads automatically to the loss of the necessary human capital; this gives the reason why it is important to bring a balance between the education of the boy child and the girl child.

Access to education deals with the availability, convenience and ability to be educated. It is suspected that thousands of boys in Sameta Sub-County do not have access to secondary school education despite the concerted efforts to push the cause forward. Kanayi(2009) identified child labour, poverty and lack of sponsorship, quest for wealth, bereavement, truancy, broken home, engagement of children as house helps, as factors or the clog in the wheel of children's access to education.

According to World Bank (2003), More than 350 million people, over half Africa's population, live below the poverty line of one dollar a day. This implies that poverty, too, excludes children, including the boy child, from secondary school schooling. In Sameta Sub-County, they are recruited from poor rural families to work as domestic servants in developed homes. According to Mwangi (2004), customs, poverty, fear and violence are the reasons why boys still account for 40 per cent of the estimated 113 million out-of-school children, and majority live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Most of the factors that militate against the boy-child’s access to education are socio cultural. Many countries on the African continent rank among the poorest in the world. The on-going HIV/AIDS epidemics, over-crowding in cities, tribal warfare and despotic governments have contributed to the degeneration of the beautiful African land into a human rights catastrophe. At the centre of the devastating situation is the boy-child. The boy-children appear to be the most targeted and most valued in the quest for resources. In a region where many are struggling to get enough food and to stay alive, remain out of reach of the various violent rebel armies, and to care for those stricken with various diseases, a basic secondary school education for the boy child is regarded useless. The right to education, which is a fundamental human right, is frequently denied to boys in some African countries.

In Kenya, boy-child secondary school education is becoming elusive as Mwangi (2004) observes that a combination of poverty and disease continue to deny the boy-child his right to education. Even with the introduction of free primary education, access to education still remains a wide dream to many Kenyan children. Despite the introduction of free secondary school education in the country which accounted for an increase in enrolment, a sizeable number of children still find themselves out of school owing to a number of reasons. These reasons are: demands for their labour in the homes such as assisting in looking after their young siblings; child marriage, and looking after the sick member of the family.

In rural areas, social and cultural patterns combined with relatively poor quality of schooling place boys, their secondary school education and development in a disadvantaged and vulnerable position. Boys bear the heaviest burden for household responsibilities, including care of sick parents and siblings, and are first ones to drop out of secondary school. In Sameta Sub-County and most other sub-counties in Kisii County, more boys than girls drop out of school (UBEC, 2003). The drop-out syndrome is a function of some factors that distract the boys from secondary schools. These factors include: preference for a trade, quest for money, parental decision, lack of employment opportunities, and long process of secondary education and lack of counselling.

Research Methodology

The study was based on a cross-sectional exploratory study design using qualitative data collection methods. In-depth interviews, questionnaires, case narratives and key informant interviews were used as main methods. Data was analyzed by use of both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Findings

The socio-cultural challenges facing the boy-child’s education are captured in table 1.

Table 1: Socio-Cultural Challenges Facing the Boy-Child’s Education

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Governments exclude boys by failing to pursue pro-boys policies	4.432	0.464
Boys are viewed from the point of poverty and low class and unwanted beings from a low class society, and because of these they are not viewed as partners, but as burden	4.443	0.057
absence of parents, the boy-child takes over the mantle of the guiding the family into better prospects	4.214	0.364
Sexuality and inappropriate sexual engagements	4.321	0.232

The results in table 1 show that the respondents agree (mean 4.00) that Governments exclude boys by failing to pursue pro-boys policies; boys are viewed from the point of poverty and low class and unwanted beings from a low class society, and because of these they are not viewed as partners, but as burden and that in the absence of parents, the boy-child takes over the mantle of the guiding the family into better prospects.

Correlation between socio-cultural challenges variables and access to education variable is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Correlation between socio-cultural challenges variables and access to education variable

Socio-cultural challenges		Access to education		
		Retention rate	Dropout	Completion rate
Boy child labour	Correlation Coefficient	-.321**	-.334**	-.344**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	30	30	30
Spearman's rho Sexual engagements	Correlation Coefficient	-.322**	-.321**	-.311**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.567	.000
	N	30	30	30
HIV/AIDS prevalence	Correlation Coefficient	-.334**	-.333**	-.342**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	30	30	30

The results in table 10 show that boy child labours negatively and significantly influence access to education of boy child in terms of retention rate, dropout and completion rate at ($r=-.321^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level), ($r=-.334^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level), and ($r=-.344^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level) respectively.

Sexual engagements negatively and significantly influence access to education of boy child in terms of retention rate, dropout and completion rate at ($r=-.322^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level), ($r=-.321^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level) and ($r= -.311^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level) respectively.

HIV/AIDS prevalence negatively and significantly influence access to education of boy child in terms of retention rate, dropout and completion rate at ($r=-.334^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level), ($r= -.333^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level), and ($r= -.343^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level), respectively.

The significant social cultural variables were merged to social culture factor and access to education variables were merged to form access to education factors using SPSS transformation technique and correlated between each other as shown in table 11.

Table 1: Correlation between Social-cultural challenges and access to education.

		Access to education	
		Correlation Coefficient	-.431**
Spearman's rho	Social-cultural challenges	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
		N	30

The results in table 2 show that social-cultural challenges negatively and significantly influence access to education at $r=-.431^{**}$, $p<.001$ significant level contributing 18.6% variability to access to education of the boy child when other factors are held constant.

The study established that the Governments exclude boys by failing to pursue pro-boys policies; boys are viewed from the point of poverty and low class and unwanted beings from a low class society, and

because of these they are not viewed as partners, but as burden and that in the absence of parents, the boy-child takes over the mantle of the guiding the family into better prospects.

The correlation analysis revealed that the boy child labours negatively and significantly influence access to education of boy child in terms of retention rate, dropout and completion rate at ($r=-.321^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level), ($r=-.334^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level), and ($r=-.344^{**}$, $P<.001$ significant level) respectively.

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The significant social cultural variables were merged to social culture factor and access to education variables were merged to form access to education factors using SPSS transformation technique and correlated between each other.

Further analysis revealed that social-cultural challenges negatively and significantly influence access to education at $r=-.431^{**}$, $p<.001$ significant level contributing 18.6% variability to access to education of the boy child when other factors are held constant.

These findings are in agreement with many scholars. Burman, (2008) argues that Schools may participate in this especially if boys are viewed from the point of poverty and low class and unwanted beings from a low class society, and because of these they are not viewed as partners, but as burden. He further argues that the governments exclude boy child in accessing education by failing to pursue pro-boy child policies (Burman, 2008). Absence of parents, the boy-child takes over the mantle of the guiding the family into better prospects (World Bank, 2003)

Despite the paucity and fragmentation of accurate and up-to-date information on the nature and magnitude of child labour, available statistics indicate that, in Africa, about 41% (80 million) of the children aged 5-14 are involved in exploitative and hazardous forms of work which not only compromise their health, safety, dignity and morals, but also deny them the right to grow, develop and enjoy their childhood. And of this number, 15% are said to be boys (World Bank, 2003).

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In Kenya, boy-child secondary school education is becoming elusive as Mwangi (2004) observes that a combination of poverty and disease continue to deny the boy-child his right to education. Boys bear the heaviest burden for household responsibilities, including care of sick parents and siblings, and are first ones to drop out of secondary school.

Conclusion

The study established that economic challenges, social challenges and social-cultural challenges negatively and significantly influence access to education by the boy child.

Recommendations

- The parents, the community, the government and other civil organization should not Marginalize and criminate boy child but consider them for financial support so as to enable them access education.
- Guiding and counselling programmes in schools should be enhanced among boys to help them overcome psycho-social problems and other social challenges.
- The Governments should pursue pro-boys policies that enhance boy child access to education.

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