



Jumuga Journal of Education,
Oral Studies, and Human Sciences (JJEOSHS)
editor@jumugajournal.org
<http://www.jumugajournal.org>

Volume 8, Issue 1, 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35544/jjeoshs.v8i1.105>

School-Level Factors and Girls' Participation:

Relationship between Schools' Learning Resources and Girls Participation

Clarice Wankio Mwita

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1566-7313>

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
&

Jason Nganyi, PhD

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4685-7152>

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
&

Judah Ndiku, PhD

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1681-5282>

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

Abstract

The research article examines the relationship between school learning resources and girls' participation in public primary schools in Kuria West sub-county, Kenya. A correlational research design was used because it describes the relationship or association between variables in a study. The initial research that culminated into this article targeted 2000 primary school girls, where a sample of 322 girls was drawn. Questionnaires with both open and closed-ended questions were used to gather data. Data was analysed to give univariate, bivariate (Pearson correlation), and multivariate (Multiple Linear regression) statistics. Pearson correlation coefficient results suggested a statistically significant correlation between school learning materials and girls' participation. The multiple linear regression results indicated that extra books and school equipment lacked by the girls is associated with missing school by up to 0.16 days ($p=0.042$) and an additional provision of other reading material like an encyclopaedia increases girls' school participation by up to 0.10 days ($p=0.037$).

Keywords: Girls' participation, Kuria West Sub-County, Learning resources

Introduction

Education plays a very critical role in human development. Essentially, it makes the person more robust, manageable, and productive in many areas of human life (Masita *et al.*, 2021). The importance of education was re-affirmed in initiatives on education such as the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, the Millennium Declaration, and the Dakar Framework for Action (Andiema, 2021). Education for All is a global movement led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that aims to meet the learning needs of all children, youth, and adults by 2015. The framework called upon countries to adopt policies and practices that would ensure 'universal access to, and completion of basic education, or whatever level of education was considered basic, by the year 2000' (Ali & Cheema, 2021).

Educating girls is one of the most important investments that any country can make on its own. The need for educating the girl child was singled out at the EFA conference in Jomtien as a key priority area (UNESCO, 2008). The gender problem in accessing education that mainly disadvantaged girls was duly recognized, leading to a formal declaration that there was an urgent need to ensure access and delivery of quality education for all girls and eliminate every impediment to guarantee their active participation in formal education (Ombago, 2014). This was, therefore, entrenched in the EFA Goal 2,

which sought to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, had access to and completed free and compulsory primary education of good quality (Ozowuba, 2021).

Despite the importance of the girl child's education, the girl child continuously faces diverse challenges. In this context, King and Winthrop (2015) while addressing "Today's challenges for girls' education", observed that the learning materials, in this case, textbooks speak a lot about girls and education. The content depicts accepted gender roles globally where the female is overwhelmingly underrepresented regarding gender context and portrayed variously in stereotyped ways in occupational and domestic areas. In effect, there is an impact on the slow change in girls' progress in education (Onesmus, 2020). According to Plan International research, constraints of poverty, location, gender stereotypes, social norms, customs, and harmful practices hang on girls, their families, and communities to work against the purposes of education. In the same breath, gender inequalities where patriarchy already holds girls as social and economic sources of labor, an attitude and perception socialized among girls has a constant influence on girls' participation in education (Africa Report., 2012).

As of 2014, Legusov *et al.* (2021) asserts that 25% of young women aged between 15-24 years, translating to about 116 million in developing countries, were unlikely to attend or complete primary school. This situation has been attributed to certain obstacles to female pupils, which seem to affect the formal learning of girls persistently (Lewin *et al.*, 2011). Participation in learning activities in the school is an important instalment in school completion and, as such, must be emphasized. However, for many girls in their teenage years, their level of participation in school remains unsatisfactory (Chiamaka, 2018). This would mean that if the situation is not urgently addressed, there will be far more boys educated than girls, and the decades of efforts and investment meant for fully educating the girl will only have minimal returns at best (Ndawa, 2014). In her efforts to achieve EFA and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Kenya re-introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in 2008 to enhance retention and increase high school transition rates (N. C. Andiema, 2021). Due to the FPE strategy, enrolment in primary schools has been steadily rising for both boys and girls. However, despite the remarkable success in reducing the basic education access gap, challenges still exist in providing quality education, especially to the girl child leading to pupil attrition and lower school completion rates in primary schools in various parts of the country (Ngugi, Mumiukha, Fedha, & Ndiga, 2015). However, infrastructural school factors were not considered even with FPE in Kenya.

In a qualitative study on overcoming obstacles to educational access for Kenyan girls in Taita Taveta, Nairobi, Kwale, and Samburu Counties, Mwakio (2017) observed that boys compared to girls made a milestone in education. Girls' lagging behind status was associated with cultural practices and beliefs such as violation of girls' rights such as the right to education and freedom of expression (Esther & Shamaki, 2022). Besides, they fall victim to forced early marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM), and sexual exploitation. Mwakio (2017) established that socio-economic, and cultural beliefs that include FGM, early marriage, pregnancies, and school-based factors affect girls' participation in primary schools in Barwessa Division, Baringo District.

Kuria West Sub-County has in the past, posted low school participation rates for female students compared with their male counterparts. For eight consecutive years, Chinato zone's rates for female students' participation steadily declined (Machini, 2008). In 1999 and 2000, their participation rates were 40% and 38% compared to their male counterparts at 60% and 62% respectively. For 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006, their rates were 36%, 34%, 30%, 28%, 26%, 25% respectively (Machini, 2008). However, these low participation rates for girls are not peculiar to Kuria West. Other evidence suggests that only 18% of Kenyan women aged over 25 years have completed secondary education (Njeri, 2023). While 86.5% of girls aged 9-13 years live in rural Kenya with 80.8% of them attending primary school, only 14.3% enroll for secondary education compared with 68.6 % of girls in the same age bracket in urban areas who complete primary education with 27.8% enrolling for secondary education.

This research article therefore sought to examine the relationship between school-level factors, particularly learning resources, and girls' participation in public primary schools in Kuria West sub-county, Kenya. The Sub-County has in the past, posted low school participation rates for female students compared with their male counterparts.

Literature Review

Learning materials in teaching are crucial to the success of students' achievement. Teaching is a complex and demanding task that requires highly specialized skills, knowledge, and resources to impact significantly on student learning (Action Aid International Kenya., 2008; UNICEF, 2012). Availability and utilization of resources in an organization is important in the achievement of its goals and objectives. Consequently, students' learning outcomes are influenced by the appropriate utilization of school resources (Eames *et al.*, 2010).

Teaching and learning resources immensely contribute to diverse gains in the education of humanity. Radhika (2018) study in India on factors influencing students' performance in secondary schools in India revealed that the provision of learning materials enables students to acquire a better understanding of academic concepts and how to perform them. It was observed that students from deprived, marginalized, and socio-economically retrogressive areas of society have difficulties with the affordability of books and materials for learning (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). In such circumstances, girls would drop out due to frustration with the lack of learning materials to facilitate participation in learning and poor performance. There are positive effects of educational materials, teacher-student ratio, teacher education, and library size on learning outputs (Boonk *et al.*, 2018). Some research in ensuring effective learning in low-income nations stresses the importance of financial and human resources that entail sub-construction of learning institutions, teacher experiences, classroom size, educational materials, and teaching abilities (Fielmua & Boye Bandie, 2012). According to Boonk *et al.* (2018). The teacher-student ratio is a significant predicament for academic performance; however, learning institutions' financial and physical potential does not significantly affect performance.

Physical constraints connected to sub-construction have a minimal restrictive effect on the school's instruction capacity (Esther & Shamaki, 2022). School managers in Mexico, Turkey, Greece, Indonesia, Uruguay, and Thailand state that lack/poor teaching aids affect the instruction quality. Above two-thirds of these managers believe that students' learning under 15 years is prevented due to the absence of quality in physical sub-construction. According to Raj *et al.* (2019), 80% of managers think these students' learning under 15 years is precluded due to inequality in educational resources Kukali *et al.* (2010) Half of the managers indicate that schools' failure to have quality resources hinders students' learning. Insufficient school teachers are also a factor affecting student learning.

A study by Mbugua (2011) on adequacy and extent of availability of teaching and learning materials in secondary schools in Kenya found that secondary schools are poorly equipped with teaching and learning resources for Mathematics. There were insufficient Mathematics textbooks in secondary schools, and poor chalkboards, which affected the teaching and learning of Mathematics since the subject involved a lot of calculations basically on chalkboard. Three-dimensional models or aids for teaching and learning Mathematics were lacking, those that were available were of poor quality, and also, teachers did not use them effectively. The chalkboard is in two dimensions, and drawing a three-dimensional on it could distort learners' thinking; for example, angles that are 90° of cuboids appear different on the chalkboard.

Ndege (2019) conducted a study on the influence of institutional inputs on the quality of secondary school education in Migori County, Kenya. The findings revealed that the variance in the quality of education as measured by the influence of teaching and learning resources on the quality of secondary school education was adjusted to R of 0.618. It was further interpreted that the value of R=0.791 indicated a positive and strong correlation between teaching and learning resources and the quality of secondary school education. It was concluded that teaching and learning resources influenced the quality of secondary school education (Obwari, 2013). The study recommended that the government and any other stakeholders provide more teaching and learning resources through an improved budgetary allocation to cater for textbooks, equipment, and computers. This study, however, did not focus on the relationship between teaching and learning resources and girls' participation in primary education, a gap the current study attempted to fill. Availability and adequacy of learning resources significantly influence girls' participation in public primary schools. Studies indicate that well-equipped schools with sufficient textbooks, classrooms, and sanitation facilities enhance girls' enrolment and retention rates. According to Abuya *et al.* (2019), schools that provide gender-sensitive facilities such as separate latrines and sanitary products record higher attendance among girls, as they address barriers related to menstrual hygiene management. Similarly, Glewwe *et al.* (2021) found that when schools invest in essential learning materials, such as textbooks and science equipment, girls' engagement in classroom activities improves, reducing dropout rates. These findings suggest that learning resources play a critical role in facilitating an inclusive learning environment that encourages girls' participation.

The quality of instructional materials and their accessibility also impact girls' academic performance and participation. Research by Evans and Acosta (2020) demonstrates that schools with a sufficient supply of instructional resources, including digital learning tools, create an engaging learning atmosphere that fosters academic achievement among girls. Additionally, a study by UNESCO (2022) revealed that in regions where girls have access to gender-responsive learning materials, their self-esteem and interest in STEM subjects increase, leading to higher retention rates in upper primary levels. This indicates that the availability of well-structured learning resources tailored to address gender disparities can significantly boost girls' participation in education.

Moreover, teacher availability and training on the use of learning resources further contribute to improving girls' participation in public primary schools. A study by Kainuwa and Yusuf (2021) highlighted that schools with well-trained teachers who effectively utilize available resources tend to have higher participation rates among girls. Teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that learning materials are equitably distributed and utilized, thereby creating an enabling

environment for girls to thrive academically. Similarly, Sabates et al. (2023) emphasize that when schools integrate gender-sensitive teaching methodologies with adequate learning materials, they reduce gender gaps in classroom participation. These findings underscore the necessity of investing in both physical and instructional learning resources to enhance girls' participation in primary education.

A study was carried out in Migori District, Migori County, Kenya, on factors affecting the participation of the girl-child in secondary school education. The findings established that lack of teaching/learning materials has a great effect on girls' participation in secondary school education. It was noted that most schools lacked computers, books, radios, and other essential teaching and learning materials which made girls' participation in secondary school education strongly ineffective (Ouma, 2013). While the study was carried out in secondary schools, there might be no difference in teaching and learning materials in primary schools in Kuria West Sub-County, Migori County. Therefore, this research article undertakes to examine this aspect in primary schools.

Research Methodology

In a nutshell, we have employed a correlational research design. The design was appropriate since the researcher was interested in examining the relationship between learning resources and girls' participation in public school and the relationship between school security and girls' participation in public schools.

Target Population and Sample Size

According to the data from the Sub-County education office, two thousand class 8 girls in all public primary schools in Kuria West Sub-County were targeted for the study. A sample size of 322 girls was obtained using the Krejcie & Morgan sample determination table, and the girls were purposively identified.

Procedure

Questionnaires were used as the main instrument of data collection. The questionnaire had both open and close-ended questions. For structured questions, an 11-point rating scale was used with 0=Absence of attribute being measured and 10=Full presence of the attribute. Respondents were required to indicate a numerical number on the rating school that represents their best position judgment on the scale. A pilot study was conducted where a reliability test showed that learning resources had a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.876. This means that the data was reliable given that the Cronbach Alpha scores were > 0.7.

Results

Demographic Details

The overall response rate was 77% which was above the minimum of 70% that Barrett *et al.* (2019) described as good. The majority of the girls were aged 13, followed by 14 years, the appropriate age for class 8. The girls were also old enough to comprehend and respond to issues affecting girls in a school environment.

Bivariate Correlation

The H_0 stated that learning resources did not have a statistically significant relationship with girls' participation in public primary schools in Kuria West Sub-County. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was preferred to test this null hypothesis.

Correlation Matrix Between the Outcome Variable and its Correlates

| Variable | g61 | g31 | g32 | g33 | g34 | g35 | g36 |
|----------|-----------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-----|-----|
| g61 | 1 | | | | | | |
| g31 | a -0.260 | 1 | | | | | |
| | b .268 | | | | | | |
| g32 | a 0.535 | 0.100 | 1 | | | | |
| | b .065 | .620 | | | | | |
| g33 | a -0.317 | 0.170 | -0.059 | 1 | | | |
| | b .074 | .398 | .769 | | | | |
| g34 | a -0.812 | 0.154 | 0.232 | 0.098 | 1 | | |
| | b .025 | .442 | .245 | .626 | | | |
| g35 | a 0.718 | 0.218 | -0.131 | -0.222 | -0.253 | 1 | |
| | b .044 | .274 | .515 | .266 | .204 | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|--------|---------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| g36 | a | -0.083 | -0.721 | 0.040 | -0.086 | -0.067 | -0.019 | 1 |
| | b | .728 | <.001 | .842 | .671 | .741 | .926 | |

Note. a=Pearson correlation coefficient; b=p-values ($\alpha=0.05$); Pair-wise correlation: ≤ 0.35 = Weak correlation; 0.36-0.67 = Moderate correlation; 0.68-0.89=Strong correlation; ≥ 0.90 = Very strong correlation; Adapted from "Interpretation of correlation coefficient," by R. Taylor, 1990, Journal of Diagnostic Medical Sonography, 6(1), p. 37

The Pearson's correlation coefficient results above suggest a statistically significant negative correlation between girls' participation in public primary schools in the Kuria West sub-county (g61) and g34 ("I have missed school because I lacked books or other school equipment") $r(241)=-.812, p=.025$, and a positive correlation with g35 ("my school provides me with other reading materials like encyclopaedias"), $r(241)=.718, p=.044$. The rest of the other potential correlates are statistically insignificant at 5%.

Multivariate Modelling (Multiple linear regression)

The researcher fitted a multiple linear regression model with k independent predictor variables x_1, \dots, x_k and one response/ outcome variable y . This was written as $y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \dots + \beta_k x_k + \epsilon$

Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients of the Effect of School Level-Factors (learning materials) on Girls Participation in Primary School in Kuria West Sub-County

| Variable label | Model 1 (g61) | | | | Model 2 (g61) | | | |
|--|---------------|------|--------|---------|---------------|------|--------|---------|
| | UC | RSE | p | β | UC | RSE | p | β |
| g34 I have missed school because I lacked books or other school equipment: 0-10 scale | -0.20 | 0.11 | 0.031 | -0.08 | -0.16 | 0.20 | 0.042 | -0.08 |
| g35 My school provides me with other reading materials like encyclopaedias: 0-10 scale | 0.15 | 0.09 | 0.023 | 0.07 | 0.10 | 0.19 | 0.037 | 0.04 |
| g11 Student's age in years, (12, ..., 16) | | | | | -0.22 | 0.18 | 0.029 | -0.10 |
| g12 Student's class stream | | | | | 0.01 | 0.14 | 0.107 | 0.06 |
| Constant | 1.01 | 2.49 | <.001 | | 1.20 | 3.42 | <.001 | |
| Model Statistics | | | | | | | | |
| N | | | 243 | | | | 236 | |
| Prob > F | | | 0.005 | | | | <.001 | |
| R ² | | | 0.5308 | | | | 0.5871 | |
| Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE) | | | 9.61 | | | | 7.26 | |

Note. UC=Unstandardized Coefficient; RMSE=Standard deviation of the regression model (the closer to zero better the fit); RSE=Robust Standard Error; Prob=Probability

In model 1, the results suggest that an extra book or school equipment lacking by the girls is associated with missing school by up to 0.20 days ($p=.031$). While this looks like less than a day, several books and equipment in that order could lead to a full day or days out of school. An extra provision of other reading material like an encyclopaedia increases school participation by up to 0.15 days ($p=.023$). The model 1 is statistically significant ($p=.005$) and explains 53.08% of the variation in the outcome variable.

Controlling for the student's age and class stream in Model 2 (final), the explanatory variables g34 and g35 remain statistically significant. An extra book or school equipment lacking by the girls is associated with missing school by up to 0.16 days ($p=.042$). An extra provision of other reading material like an encyclopaedia increases school participation by up to 0.10 days ($p=.037$). An extra year in the age of the student (g11) is associated with missing school by up to 0.22 days ($p=.029$). The results of the effect of the students' class stream (g12) on their school participation in Model 2 is not statistically significant. Model 2 is statistically significant ($<.001$) and explains 58.71% of the variation in the outcome variable.

The efficacy of the model was tested for normality to satisfy the requirement that the errors should be normally distributed. This is necessary for hypothesis tests to be valid so that the estimation of the coefficients requires that the errors be identically and independently distributed. From the tests, the residuals appear to follow a normal pattern indicating that the model did a fairly good job at fitting the data.

Testing the Null hypothesis H_0

The H_0 stated that learning resources did not have a statistically significant relationship with girls' participation in public primary schools in Kuria West Sub-County. An extra book or school equipment lacked by the girls (g34) is associated with missing school by up to 0.16 days ($p=.042$) and an extra provision of other reading material like an encyclopaedia (g35) increasing school participation by up to 0.10 days ($p=.037$), the null hypothesis was rejected with the conclusion that there is evidence suggesting that books, school equipment, other reading materials such as encyclopaedia affect the participation of girls in public primary schools in Kuria West Sub-County.

Discussion

Teaching and learning has been described as a complex and demanding task that requires highly specialized skills, knowledge, and resources to impact significantly on students' learning (Ingwersen *et al.*, 2019). The results agree with those of Esther and Shamaki (2022), who found that the availability and utilization of resources in an organization is important in the achievement of its goals and objectives, consequently, students' learning outcomes are influenced by the appropriate utilization of school resources.

The results also agree with those of Kumar (2020) who found that investing in educational resources, mainly teaching and learning resources, is the key to ensuring that schools become institutions where students work together, learn from each other, and benefit from a supportive school environment, and consequently maximize student learning so that all students achieve their full learning potential. The results also agree with those of Meza and Marttinen (2019) who found that learning and teaching resources form one of the potent factors that contribute to academic achievement in the school system. They include instructional materials meant for teaching and learning.

These results corroborate those of Obogno (2019) who found that the availability of books brings dramatic improvements in reading, writing, listening, vocabulary, and grammar, especially for younger age groups and where children are learning a language different from their home language. They also agree with that of Ugboha and Namu (2019) who found that years' 4 and 5 pupils provided with between 100 and 200 books per school gained three times as much in reading as those in the control schools, together with parallel improvements in writing and listening comprehension.

Conclusion

From the findings, it was concluded that there is a positive relationship between learning resources and girls' participation in education in Kuria West Sub-County. The study concludes that learning resources contribute to an increase in girls' participation in schools in Kuria West Sub-County. This is because educational resources, mainly teaching and learning resources, ensure that schools become institutions where pupils work together, learn from each other benefit from a supportive school environment, and consequently maximize their knowledge acquisition and achievement of full learning potential.

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Ethical Pledge

This is original research that was conducted in primary schools in Kuria West sub-county. All the research ethics were observed. The researcher obtained necessary approvals from the University and NACOSTI (National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation).

Competing Interests

There were no financial, or personal relationships or undue interests that influenced the researcher to conduct this study. The study was initially conducted as a requirement for the award of a Master's degree in Educational Planning.

Author(s) Contributions

The listed scholars are the sole authors of this article.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this research article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors or the Journal itself.

Ethical Considerations Statement

The authors followed research ethics that require protecting human research participants which involved ensuring their safety, well-being, and rights including obtaining informed consent, and monitoring participants for and adverse emotional effects from the questionnaires used for data collection. Ethical clearance was given by Masinde Muliro University and the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI).