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Family Socio-Economic Background and Girls Education in Public Secondary Schools in Bungoma County, Kenya

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Family Size.*

The paper presents a discussion on the influence of family socioeconomic background on investment in girls' education in public secondary schools in Bungoma County. Despite several measures to enhance gender parity in the transition of students to secondary school, disparities still persist among girls. The paper focuses on key socioeconomic aspects like parents' level of education, family size and household income and how they influence the investment in girls' education at secondary school. A descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. The target population for the study was 242 parents, 245 students, 148 teachers and 60 head teachers. 91 parents, 108 teachers, 36 headteachers, and 172 students were sampled using simple random sampling. Data was obtained using interview schedule for parents and structured questionnaires. Qualitative data was analysed thematically to identify key patterns and themes that are related to perception and challenges related to investment in girl's education, quantitative data was coded, formatted and analysed using Social Package for Statistical Science (SPSS). The presentation of the findings was done using pie charts, tables and graphs. The findings established that parents' level of education had a significant influence on their attitude towards girls' education. Highly educated parents prioritized the investment in girl's education as compared to those with lower level of education. The study also established that family size and household income also impact the investment in girl's education since parents with large families are more likely to struggle to allocate the limited resources toward their children education with girls being the most disadvantaged gender. The paper highlights the need to sensitize parents and the community on the significance of investing in girl's education, Initiating income generating programmes for low-income households should be adopted to alleviate their financial constraints. In addition, parents should also be sensitized to have few children.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is globally recognised as a human right and one of the key factors for social and economic development. In spite of this, disparities in education access on the ground of gender still remains a concerning issue in many countries especially in Asia, South America and Africa. This has been attributed to family socioeconomic factors such as family income, family size and parental level of education which influences access to secondary school education for girls (UNESCO, 2020)

The effects of low investment in girl's education at secondary school level are far-reaching. Girls who don't access secondary school education are more likely to have poor health, economically poor and have limited economic opportunities. In contrast, educated girls are likely to significantly contribute to economic growth and societal well-being. Addressing these socioeconomic barriers that affect the investment in girl's education at secondary school level is significant for achieving gender equity and sustainable development.

Although education stakeholders in Bungoma County acknowledge a crucial role played by the investment in girl's secondary school education through the provision of necessary requirements

ranging from county government secondary school scholarships and bursaries for girls, the girls' transition and retention in secondary schools has become an issue of concern. Records from the County Ministry of Education Quality Assurance and Standards Department show that despite efforts made by the stakeholders in the realization of 100% transition to secondary schools, we still have a lot of internal wastages in terms of drop-out rate and lack of transition to secondary schools among girls in secondary schools.

Objectives

- Examine the effects of parents' level of education on the investment in girls' public secondary school education in Bungoma County.
- Determine the effects of family size on the investment in girls' education at the secondary school level in Bungoma County.
- Determine the effects of household income on investment in girls' education at the secondary school level in Bungoma County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parents Level of Education

Parents' level of education plays a crucial role on how it influences the investment in girl's education at secondary school. Parents who are educated, especially mothers, are more likely to put a priority and value on their daughter's education. They recognise the benefits of an investment in girl's education such as health benefits, career aspect and positive contribution to the societal well-being and are more likely to allocate their resources to their daughters' education (UNESCO, 2022). Educated parents are more likely to have the awareness of breaking gender stereotypes and aspire to foster equality through education. In contrast, parents with a lower education level tend to see no value in education due to financial constraints which has been affirmed by Buchmann & Hannum, (2011) who noted that girls from societies where parents had low level of education were more likely suited to domestic roles and exposed to early marriages. This study concludes that there is a relationship between parents' level of education and the investment in girl's education at secondary school level.

Patel et al. (2018) through their detailed study on the effect of household education on dropout rate among girls in India shows a significant relationship between parents' level of education and the investment in girls' education, with greater emphasis of the level of mother's education. Girls from family where their mother lack any formal education a lot of challenges that ranges from lack of support and encouragement and lack of motivation to pursue secondary school education. The study notes that mothers who are educated are more likely to actively support their daughter's education creating a supportive as they pursue their education.

Similarly, a study in Turkana County noted that parental level of education is a crucial factor that influences that choice of investing in girl's education at secondary school. The study highlighted that parents with level of education are more likely to cater for their daughters' private cost

of education and recognises its significance for opportunities.

Despite numerous researches on parents' level of education and investment in girl's education, most of them study focuses on the economic benefits that come with educated parents while ignoring non-monetary benefits that come with educated parents that are likely to affect their choice in investing in a girl's education such as parental attitude, aspiration for their daughters and values. A gap this study aims to address.

Family size

Family size also plays a critical role in the investment in girls secondary school education. Large families are more likely to face financial hardship, making it difficult to allocate the limited resources for every child within the family. Situations such as this may lead to prioritizing boys' education at the expense of girl's education. A study by Nyanga (2019) noted that girls from small families of less than three children were more likely to transit to and complete secondary school education as compared to those from large families of more than five children since these parents have difficulties in affording secondary school education expenses.

Similarly, Patel et al. (2018) highlights that small families are less burdened with choices between investing in girls or boy's education. She suggests that with a fewer number of children, there is a higher likelihood of equitable allocation of resources towards secondary education for children regardless of gender. Similarly, a study by Mackatiani et al. (2022) links a high dropout rate among girls to family size, he noted that girls who came from large families of more than five members were more likely to dropout from secondary school or fail to transition to secondary school.

Despite these findings on the role of family size in the investment in girl's education at secondary school level, the existing studies focus so much on the number of children within a family without

isolating detailed effect of family size in reference to regional disparities and cultural diversity, leaving a gap for localized research. Furthermore, the interaction between family size and other socioeconomic variables such as parents' level of education and household income, needs a deeper study to fully comprehend their combined effect on the investment in girl's education.

Household Income

Nyanga (2019) in his study concluded that level of household income influences the investment in girl's education at secondary school level as it incurs both indirect and direct costs of education such as school fees, cost of uniforms, transportation, books and opportunity costs. Mackatiani et al. (2022) study also note that household income is a significant factor that determines when children enrol in school, regular attendance and completion.

A study done by Smith et al. (2022) in Australia to investigate the relationship between household income and dropout rate among girls in secondary school concluded that, there is a substantial relation between lower household income and high dropout rate among girls in secondary school. Financial constraints like inability to cater for direct cost of education, were the critical hurdles towards girl child education. Additionally, the study also noted that lower household income reduced the parental involvement in their daughter's education due to inadequate resources and financial struggle leading to significant rise in the dropout rate among this group. The study done by Smith et al. (2022) inform the current research as it emphasizes on how household income impacts the investment in girls secondary school education. However, the Australian setting represent a different setting with little reflection on the cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of Bungoma County.

Ketija (2018) carried out a study on how family socioeconomic background affects the investment in education in Tanzania. The study compared dropout rates in five secondary schools. The finding

showed a higher dropout rate in those schools that were located in less privileged localities. She noted that, children from less privileged localities came from families with low household income. These families find it difficult to cover for the direct private cost of education forcing their children to dropout of school and engage in income generating activities. This study has limited focus as it assumes that both boys and girls are affected equally by low household income. The findings show a significantly higher rate of dropout among girls as compared to boys leaving a gap for further study on why girls are the most affected gender. This study sought to address this gap by exploring how socioeconomic background affects the investment in girl's education at secondary school level in Bungoma County, Kenya.

Musau (2017) in his study on "socioeconomic determinant on the investment in girls secondary school education in Machakos County" noted that household income influences the transition and retention of girls in secondary school. In his study Musau noted that girls from low income households have a high chance of dropping out of school to assist parents meet family basic needs. The study by Musau was carried out in Machakos County and there is a need to carry out similar research in other countries that face a similar challenge, a gap this study will address.

METHODOLOGY

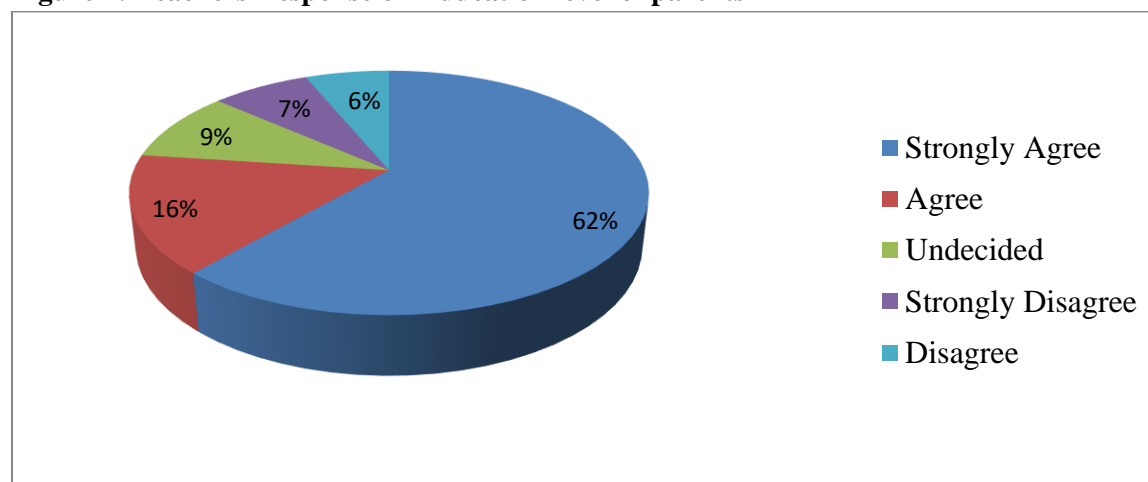
The study adopted a descriptive research design which used both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the collection of data and analysis. In this study the independent variable was the family socioeconomic background while the dependent variable was the investment in girl's education in secondary school. The study was carried out in Bungoma County with a target population of 60 headteachers, 148 teachers, 242 parents and 245 students. Simple random sampling was used to sample 36 head teachers, 108 teachers, 91 parents and 172 students. Questionnaires for headteachers, teachers and students were used to get data on

parents' level of education, family size and trends in girls' transition to secondary school and retention. Interview schedule for parents was preferred since some parents are illiterate or semi literate and cannot adequately fill the questionnaires. Kerlinger (1973) also notes that interview schedules are preferred since most people are more willing to communicate orally as compared to writing. Quantitative data was collected, coded, formatted, and analysed using SPSS while qualitative data was analysed through thematic analysis to determine recurring themes and patterns then presented in the form of pie charts, graphs, and frequency tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results for this study were presented in figures and charts based on the objectives.

Figure 1: Teachers Response on Education level of parents



Source: Researcher

The figure above indicates that many teachers strongly agreed that the level of parents' education influenced the investment in girls' secondary school education. This indicates that educated parents inspired and encouraged their daughters to invest in secondary school education compared to illiterate parents. This concurs with the Glick & Sahn (2020) study, which indicated that parents' education correlates with the investments in girl's education.

Parents' Level of Education and the Investment in Girls' Public Secondary School Education

Parents' level of education is a significant factor that is likely to affect a girl's education at secondary school. In determining how parents' level of education affects the investment in girl's education teachers' responses were collected using questionnaires. 59 (61.46%) who took part in this study strongly Agreed that parents' level of education had a significantly influenced the investment in girl's education at the secondary school, 15 (15.63%) Agreed, 9 (9.34%) were Undecided, 7 (7.29%) Strongly Disagreed while 6 (6.25) Disagreed. This is summarized in figure 1 below.

Family Size and The Investment in Girls' Education at The Secondary School Level

Students who took part in the study were requested to state the number of children in their family and to specify if the number had an effect on their educational aspirations. The responses are tabulated in table 1 below

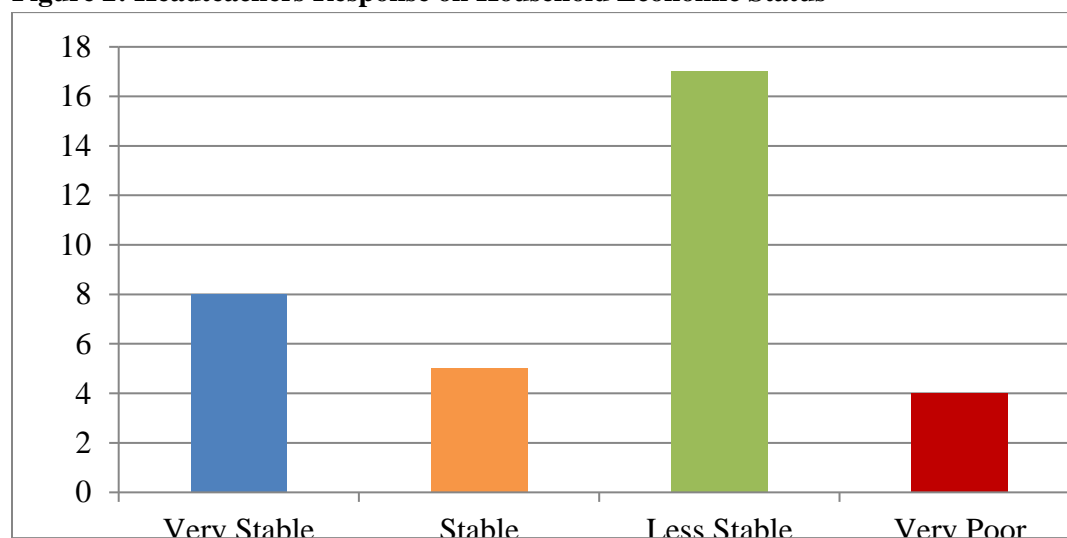
Table 1: Students Response on the Number of Children in the Family

Number of Children	Frequency	Percentage
1-2	18	11
3-4	131	80
Above 5	14	9
Total	163	100

Source: Researcher

These findings indicate that the majority of respondents, 131 (80%) came from 3-4 children families. In comparison, students from families with above five children 14(9%) drastically reduced; this suggests that parents with less than four children effectively managed to allocate resources for their daughters' education. Families with more than five children struggled for resources towards their daughters' education forcing most girls not to transit to secondary schools or drop after enrolling. Those in day schools indicated that large family size forced them to enrol in day secondary because of its affordability. They additionally noted that large families financially disadvantaged them. This has been affirmed by Kilonzo & Wambua (2018) study.

In response to how household income affects the investment in girl's education at secondary school level 8(23.53%), headteachers who took part in the study noted that most students came from very stable families, 5(14.71%) showed that most girls in their schools came from stable families, 17(50%) noted that most parents were less stable. In contrast, a few 4(11,76) indicated that most girls came from very low-income families. When requested to respond on how effectively parents funds their daughters' education at the secondary school, 3(8.82%) noted that most parents fund their daughters' education very adequately, 8(23.53%) noted adequate funding, while 15(44.12%) indicated inadequate funding and 8(23.53%) indicated very inadequate funding. The results were summarized in figure 2 below

Figure 2: Headteachers Response on Household Economic Status

Source: Researcher

The above findings show that many students came from low-income families which could not

effectively cater for their daughter's private cost of education at secondary school.

Out of the total number of parents who were interviewed 72(84.71%) noted that household income influenced the investment in girl's education. 13 (15.29%) who were the minority had a different opinion noting its affordability which was attributed to the significant gain from the introduction of FDSE. The research findings indicate that most parents felt that household income influenced the investment in girl's secondary school education to a larger extent. The study concurs with Otieno's (2013) study in Busia, who concluded that the critical cause of girl's dropout from secondary school is the failure of parents to fund their children's education

CONCLUSION

Parents' education was a significant feature influencing the investment in girl's education since it has a significant implication on their perception concerning the importance of educating girls at secondary school. Parents' high level of education are likely to put a priority on their daughters' education as they recognize both direct and indirect benefits of investing in a girl's education. In addition, the study established that girls whose parents had only attained a low level of education were more likely to drop out of school or completely fail to transition to secondary school education.

The study concluded that the size of the family is a determining factor in allocation of resources towards education. Large families are more likely to have limited resources allocated per child as parents prioritize boy's education. In contrast Girls from small families of less than four children had a high chance of transiting to secondary school education.

Household income had a significant direct influence on the investment in girls' secondary school education in Bungoma County. The paper established that low household income influences the ability of these parents to afford the direct private cost of education such as uniforms, books and other necessities leading to low transition rate, absenteeism and drop-out from schools.

Recommendations

In order to increase the rate of investment in girls secondary school education, more sensitization to parents through awareness campaigns, workshops, outreach programmes and mentorship initiatives on the nonmonetary significance of investing in girl's education at secondary school level with the main aim of changing the society perception in regards to girl's education at secondary school. Local and religious leaders should be involved in advocating for girl's education by challenging retrogressive practices such as gender discrimination, child labour and early marriages.

Policy reforms on funding by the national government through FDSE, Constituency Development Fund and County government scholarship should be enhanced to cover the private costs specifically for girls. Vocational training and community-based income generating programmes for low-income households should be adopted to alleviate their financial constraints. In addition, parents should also be sensitized on having a number of children they can manage to take care of their education.

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