

Gender in Education: A Case of Academic Performance of the Girl Child in Butere District Kenya

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Abstract

In Kenya pupils usually sit for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) in order to join secondary education and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations (KCSE) to join post-secondary and/or tertiary education. But there is a concern about the pupils' poor academic performance in both standard eight and form four national examinations countrywide and the most worrying problem is the performance of the girl child in Butere district. In view of this a comparative survey was undertaken in this respect. The purpose of this study was to examine the factors contributing to this dismal academic performance by girls in Butere District. School administrators and teachers were asked to rate the factors identified as perhaps responsible for the setback. The study revealed that some cultural practices, improper parenting, parental violation of child rights and welfare of the child, lack of ideal love, and rights of the child, early marriages, among other factors; led to the dismal academic performance by the female child in the district. The study therefore made viable recommendations which could uplift the academic performance in both KCPE and KCSE examinations.

Keywords: Performance, Secondary, Primary, Girlchild, Examination

1. Introduction

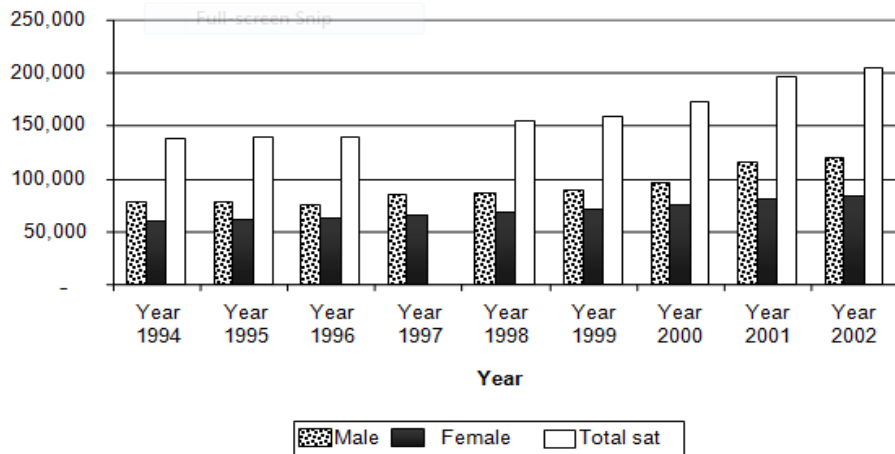
There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the performance of the Girl child at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination is slowly dwindling.

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For instance, Aduda (2002) say that the performance of female pupils who enrolled and sat for KCSE from 1992 to 2002 has shown below average mean grade compared to that of their male counterparts who enrolled and sat for the same examination over the same period. This evidence was also echoed by Silsil (2006a) who made an interesting observation regarding the fate of the girl child. He reported a story carried on the ‘Education Watch’ section of the local Daily Nation Newspaper using the ‘story of Ruth Achieng’, a former student at Asumbi Girls School in Homa Bay who was the only girl to appear in the top 100 students in the whole of Nyanza province. Apparently, this story should be a worry to education stakeholders regarding the appalling performance of female candidates at KCSE in Western Kenya, especially Butere District. If this scenario is something to go by, then there is a need to understand the factors behind the girlchild’s poor performance.

Table 1: KCSE candidates’ enrolment trend over the last 10 years by Gender in Western Kenya



The poor state of the girlchild performance is painted well by the results shown in Table 1 which clearly reveals a below average performance by females in Western Kenya. The fate of the girlchild’s performance is even more worrying because the report pointed out that in the list of finest1000 top students who sat for KCSE in 2005; only 249 were girls (Silsil, 2006b).

Table 2: KCSE 2006 Secondary Schools Performance Ranking

Best Secondary School	Mean Grade
1. Butere Girls High School	6.9221
2. Butere Boys High School	6.7949
3. Mwhula Boys High School	6.6333
4. Shatsala Mixed	6.0000
5. Eshinutsa Mixed	5.8182
6. Eshibinga Mixed	5.4545
7. Ibokolo Mixed	5.3704
8. Lunza Mixed	5.3465
9. Emalindi Girls	5.1724
10. Eshikalame Mixed	5.1113
11. Eshitari Mixed	5.1111
12. St Paul's Shikunga Mixed	4.9231
13. Manyala Mixed	4.8571
14. Bukolwe Mixed	4.8411
15. Namasoli Mixed	4.7831
16. Bulanda Mixed	4.6944
17. Inaya Mixed	4.6552
18. Lwanda Dudi Mixed	4.5217
19. Ekambuli Mixed	4.5000
20. Khwisero Mixed	4.4043
21. Buchenya Girls	4.3125
22. Shiraha Mix	4.1333
23. Khwisero Girls	3.8500
24. Shinamwenyuli Mixed	3.7500
25. Bumamu Mix	3.3636
26. Butere Mixed	3.0385

The results presented in Table 2 above is a clear evidence that the performance of the girlchild in Butere District is almost below that of Garissa High School with a mean score of 6.1391 and ranked as the last in the best performing schools nationally.

Apparently, Butere Girls High School could have been included in the ranking but conditions of North Eastern where Garissa High School is situated cannot be compared with those enjoyed by Butere Girls High School and most schools in the district.

Table 3: Best performing School Nationally in KCSE 2005

Province	Best Performing School	Mean Grade
1. Central	Alliance Boys High	10.5168
2. Nairobi	Starehe Boys Centre	10.4407
3. Rift Valley	Bahati Girls	9.8941
4. Western	Friends Kamusinga	9.8505
5. Eastern	Precious Blood Kilungu	9.6300
6. Nyanza	Maseno School	9.5022
7. Coast	Abuhereira Academy	9.4137
8. North Eastern	Garissa	6.1391

Table 4: Best Performing School in Butere District at KCSE 2005

Best Performing District School	Mean Grade
Butere Girls High School	6.9221

An analysis of the results of KCPE 2005 and 2006 presented in Tables 5-8, shows that the academic performance of female candidates was equally poor. This because while the average performance of best provincial schools ranged between 437 and 339, the top school in Butere District was Ikomero Primary School that posted only 321 which is way below the performance of Kakamega Hill School which posted 407 and became the best performing school in Western Province in 2005.

Table 5: KCPE 2005 Best Performing Primary Schools Ranking Nationally

Province	Best School	Mean Score
1. Nairobi	Newlight Komarock School	437.07
2. Rift Valley	Gilgil Hills Academy	421.38
3. Coast	Mawingo Academy	413.79
4. Central	Pleasant View Academy	413.06
5. Western	Kakamega Hill School	407.10
6. Eastern	Fred's Academy	402.10
7. Nyanza	Oyugis Highlands Academy	382.22
8. North Eastern	Getune Private Primary School	339.42

Table 6: Butere District Best Primary School in KCPE 2005

Best District School	Mean Score
Ikomero Primary School	321.88

(Source: Butere-Mumias District Education Board, 2006)

Similarly the performance of pupils in 2006 KCPE was no better in that the results of Eshirembe Primary the best performing school in Butere district was 326.94 which as also lower compared to the mean score of 406.90 posted by Mareli Academy which was the best performing school in Western province in 2006.

Table 7: 2006 KCPE Results

Province	Best School	Mean Score
1. Nairobi	Makini Ngong Road Acade	428.24
2. Rift Valley	Gilgil Hills Academy	425.05
3. Central	Pleasant View Academy	411.69
4. Western	Mareli Academy	406.90
5. Coast	Mawingo Academy	405.51
6. Eastern	Fred's Academy	402.58
7. Nyanza	International Vision's	391.70
8. North Eastern	Getune Private Primary Sch	353.75

Table 8: Best KCPE Performing Primary School in Butere District 2006

Best District School	Mean Score
Eshirembe Primary School	326.94

(Source: David K. Ndichu, Education Watch: 16-39, Daily Nation Newspaper February 2006)

1.1 The Problem

There is clear evidence from the data shown in Tables 1 to 8 that the performance of girls in Butere District is declining while the performance of girls in other regions with similar characteristics and conditions are performing extremely well. Butere Girls High School the only best performing girls' school in Butere district had a mean grade score of 6.9221 which is almost 3 points lower than Friends Kamusinga which was the best performing male school in Western Kenya with a mean score of 9.8505. There have been similar results every time the district makes an analysis of the KCPE and KCSE results (Butere-Mumias District Education Board, 2006, 2007). But the dwindling of pupils academic performance is not unrelated to the prevailing factors that bedevil the efforts of the stakeholders. Therefore it is critical we understand why the girl child's performance is very poor in Western Kenya. Similarly, it is crucial to unravel the factors that might contribute to this underperformance. It is on this basis that the study reported in this paper was conceived.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

In order to uncover the factors bedevilling the girlchild's performance in Butere District, the following research objectives were put forth to guide the study:

1. To compare Butere District K.C.P.E. and K.C.S.E. academic performance in 2005 and 2006 with best performances in Western province in which the district was situated; and the other seven provinces in Kenya.

2. To examine whether: Old customs or modern lifestyles, custody or protection, maintenance, adoption, welfare, rights or general life of living, family or home life, schooling or education, nurture or care of children, teachers or parents; and any other factors which adversely affected the girl pupil academic performance in Butere district.

1.3 The Study Area

Butere is a district was created out of the former larger Butere-Mumias district which consisted of Butere and Khwisero administrative divisions. The two divisions were 209.8 and 143 square kilometres in area respectively. Therefore the whole district was 353.1 square kilometres. It has 130 primary and 26 secondary schools.

The inhabitants of the district are poor peasant whose livelihood depends on sugar cane, maize, beans, millet, cassava, groundnuts, bananas and simsim farming. Most of Butere residents tend to value their sons more than daughters. The custody, maintenance, adoption, welfare; rights, further education, parenting and nurture of the female children were not taken a seriously by adults, compared to those in the Central and Nairobi Provinces in Kenya.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

In view of the academic problem cited pin the previous section, a descriptive survey design was used to unravel the factors curbing the performance of the girlchild in Butere District, Kakamega County.

2.2 Respondents and Sampling Technique

The study used a purposive sampling technique to sample 591 respondents (183 school administrators from Butere and Khwisero divisions, 78 secondary school teachers from 26 secondary schools and 390 primary school teachers from 130 primary schools) that participated in the study.

The necessary data was collected using a Questionnaire designed for the study. In total data was gathered from 591 respondents that responded to a questionnaire administered to them. The results are presented and discussed in the next section.

3. Results and Discussions

The data gathered collected from school administrators, secondary school teachers and primary school teachers were collected, analysed and presented.

Table 7: Factors Which Influenced Academic Performance in K.C.P.E. and K.C.S.E. in Butere District

Factor influences gender positively or Negative	<u>Administrators n=183</u>			
	Male (%)		Female (%)	
Factor:	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Old customs	71.04	28.96	28.40	71.60
2. Modern lifestyles	23.50	76.50	42.6 2	57.38
3. Custody or protection of children	64.48	35.52	42.60	57.40
4. Maintenance of children	71.40	28.60	50.00	50.00
5. Adoption of children	76.50	23.50	42.66	57.44
6. Welfare of children	71.24	28.76	25.57	74.43
7. Rights of children and their general life	85.24	14.76	42.86	57.14
8. Family and home life	71.44	28.56	25.70	74.30
9. Schooling or education	85.40	14.60	42.06	57.94
10.. Nurture or care of children	23.77	76.23	34.55	65.45
11. Teachers and parents	76.89	23.11	83.45	16.55

A look at the data presented in the Table above, the administrators seem to agree that old customs influence male students. However, the same old customs seem to work against female pupils. This is perhaps true given that most old customs roles seem to favour the male child. In most cases, male pupils are not over burden with household chores such as cooking, fetching water, fetching firewood and taking the roles of mothers in the home. Apart from the perceptions of secondary school teachers who seem to indicate that old customs influence both gender positively, the primary school teachers' data agree with those of the administrators in that a high number (75.65%) are of the opinion that old customs tend to influence female pupils negatively.

This finding supports Chepchieng and author (2002) findings that the community customs do affect female pupils in that they are expected to help their mothers and siblings by attending to family household chores that take most of their time while their male counterparts use to study.

Table 8: Factors Which Influenced Academic Performance in K.C.P.E. and K.C.S.E. in Butere District

Factor influences gender positively (or)	Gender			
	Male (%)		Female (%)	
Factor:	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Old customs	95.61	04.39	88.10	15.90
2. Modern lifestyles	14.57	85.43	7.16	92.84
3. Custody or protection of children	74.55	25.45	79.80	20.20
4. Maintenance of children	46.20	53.80	86.26	13.74
5. Adoption of children	45.0	55.0	68.45	31.55
6. Welfare of children	46.40	53.60	46.44	54.56
7. Rights of children and their general life	46.20	53.80	77.42	22.58
8. Family and home life	44.0	56.0	81.70	18.30
9. Schooling or education	43.80	56.20	54.08	45.92
10.. Nurture or care of children	48.88	51.12	31.60	69.40
11. Teachers and parents	77.80	22.20	81.35	18.65

A closer look at the data from all groups, there is a high correlation in that most of the data agree on several factors. For instance, both secondary and primary school teachers all agree that modern lifestyles tend to influence both gender negatively (85.43% and 92.84% for secondary school teachers compared to 95.4% and 96.6% for primary school teachers. The administrators also supported this idea. There are also other pertinent factors that seem to affect the girlchild negatively that the data has revealed. For example, custody or protection of children, nurture or care of children are some of the factors that often deny the female pupils time to study because they are always the ones that take over these responsibilities while their counterparts are not expected to assume such roles. All these issues seem to be happening despite the fact that Kenya is expected to implement the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Draft Convention for the African Perspective ANPPCAN, 1990: 2005 and UN Secretariat, 1990).

Table 9: Factors Which Influenced Academic Performance in K.C.P.E. and K.C.S.E. in Butere District

Factor influences gender position	<u>Teachers n=390</u>			
	Male (%)		Female (%)	
Factor:	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Old customs	84.61	25.39	24.35	75.65
2. Modern lifestyles	4.60	95.40	3.40	96.60
3. Custody or protection of children	74.58	27.42	86.23	13.87
4. Maintenance of children	84.62	15.38	87.63	12.37
5. Adoption of children	64.50	35.50	46.60	53.40
6. Welfare of children	44.64	54.36	44.22	55.78
7. Rights of children and their general life	74.62	25.38	80.35	19.65
8. Family and home life	41.40	58.60	91.70	8.30
9. Schooling or education	40.38	59.62	76.24	23.76
10.. Nurture or care of children	51.46	49.54	50.11	49.89
11. Teachers and parents	88.65	11.35	80.44	19.56

From the data presented in the above, there is a revealed the fact that the problems bedevilling the girlchild in Butere district are not unrelated to these factors. The fact that most of the secondary schools in the district are day schools; it is no wonder that there is a low performance on the part of the girlchild. Day secondary schools are coeducational schools which unlike boarding secondary schools, the pupils daily attend classes from their homes and most of their study time attending to family activities.

Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

A scrutiny of all the data presented in Tables 2 to 8 led to the following findings and conclusions.

1. Primary and secondary schools in Butere district did their best in KCPE and KCSE examinations but there was still room for improvement when compared to other provinces in Kenya. There was a significant difference between Butere Girls High School and Friends Boys High School from the same Western Province. Similarly, Kakamega Hill primary and Ikomero Primary Schools.

Mangu Boys High, Kenya Girls High; Pleasant View Academy and Makini Ngong' Road Academy primary schools compared to the above Butere district Primary and secondary schools. The study concludes that most schools in Butere district are day schools where pupils operate from their homes and may not have control over their study time.

2. The study findings disclosed the factors concerned with boy-girl performance compared which included old customs and modern styles of living, rights of children and their general life, nurture of children, teaching and parenting were leading causes of poor performance among the girl-child in Butere district. The study concludes that most of these factors tend to affect the girlchild negatively as opposed to the boy-child.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. The economy of Butere district needed improvement. Poor economy or poverty adversely affected academic performance particularly of the girl child.
2. Factors shown in table 8 which interfered with KCPE and KCSE academic performance by female pupils should be addressed and the necessary solutions taken by parents, teachers, educationists, ministry of education, the government and others concerned.
3. Since the government has signed the Universal convention on the rights of children adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of children and other United Nations, Organisation of African Unity then and the measures should be taken:
 - i) Both male and female children are equal before the universal and Kenyan laws. They should be treated as equals.
 - ii) Female human role models in Butere district and other parts of Kenya should be taught in schools to the girls.
 - iii) Expose the female pupils to situations which could help them make right choices in their lives.

- iv) Peer teaching or groups, guidance and counselling be introduced in all schools.
- v) Non-governmental organisations and a specific government ministry be mandated to cater for girl-child education, fees, social problems, pregnancies, early marriages, out dated customs, protection, custody, maintenance, adoption, welfare and rights, nurture, bursary, maltreatment, care and education for the female pupils.
- vi) Legislation to protect the girl-child against assuming the role of mothers when parents die, rape, discrimination, exploitation, negative cultural practices, sources of bride wealth, sexual abuse, denial of time studies and peer measure be enacted.
- vii) There was need to educate those concerned on the importance of education of the girl-child.
- viii) Financial constraints facing the girl-pupil should be addressed.
- ix) Guard against religions which regard the girl-child as subhuman meant to serve males by too much house chores. Parents should have house helpers to avoid overworking their daughters or girls.
- x) Parents should avoid sending their daughters to do domestic work to earn for parents a living.
- xi) Girls need emotional, material support and advice choice of viable careers.
- xii) Forced marriages of the girls should be made punishable by law.
- xiii) Some activities such as fishing, sale of beer in bars, smuggling, fishing, looking after animals, brewing beer for instance booze, by the girls at expense of education be stopped.
- xiv) Since the transition rate of the girl-child to secondary schools was very low, affirmative action should be considered to curb the problem.
- xv) Female children slept in less conducive environmental like kitchens. Therefore suitable shelter was necessary for the girls.
- xvi) Some social groups like night religious crusade, impacted negatively upon some children. Those organisations were dominated by males in leadership. Their influence sometimes led to social harassment of the females.
- xvii) There were too many day and mixed secondary schools. More schools for girls were needed for specialised counselling. There was too much congestion in these mixed schools which led to lack of privacy which degenerated to dangerous sexual involvement by active boys and girls.

- xviii) Obsolete traditional customs and Western influence that tend to erode positive African role of guidance by grandparents be embraced in place of modern lifestyles because they are still foreign for rural folk.
 - xix) It was further recommended that girls who got pregnant through unfortunate enticement, be re-admitted back to their schools. The unique social problems which faced the girls should be addressed by female teachers and parents.
 - xx) Some orphaned female children stayed with their married sisters while in school. Some of the husbands of their married sisters impregnated the schoolgirls. This was a social problem which should *be* solved by elders or the government. Many girls whose mothers died and were left under the care of their step mothers, rarely continued with their schooling too. Therefore the girls eloped and were neglected because their fathers gave up when their elder sisters got pregnant. Some age-mates of the fathers put pressure on them by seducing them that it was a waste of money to educate girls who had delivered babies. Positive approach by fathers was necessary.
4. There was lack of political will to sensitise the community on equal opportunities for girls and boys in education. Moreover the community leaders were predominantly males. The few females had been caught in the patriarchal cultural vicious circle. Majority of the female leaders lacked the capacity to articulate gender issues.

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