

Community and School Factors Contributing to Female Students Dropouts in Public Mixed-day Secondary Schools in Mathioya District, Kenya

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Abstract

This study objective was to investigate and identify the factors that contribute to female students drop out in mixed day secondary schools in Mathioya district. The purpose of the research was to come up with findings that are likely to create awareness to the administration in formulating and implementing educational policies that may minimize this problem. The importance of the study is to understand the challenges facing female students and how these can be resolved. The study was guided by feminist theory by utilizing social feminism ideology. Stratified random sampling method was used to select eight head teachers and two hundred and forty girls who participated in the study by filling pre determined questionnaires provided for each participant. Questionnaires were of two categories, one for head teachers and the other for students. Data obtained from scheduled questionnaires were coded, computed, analysed and summarized using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and mean. The study established that poverty, gender bias in schools and at home, lack of guidance and counselling on sexuality, pregnancies and indiscipline are the major factors that cause school dropout for girls. The study recommended the government, education stakeholders and community to implement existing laws and policies that enhance girl's education for high completion rates of secondary education.

Keywords: girls' education, female students' performance, gender disparity, girl child transition, culture and education.

INTRODUCTION

According to Mushi (2002), provision of education to all citizens has been challenging despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that entitles everyone to the right to basic education. Female education is recognized as a critical pathway in promoting social, political and economic development in any country. The dropout of girls from public schools is a result of inefficient utilization of human and economic resources by the education system (Odaga & Heneveld, 1995). When girls dropout of school it is costly in terms of their quality of life as well as to the society at large. Dropout denies female students the opportunity for employment and the means to increase their social and political participation. According to Mingat, (2002) the non-completion of schooling by females contributes to their low social status in society as well as to their reduced decision making power at the household and over their lives. The economic and social benefits of female dropout represent a significant regression in the development of nations (Kibbogy 2001).

In spite of the efforts made by African countries to increase female educational opportunities, girls' and

women's access to education remains limited in several sub-Saharan African countries including Kenya. According to Ballara (2001) many girls in the region, most of who reside in rural areas in Africa are out of school due to poverty, early pregnancies, early marriages, hostile school environment and cultural beliefs among others.

Female education has been identified as more crucial for the advancement of a nation than just education in general (McMichael, 2004). It is now widely recognized that the social returns to female education greatly exceeds those of male education. This is because development cannot happen without the participation of women in society. The high level of school dropout of female students from public schools in Kenya hinders empowerment of women to participate in implementation of necessary social changes. These include: raising smaller, better nourished and healthier families; women with no education usually have more children (Moraa 1999; United Nations 2005).

Currently Kenya has a policy of free primary education introduced by the government in 2003; and a subsidized day secondary education introduced

in 2008. Despite the fact that no tuition fees are paid for day secondary schools, girls still face challenges arising from community and school that force them to dropout of schools as compared to boys (Njeru & Orodho, 2003).

Mathiyoa district has witnessed an increasing trend in the number of female students' dropout despite the government's free tuition education programme in all public secondary schools. It is against this background that the researcher investigated and assessed the community and school factors contributing to school dropout of female students from public mixed-day secondary schools. The research objectives are: to establish community factors influencing dropout of girls from mixed day school; and to establish school factors that cause dropout of girls from mixed day secondary schools in Mathiyoa district.

The findings of this study will be of great significance in creating awareness on the factors that cause female students dropout in mixed public schools and enable the administrators formulate and implement education policies that minimize these factors. The findings of this study will form a benchmark for further studies in school dropouts in other part of Kenya and also in the region. The study was limited by respondents' attitudes and their willingness to respond.

The study was guided two theories: feminist theory and social feminism ideology. The feminist theory highlights women exploitation and oppression by putting sexuality, reproduction and patriarchal ideologies at the centre of the political arena (Barbara and Witz 2004). Social feminism ideology recognized that the exploitation and oppression of women are rooted in the structure of patriarchal capitalism. The research intended to establish whether parents, community and schools management exploits and discriminate the female students. The study will determined whether the improvement of domestic, community and school environment can reduce female dropout rate in mixed public schools. The independent variables are: violence, duties, poverty (parents); discrimination, pregnancies, early marriages (community); resources allocation, sexual harassment and low performance (school). These variables determine the performance of the dependent variable (girls' dropout).

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study was carried out in Mathiyoa district, Murang'a County in Kenya; to the east side of the Aberdare ranges. The district has twenty one mixed-day secondary schools; out of which fourteen schools were sampled to give a general overview on the factors that cause female students' to drop out of school. The schools selected using random sampling

are: Kiambuthia, Mananga, Runyeki, Mihuti, Gikoe, Kamune, Iruri, Gitongu, Gitugi, Matuto, Karunge, Kiriani, Thuta and Mathiyoa (tables 1.0; & 1.1).

The study adopted an ex-post facto research design. It investigated possible cause and effect relationships by observing an existing condition or state of affairs and searching back in time for plausible causal factors. This design was appropriate because it sought to find out the factors that contribute to dropout of girls in mixed-day secondary schools in Mathiyoa district. The independent variables were investigated after they had caused the effect on (dropout) dependent variable. The reason for choosing this design was that it is appropriate in description of the variables and how they are related to the area of study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). The targeted population comprised of female students in mixed-day secondary schools, teachers and ministry of education provided in-depth information.

The total accessible population was 21 head teachers and 1610 students. Stratified random sampling method was applied to obtain a sample of 248 of the accessible population of head teachers and female students. This sample of 248 respondents availed a variety of responses that facilitated the comparable analysis. The sample consisted of two hundred and forty female students and eight head teachers in fourteen mixed-day secondary schools in Mathiyoa district.

Data was collected using two categories of questionnaires; one for head teachers and the other for students. Questionnaires for the head teacher had section A (for head teachers particulars and school particulars) whereas section B (designed to get responses for objective questions). Questionnaire for students also consisted of section A (solicited general information about the student and the school) whereas section B (consisted questions related to the research objectives).

To enhance reliability and validity, a pilot study was carried out to help the researcher in determining items in the study which were ambiguous in eliciting relevant information and if need be make modification in the questionnaires. Respondents for this purpose were form four female students and head teachers from two mixed day schools that did not participating in the study. Upon receiving the questionnaires from the respondents, they were coded, computed and analysed using descriptive analysis method. The ethical consideration in this study was privacy and confidentiality of the respondents. The respondents were therefore not required to write their names on the questionnaire. Any information gained through access to students' data and head teachers' responses to items in the

questionnaire was highly guarded and used only for the purpose of the study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to assess the factors contributing to school dropout of female students' from public mixed-day secondary schools in Mathioya district, Muranga County.

Table 1.0 shows student enrolment on gender basis in 2007 (entry to form one) and 2010 when completing form four in selected schools in Mathioya district. Table 1.0 shows the total enrolment in 14 schools in 2007 (form one intake), whereas table 1.1 shows the enrolment in 2010 (form four). The study utilized these tables as a basis to analyse the dropout ratio for girls and boys. Table 1.0 shows the enrolment of girls in form one is almost the same as that for boys. Data on table 1.1 shows a number of girls have dropout of school before completing fourth form. Table 1.2 shows the number of boys dropout is minimal (average 5 %). This implies that boys seldom drop out of schools compared to the girls (table 1.3) with average 12%.

Table: 1.0: School Enrolment 2007

School	Boys	Girls	Total	% boys	% girls
Kiambuthia	104	129	233	45	56
Mananga	154	192	346	45	55
Runyeki	120	113	233	52	48
Mihuti	85	95	180	47	53
Gikoe	151	134	285	53	47
Kamune	110	119	229	48	52
Iruri	107	110	217	49	51
Gitongu	161	169	330	49	51
Gitugi	131	109	240	55	45
Matuto	104	121	225	46	54
Karunge	109	105	214	51	49
Kiriani	99	110	209	47	53
Thuita	123	121	244	50	50
Mathioya	111	123	234	47	53

Source: DEO's office Mathioya (2011)

Table: 1.1: School Enrolment by 2010

School	Boys	Girls	Total	% boys	% girls
Kiambuthia	129	100	229	56.0	44.0
Mananga	188	171	359	52.37	47.63
Runyeki	129	100	229	56.34	43.66
Mihuti	64	69	133	48.12	51.88
Gikoe	178	151	329	54.10	45.90
Kamune	113	101	214	52.80	47.20
Iruri	98	112	210	46.67	53.33
Gitongu	160	171	331	48.34	51.66
Gitugi	134	89	223	60.2	39.80
Matuto	110	121	222	45.0	55.0
Karunge	121	108	229	47.0	53.0
Kiriani	101	121	222	45.0	55.0
Thuita	135	102	237	57.0	43.0
Mathioya	119	104	223	53	47.0
Total	1779	1610	3389		

Source: DEO's office Mathioya 2011

Table: 1. 2: Boys Dropout

Name of school	No. joined form 1 (2007)	No. In form 4 (2010)	No. dropped	Percentage %
Kiambuthia	35	33	2	5.7
Mananga	50	47	3	6.0
Runyeki	36	35	1	3.0
Mihuti	21	20	1	5.0
Gikoe	48	47	1	2.1
Kamune	34	33	1	3.0
Iruri	40	42	2	5.0
Gitongu	40	42	2	5.0
Gitugi	48	46	2	4.2
Matuto	26	24	2	8.0
Karunge	41	37	3	7.3
Kiria-ini	50	48	2	4.0
Thuita	55	53	2	3.6
Mathioya	61	60	1	1.6
Total	585	567	18	

Source: DEO's office Mathioya 2011

Table 1.3: Girls Dropout

Name of School	No. joined Form 1 (2007)	No. in Form 4 (2010)	No. dropped	Percentage %
Kiambuthia	47	42	5	10.6%
Mananga	31	29	3	9%
Runyeki	66	60	6	9%
Mihuti	65	54	9	13.8%
Gikoe	75	67	8	10.6%
Kamune	57	51	6	10.5%
Iruri	89	79	10	11.2%
Gitongu	96	87	9	9%
Gitugi	79	69	10	12.6%
Matuto	91	80	11	12%
Karunge	67	61	6	8.9%
Kiriani	61	55	6	9%
Thuita	67	60	7	10.4%
Mathioya	58	52	6	10.3%
Total	949	846	102	

Source: DEO's office Mathioya 2011

Table 1.3 shows the number of girls who enrol to join form one are many, but a number of them dropout of school as they proceed to form four. The percentage of drop out is high, with most schools reporting between 9% - 13% in three years. Mihuti secondary school had the highest dropout at 13.8%; while Karunge reported 8.9%.

Table: 1. 4: The Difference in Girls and Boys Dropout

School	Girls drop out	Boys drop out	Differences
Kiambuthia	5	2	3
Mananga	3	3	-
Runyeki	6	1	5
Mihuti	9	1	8
Gikoe	8	1	7
Kamune	6	1	5
Iruri	10	2	8
Gitongu	9	2	7
Gitugi	10	2	8
Matuto	11	2	9
Karunge	6	3	3
Kiria-ini	6	2	4
Thuita	7	1	6
Mathioya	6	1	5
Total	102	24	78

Source: DEO's office Mathioya 2011

Data in table 1.4 shows the difference in number of boys and girls who dropped out in various schools is big. Data shows 76.4% are girls' dropout while only 23.6% are boys. The results imply girls seem dropout of school is higher than the boys. It is against this background that the researcher will present reasons for dropout ranging from domestic, community and school factors that have lead to more girls dropping out of the school than the boys. Out of the sample size of 248 comprising students and head teachers; 8 head teachers responded and 212 students responded, bringing the sample to 220 respondents.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presents data on gender, years of service in teaching and years worked as a head teacher. Data is presented on students that were interviewed. On gender of respondents, 77% were females while 23% were males. This data implies majority of the respondents are females. This is expected since the study involved female students' dropout in public mixed schools. However the 23% of the respondents were male head teachers and some male students.

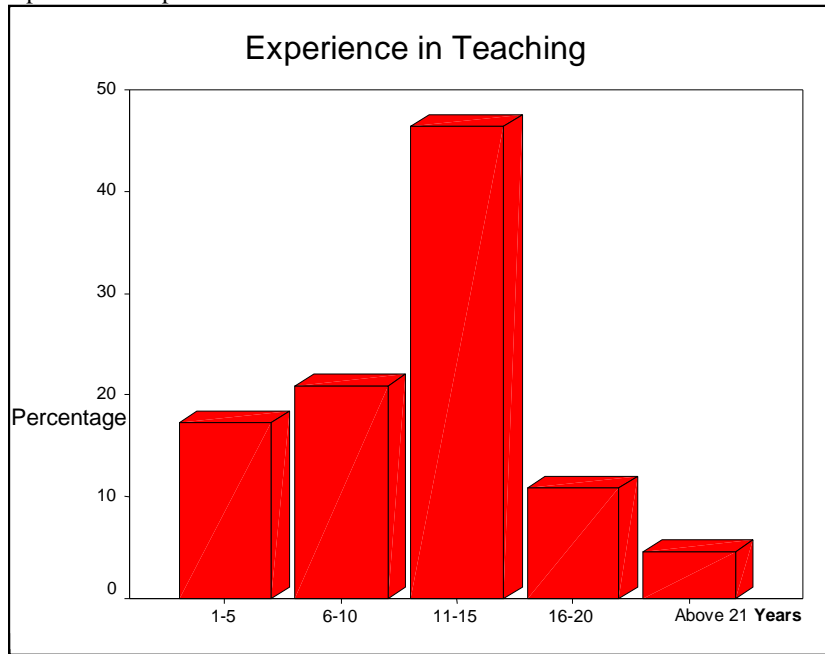


Figure 1.0: Teaching Experience

Figure 1.0 show most of the respondents have been in their respective schools for a period of between 11-15years. Respondents consisting of 48% agreed that they have been associated with their schools for a long period. Some 18% of the respondents stated that they have been in their schools for 1-5 years, while those with more than 21 years are only 5%. These results imply majority of the teachers have been associated with the school for between 11 and 15 years. The fact that most teachers are familiar with their schools; then it is assumed that they provide credible information on causes and prevalence of female students' dropout.

Average Enrolment in a Class

The study shows average enrolment in a class is between 31 and 40 students (45.5%); whereas 16.8% stated an average of less than 20 students. Some 16.4% of the respondents indicated an average of 21-30 students. A small portion of respondents (11.4%) shows an average of more than 51, whereas 10% shows an average of 41-50 students per class (fig 1.1). This implies a high number of class dropout confirmed by the small number of students per class.

Domestic Factors Causing School Dropout of Female Students in Mathioya district

The first research question sought to find out the domestic factors affecting female students' education. To establish this, the respondents were given a series of questions to respond to and the findings were as follows.

Duties Performed after School by Girls

The study shows that most girls are involved in cooking (45.9%), 25% in taking care of their siblings, 12.7% assist their parents in business; while 11.4% are involved in farming after school (fig 1.2). The results indication majority of female students carry out household chores after school. This implies girls spent little time on their studies when they reach home leading to poor performance and eventual dropout from school. This finding concur with Rihani (2006) who noted that girls are required to combine school work with household chores and do not often complete their school work. Sometimes they undertake menial jobs for teachers and are more likely to be subjected to sexual abuse and violence than boys.

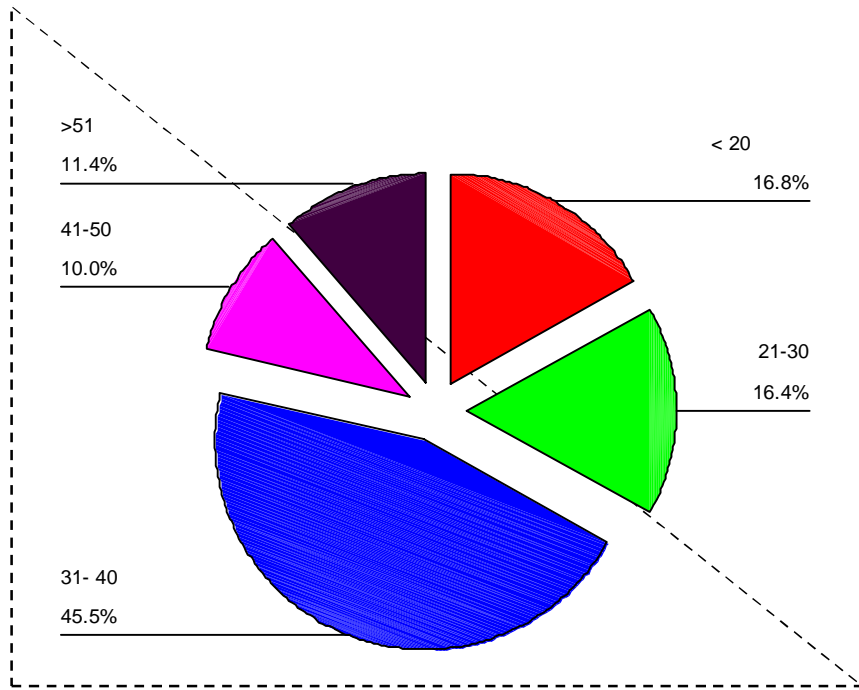


Figure 1.1: Average enrolments in class

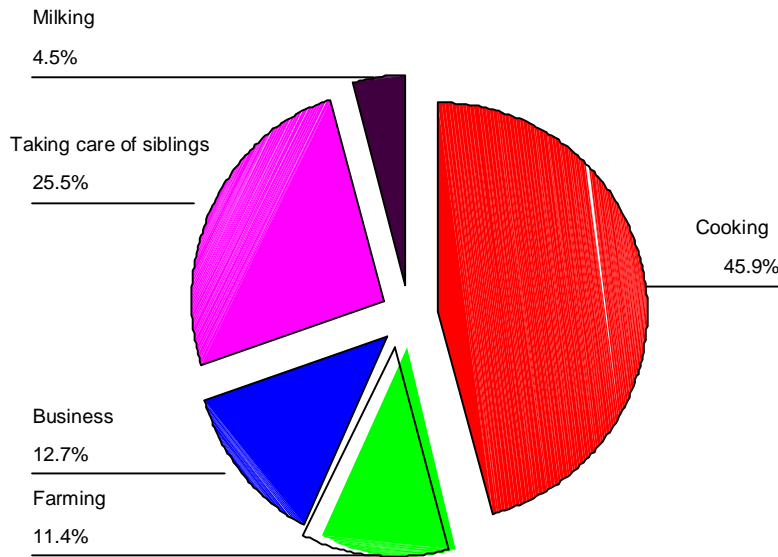


Figure 1.2: Duties performed after school by girls

Poverty Levels

The question on poverty as a cause of school dropout was asked and the study shows majority (45.5%) of the respondents strongly agree that it contributes to girls’ dropout of schools. Some 26.4% agree that poverty results to high school dropout, while 11.4% of the respondents disagree (table 1.5). These results agree with UNESCO (2002) finding that states girls

are presented with domestic obligations that cost them time, such as: caring for their siblings while parents go out to work for family income, take care of the sick, and attend to traditional rituals and funerals.

Table 1.5: Poverty as a cause of school dropout

Response	Frequency	Percent
I do not know	18	8.2
Strongly disagree	19	8.6
Disagree	25	11.4
Agree	58	26.4
Strongly agree	100	45.5
Total	220	100.0

HIV /AIDS contribution to Dropout of Girls than Boys

The study shows that HIV/ AIDS affect girls than boys. Majority of the respondents (45%) strongly agree that HIV AIDS leads to high dropout of girls than boys (fig 1.3).

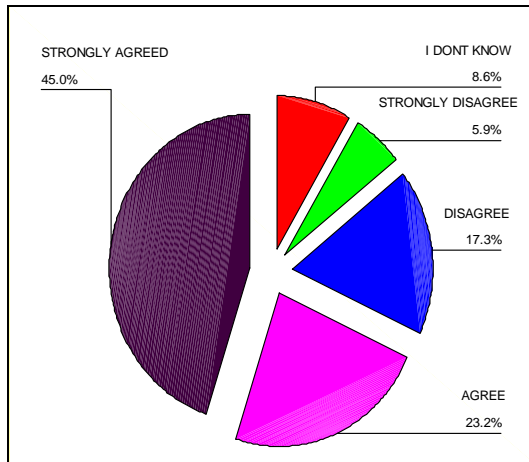


Figure 1.3: Contribution of HIV/AIDS

Another 23.2% of respondents' agree whereas 17.3% disagree that HIV AIDS contributes to high school dropout of girls than boys. These findings agree with Kibbogy (2001) who stated that lack of free education encourages sexual exploitation of children. Some orphans turn to prostitution to earn money for paying school fees and in the process they contract HIV/AIDS. For many parents who are dying of HIV/AIDS, their greatest worry is who will pay for school fees, supplies and uniforms for their children once they pass on.

Domestic Violence cause Girls' School Dropout than Boys

Majority of the respondents agreed that domestic violence contributes to girls' dropout of the school (45.5 %), 32.3% strongly agreed while 5% strongly disagree (table 1.6). Thus the domestic violence according to majority of the respondents is a major contributor to girls' school dropout. The reasons for this are that, mothers' runaway due to domestic violence, the girls go with them. It could also be due to lack of school fees or even instability of their mothers where they have moved to.

Table 1.6: Domestic Violence

Responses to Domestic Violence	Frequency	Percent
Not sure	2	0.9
Strongly disagree	11	5.0
Disagree	36	16.4
Agree	100	45.5
Strongly agreed	71	32.3
Total	220	100.0

Domestic Labour Cause Girls to Dropout of School than Boys

The study shows majority of the respondents (49.5%) strongly agree that domestic labour plays a great role in girls' school dropout. Some 22.3% agree that domestic labour leads to girls' dropout while 24% of the respondents disagree to this fact (fig 1.4). The data implies that girls are more involved in domestic labour which affects their studies.

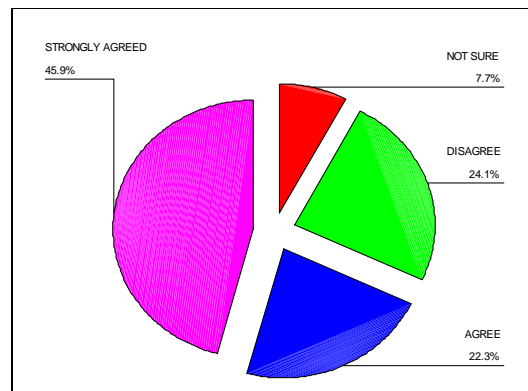


Figure 1.4: Domestic labour

Parents' Separation Makes More Girls Dropout of School than boys

Results in table 1.7 shows 46.4% of the respondents strongly agree that parent's separation play a part in girls school dropout; some 33.6% agree and 7.7% of the respondents strongly disagree that parent's separation caused dropout of girls.

Table: 1.7: Parents Separation

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not sure	4	1.8
Strongly disagree	17	7.7
Disagree	23	10.5
Agreed	74	33.6
Strongly agreed	102	46.4
Total	220	100.0

Community Factors Affecting Female Students' Education

The second research question sought to establish community factors that affect female students' education. School head teachers were given a list of items on a table to identify with girls school dropout. These factors are discussed below.

Holiday Tuition favours Boys than Girls

The study reveals that parents favour boys in paying for holiday tuition fees than girls who participate in

domestic work. Majority respondents agree (54.1%) that girls are discriminated when paying for holiday tuition fees fig 1.5. Some 13.2% strongly agree while 12.3% strongly disagreeing that holiday tuition discriminatory for girls. Another 13.6% are not sure whether the boys are favoured more than girls. The reason for discrimination was identified as ‘mothers prefer to retain girls at home to assist in various chores while they attend to community activities’. This action denies girls the opportunities to study more, revise and perform well in school. Persistent poor performance of girls encourages them to drop out of school.

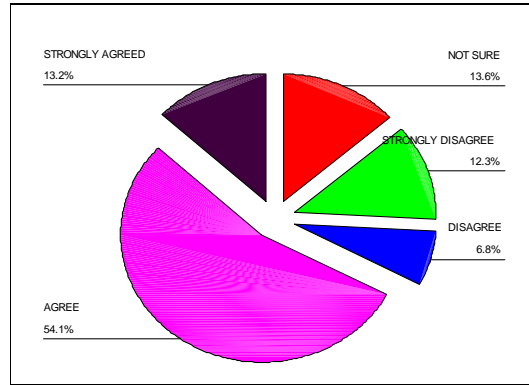


Figure 1.5: Holiday tuition

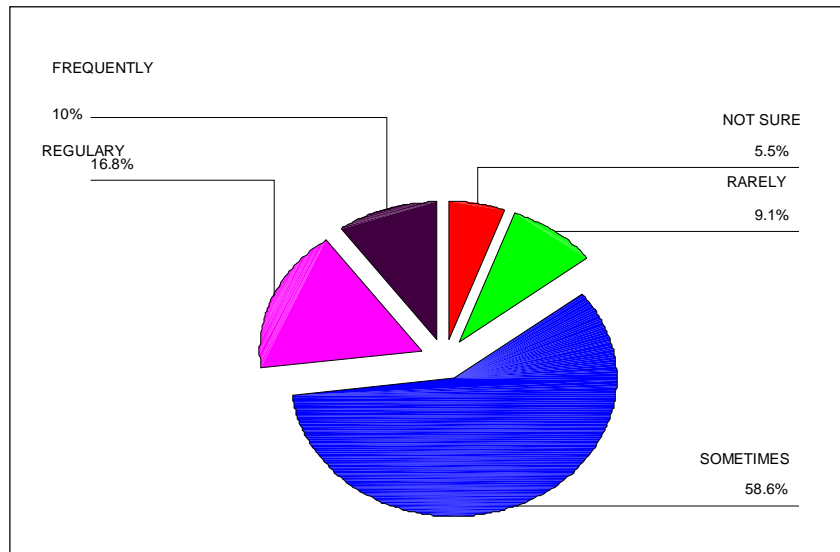


Figure 1.6: Pregnancies

Pregnancy among Girls’ Causes Dropout from School

Majority of the respondents indicated pregnancy sometimes causes girls drop out of the school and approximately 26% show pregnancies frequently cause school dropout (fig 1.6). A similar study by Fagerlind and Saha (2006) established that pregnancy is a major factor leading to female student’s dropout from school.

Parents’ Low Attitude towards Girls Education increases dropout

The respondents were asked to respond as to whether parent’s attitude towards girls’ education contributed to school dropout. Majority 51.4% indicate it is true; another 12.7% agreed it is very true (table 1.8). These findings agree with Mushi (2002) who stated that socio-cultural attitudes and practices have a big influence on education. African communities largely have a male-preference attitude in education and males are expected to wonder in the world of knowledge and technology while a woman’s place is at home, keeping up with the livelihood of the family.

Table 1.8: Parents attitude

Response	Frequency	Percent
I do not know	14	6.4
My be	26	11.8
Not true	39	17.7
True	113	51.4
Very true	28	12.7
Total	220	100.0

Table 1.9: Distance travelled from Home to School

Response	Frequency	Percent
100m	15	6.8
101 – 500m	33	15.0
501m – 3km	129	58.6
4km – 10km	20	9.1
11km and above	23	10.5
Total	220	100

The study results show majority of the students travel between 501 metres and 3 kilometres from home to school. On a day’s routine home-school-home; most students travelled approximately six kilometres (table 1.9). The distance travelled from homes- school makes it difficult for girls to walk and exposes them to pre-marital relationships which lead to pregnancies and eventual dropout of school.

What Female Students do after Dropping out of School

Majority of the girls who drop out of school (58.6%) practice casual; whereas 23.2% get married and only 3.6% land good jobs (table 1.10). The reason for this was identified as good jobs require completion of education cycle and added skills.

Table 1.10: Work after School

Response	Frequency	Percent
Married	51	23.2
House maids	13	5.9
Business	19	8.6
Good jobs	8	3.6
Casual workers	129	58.6
Total	220	100.0

Common Cultural Factors That Influence School Dropout for Girls

The respondents identified the following cultural factors as causing school dropout (table 1.11). Lack of parental guidance was supported by 50.5% of the respondents and female genital mutilation 18.6%. These indicate that cultural practice plays a great role in interfering with the education of girls. Although FGM as a practice is banned in Kenya, some communities still practice in private. The government should be vigilant and arrest those who practice FGM.

Table 1.11: Cultural factors

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
No parental guidance	111	50.5
FGM	41	18.6
Dances	22	10
Community work	19	8.9
Sect worship	27	12
Total	220	100

School-Related Factors That Cause Dropout of Female Students

The third research question sought to establish school-related factors that cause girls’ dropping out of school. To answer this question, the respondents were asked a series of questions whose responses are discussed below.

Class with the Highest Dropout Rate of Girls than Boys

When the question on the highest dropout class was asked, majority of the respondents’ show 53.2% of girls’ dropout are in form two; while 19.5% reported dropout in form one. Some 13.6% of the respondents state they are not aware. The reasons for dropout in form two were mainly; transfer to another school, lack of school fees and pregnancies.

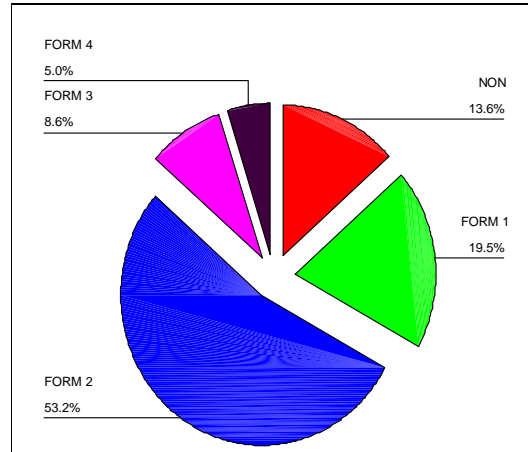


Figure 1.7: Dropout rate per class

The study sought to know whether there were cases of discrimination in allocation of resources to girls in schools. Data shows 53.2% strongly agree; 23.6% agree; whereas 17.7% disagree, 4.1% strongly disagree and 1.4% was not sure. This position will greatly disadvantage girls in their pursuit of education and the anomaly should be rectified to allow equal access to resources between boys and girls. The findings also show 54.1% of the respondents strongly agree that girls have more fees arrears than boys. This implies that parents prefer to pay fees for boys first then girls later.

The study enquired as to the number of students proceeding from one form to the next. Majority of the respondents (55.9%) strongly agree that boys more than girls proceed to next class; some 24.5% agree that more boys than girls proceed to the next class and only 11.4% disagree to this fact. The data implies majority of boys transit to next class than girls who either dropout or repeat a class due to non-performance.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that domestic, community and school factors all contributed to a school dropout of girls from day secondary schools in Mathioya district. The factors that came out clearly: poverty of parents, distance between home and school, domestic work, community attitude towards girls’ education and lack of parental guidance. All these are factors which can be addressed by the education system, government and community to enhance girls’ completion of secondary school education and reduce dropout. Educated girls will be guaranteed good jobs that will pay well, hence improved livelihoods in future.

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