

Barriers Facing Girls' in Accessing Equal Quality Education Opportunities: A Baseline Survey at Bugogwa and Shibula Wards in Ilemela District, Mwanza, Tanzania

Zena Ismail Machinda¹, Veneranda Paulo Byerengo²

¹ *Department of Geography; St. Augustine University of Tanzania; P. O. Box 307;*

² *Department of Educational Foundations; St. Augustine University of Tanzania; P. O. Box 307;*

ABSTRACT: This study sought to examine barriers facing girls' access to equal quality education opportunities in Ilemela District, Tanzania. The study came up due to the existing data on increasing girls school dropout, early pregnancies and poor academic performance. The study adapted mixed research design to generate data through focus group discussion and questionnaires. The instruments were employed to 90 respondents. The analysis was done using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The major findings show that, cultural beliefs, and patriarchal values were associated with girls' barriers in accessing education whereby some cultures are still completely forbidden girls' to access education. Furthermore, menstruation and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) experiencing in some areas like Mara, Mwanza, Dodoma regions in Tanzania. This cultural practice, although now illegal, but is still a common occurrence in communities. Other barriers are poverty, long distance to school, pregnancy, gender-based violence (GBV) sanitary pads, early marriage were common for girls' not to access quality education. The study recommends that; communication, campaign, education, and advocacy at all levels of society are very important for changing gender and social norms. Additionally, providing safe transport to school, improve sanitary materials at school for girls to manage their menstruation and feel empowered to have full control over their bodies. Future, policies should be focusing on sending more girls to school while paying close attention not just to enrolment but also their attendance. In addition, the Government should revise the Marriage Policy of 1971 and ensure inclusive equitable quality education for all, especially girls and women by 2030.

Key words: barriers, girls, quality, education, Ilemela

1. INTRODUCTION

Educating women has been identified as a backbone to advanced societies around the world (Leadership Report,2017). It is an important issue because of several reasons; female education significantly reduces the rate of maternal in communities this is so because women who undergo formal training which includes (formal, informal, and culture) knowledge; labor skills (general, industry, firm, job, and task specific); and experience tend to have a better understanding of healthcare (Leadership Report,2017; Osiobe,2020).

In the 21st century, education is one of the most critical areas of employment for young adults; it is also an area that offers some of the most suitable solutions to the issues we face today. Furthermore, offering girls' education is one sure way to prepare them for the challenges of tomorrow. They are enabled to make better choice over changes they wish to see in their families, communities, and nation. Female education should be encouraged for the sole reasons that, *"all humans are created equal"*, and pursuit, of happiness and property is a fundamental human right. Education gives women skills, information, and self-confidence, which are needed for better parenting, work, and citizenship (UNICEF,2016).

According to a document released by the World Bank (2017) as cited in Osiobe, Osiebe and Osiebe (2020) on girls' education, it stated that, *"Girls' education goes beyond getting female child into school; it is also about ensuring that these girls learn, contribute, and feel safe while in the school environment"*. At first glance, looking at things from surface, it might have seen that all is well (things are improving, but we can do better). Education opportunities are spread evenly between male and female genders in Nigeria. It is certainly not true when you take a closer look, especially in rural communities. Despite the experience of special girls' schools all around the nation, there is still more work to be done in encouraging more families to send their female children to school (Osiobe,2020).

In Nigeria, there are many factors and reasons why females there are less educated than men. Over the years, various researches have proven that there is a connection between the literacy rate of girls' and religious and traditional misconception (Falae, 2018). Nigeria, being a very religious country, where most citizens live according to the book of their faith, their religious believes contribute to why many households think that girls do not need formal education as their male counterpart. This same ideology is true in the native traditions of the nation. Most of these traditional views do not believe a girl should do more than becoming a mother and a house wife. In such cases, why would parents spend money on giving their female child a formal education when being a mother does not need all that? To tag this as *"Gender Discrimination"* will be short sited and an assumption that parents do not love their female children, which is not wholly accurate (World Bank, 2017)

Although today, in very few parts of the world, girls are discriminated and marginalized *"based on sex"* within communities and in schools. Moreover, many families in Nigeria, especially the ones from rural areas suffer from poverty (Ebunife,2018). This prevalent poverty leads parent to prioritize boys' education over that of girls, thereby, neglecting girls' education completely or giving it less attention than it deserves. Furthermore, when a girl is forced to become a wife at an age of 11-15 years, her right to acquiring formal education can be affected, and in most cases, it is for the negative. This is sensitive and controversial topic, as most girls affected by child marriages do not receive adequate formal educational training. In addition, to this list, is frequent cases of abuse, which might come from both love ones and strangers. Another issue that comes from Nigerian traditional and religious view is on a child's early marriage stand, and most cases, the female children have little or no say in the decision made (Falae, 2018).

Moreover, girls' education is arguably the best investment for the global economy. it is estimated that countries lose out on a suggested \$15 trillion and 30\$ trillion is lost life time productivity and earning. However, most importantly, investing in girls' education results in child marriage rates decreasing, child mortality rates falling, maternal mortality rates falling and improving health dramatically. Women who are educated make better decisions for their health, family, finance, and for their future aspiration (World Bank, 2017).

"Better educated women tend to be more informed about nutrition and health care, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and their children are usually healthier, should they choose to become mothers" (World Bank, 2017).

Furthermore, the economy of a nation's experience grows when women are empowered through education; this is because productivity and opportunity are now spread evenly among genders in most parts of the world. If women are allowed to generate income at various levels, it reduces dependence and promotes entrepreneurship in the nation. Moreover, educating girls reduces inequality, and hence, encourages the idea that we are all created equal. Equality of gender is empowered through literacy among female members of society, providing female children the opportunity to obtain formal education makes them relevant to the nation. Opening the primary education system to all (ensuring they are of quality standard too) will not just strengthen the female gender group but it will give other marginalized groups like orphans, ethnic minorities, physically challenged, rural families, and the poor, the educational opportunity needed. Emma Lazarus was right, when she said,

"until we are all free, we are none of us free" (World Bank, 2022). Every day, girls face barriers to education caused by poverty, cultural norms and practices. Poor infrastructure, violence and fragility. Girls' education is a strategic development priority for the World Bank.

According to World Bank (2022) report, every year at least 120,000 girls drop out of school for reasons including teenage pregnancy and children marriage. The Government of Tanzania has placed a national policy Under Regulation 4 of the Education Act (Expulsion and Exclusion of Pupils from Schools) that outlines circumstances under which students can be permanently expelled from school and lists entering into web lock and committing an "offence against morality" as ground for expulsion.

In addition to that, studies in Tanzania reported that, almost one in five (19%) of Tanzanian women aged 15 years and older have been or were married before the age of 18 years, this data is according to the report from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2021. In a study by Human Right Watch (2014) shows that 31% of girls in Tanzania are married before their 18 birthday and 5% are married before the age of 15. While, 4% of boys in Tanzania are married before the age of 18. The study reports that child marriage is as high as 59% in Shinyanga region, 58% in Tabora region, 55% in Mara and 51% in Dodoma regions. The rates are lower in Iringa 8% and 19% in Dar es Salaam. In rural areas of the border Kenya, some girls reported marry as young as 11 years. Child marriage is driven by gender inequality and the beliefs that girls are somehow inferior to boys. In Tanzania, child marriage is intensified by poverty and family honor:

Poverty: Poverty is considered leading driver of child marriage in Tanzania, marriage is perceived to protect a girl against poverty and provide a reprieve for the family, 'Mahari', 'bride price' involves a husband giving money, cattle or clothing to bride's family with little opportunity to earn an income for themselves, while girls often see marriage as their only option. According to World Bank (2022), poverty is one of the most important contributing factors to a girls' education. When families cannot afford the cost of education, girls have much higher likelihood of dropping out of school than boys. Girls often stay home to take care of younger siblings and bear the main burden of housework. This is linked to the traditional patriarchal gender roles and beliefs where boys are considered future breadwinners, and girls are seen as caregivers. For similar reasons, acute poverty is linked to higher rate of child marriage and early pregnancies.

Family honor: Pre-marital sex is often considered a taboo which undermines family honor and decreases the amount of dowry a girl can fetch when married. Some girls who are considered to be "micharuko" 'running around with men' are forced into marriage to avoid bringing shame to families.

Furthermore, UNICEF (2020) report explains other obstacles for girls attaining quality education as follows;

Cultural Beliefs and Patriarchal values: in some cultures, girls' education is still completely forbidden. While, boys are sent to school, girls' opportunities are reduced considerably to the role of giving birth, raising kids, and performing domestic work. These cultural beliefs are stuck within patriarchal traditions. It is not uncommon for

families to invest in their son's education before investing their daughter's. This is sometimes referred to as the "son preference", an attitude that boys are more valuable than girls and therefore, have a greater chance of success, meaning that they are most likely to be sent to education first or have their education invested in rather than other girls in the family (UNICEF,2020).

Conflict, violence, and Dangerous Journeys to school: All over the world girls are at a much higher risk of violence in the society. Long distance to and from schools are often common for many girls where there is no transport available in the community. Walking these journeys can be extremely dangerous as many young girls' experience sexual harassment or even violence. This danger increases even more in times of conflict. According to the World Bank (2021), in countries affected by conflict girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school than girls living in non-affected countries. For instance, in south Sudanese civil war, it is estimated that three-quarters of girls are not in primary school, partially due to unsafe journey among many other reasons. An estimated 14.3 million children are not able to attend school in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. This is all due to the impact of conflict. The impact of dangerous journeys greatly affects girls' education by preventing them from even enrolling. This has been impacted further by conflict and the current pandemic.

Menstruation and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The inevitability of girls' biology means that menstruation can act as an interruption to girls' education. In many poor communities, sanitary products are not an option and are often not provided at school. By simply not having the resources to manage their period, girls will have to miss schools which often leads to a permanent drop-out. In addition to this, many girls will experience FGM/C. This cultural practice, although now illegal in many countries, but is still a common occurrence in communities. The medical implications that are sometimes caused mean that girls can experience excruciating pain, bleeding or sometimes infection. This can have a detrimental effect on their health and education as they are unable to attend (World Bank, 2022). FGM/C is linked to a desire to control female sexuality and is seen by many communities as a rite of passage to prepare girls for marriage. Other "women hood". Initiation ceremonies and dances such as Unyago, Samba, and Chagulaga- involves a girl being trained on marital expectations when reaches puberty.

Household Chores: Forced domestic work creates low self-esteem in girls and a lack of interest in education. Adult responsibilities, like taking care of sick parents or babysitting siblings, tend to fall on girls. Around the world girls spend 40% more time performing unpaid chores- including cooking, cleaning, and collecting water and firewood- than boys. Some of these chores put girls in danger of encountering sexual violence.

In Burkina Faso, Yemen, and Somalia, girls between 10 and 14 years old bear the most disproportionate burden of household chores compared to boys. In Somalia, girls spend the most amount of time on chores in the world, averaging 26 hours every week (Rodriguez, 2019). Therefore, research recommended awareness creation and wide engagement of families and communities at large, in a study conducted in Ilemela Mwanza, Tanzania by Byerengo and Onyango (2021) recommended that The Ministry of education and vocational training to make policy reforms that encourage a national wide involvement of families and community in children and school development activities to ensure quality provision of education which will enhance best returns in education.

Gender- Based Violence (GBV): Gender-based violence can take many forms, including physical and sexual abuse, harassment and bullying. Surviving rape, coercion, discrimination, and other types of abuse affects girls' enrollment, lowers their participation and achievements and increases absenteeism and dropout rates. It is estimated that 246 million girls and boys are harassed and abused on their way to school every year, but girls are disproportionately targeted. Tanzania found that almost 1 in 4 girls who experienced sexual violence reported the incident while traveling to or from school, and nearly 17% reported at least one incident occurred at school or on school property. Parents are less likely to let their daughters travel to school if they have to travel long unsafe distance (Rodriguez, 2019).

In Tanzania, there is almost no accountability for victims of violence related child marriage, including domestic violence. Tanzania lacks a comprehensive law on domestic violence and marital rape is not criminalized. The Government has made scant efforts to investigate or prosecute perpetrators. Several significant factors underpin this impunity. Furthermore, many girls and women do not know what their rights are, or do not know where to seek assistance, other than from their families or traditional institutions. Some victims will not report forced marriage and marital abuse because they lack confidence in the justice system and fear reprisal and stigma should they report their families or husbands (Human Right Watch, 2014).

The Tanzanian government has not made sufficient effort to protect girls at risk of child and forced marriage and to assist survivors with much needed psychological, social, or economic support. Survivors often struggle alone with the severe mental health consequences of the abuses they endured. Additionally, they get little support to make up for their lost education or to help them develop economic opportunities to provide for themselves and their children. While some local groups and international aid agencies operate programs, their efforts can not compensate for the state authorities' failure to adopt national strategies to address survivors' various needs. As a result of these failure and inadequacies, many women and girls continue to struggle with the often devastating and long-lasting consequences of child marriage. The problem of child marriage harms not only individual girls and women, but also their families, communities and nation at large. Failure to combat this problem is likely to have negative implications for Tanzania's future social and economic development (Human Right Watch, 2014)

Therefore, this baseline survey also sought to establish barriers facing girls' in accessing equal quality education opportunities in Ilemela District, Tanzania. And findings of this study are expected to contribute to the potential strategies of keeping girls' in school supports, economic growth, promotes peace and even help to fight climate change.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section explains about the methodology that guided the study. It presents items including research design, population and sampling, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Research Design

The study adopted the mixed research design. According to Cresswell, (2009), mixed research design focuses on collection, analysis and combination of both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study. The two research approaches complement each other, providing different perspectives and answering different specific questions within any one broad area. The use of two approaches also enable validation of data through triangulation.

Population and Sampling

Population is a group of people under which the study is to be conducted. The respondents in this baseline survey comprised ninety participants (75 girls and 15 leaders). Purposive sampling technique ensured that participants with right information on barriers to girls' accessing quality education were chosen. Participants were from different categories (local government leaders, women group leaders, religious leader, and teachers). Simple random sampling technique was employed to select girls, for the purpose of the study. They were chosen to give views related to barriers to girls' accessing quality education in Tanzania.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedure

Open and close ended questionnaires and interview guide were used to collect data. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argued that, a questionnaire is widely used and is a useful instrument for collecting information. For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire was chosen because it catered for a large number of participants and guaranteed their anonymity. Questionnaires can be administered without the presence of the researcher and it is often easy to analyze the data. The questions in the questionnaire focused on type of challenges facing girls in attaining quality education, areas where do girls facing challenges most and suggestions on the solution to be done.

The researchers distributed the questionnaire to each participant and asked them to complete. This was done to allow and make sure that participants might give their opinion on the theme under the study. All ninety (90) participants were able to complete questionnaires. Focus group discussion were done with fifteen (15) key informants including: local government leaders, women group leaders, religious leader, and teachers.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Phondje *et.al.*, (2011) describes data analysis as examining, sorting, categorizing, evaluating, comparing, synthesizing and contemplating the coded data as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data. This is an important stage where all data brought together and grouped according to their similarities and themes. Most data collected were quantitative in nature. These data were tabulated and calculated in percentages to find out the underlying meaning of the information collected. The qualitative data were subjected to content analysis through the thematic approach.

Ethical Consideration

To carry out the study, permission was obtained from the Mwanza Region and Ilemela District administration. The participants were informed about the expectation and procedure of the study and they consented voluntarily. The research assured the respondents a high degree of confidentiality regarding the information provided. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time (Cresswell,2013).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to examine barriers to girls' accessing equal quality education opportunities. The findings are presented into various themes as follows:

Place where girls facing most of challenges in accessing quality education

With regard to the place where girls' most facing challenges, majority of respondents (61%) answered at home, followed by (22.2%) said at school and the remaining few (16.7%) mentioned other places like on the way back home from school and to the street where they live. Furthermore, equity and access for all (disadvantageous group) in this way, ingrained cultural and societal prejudices create significant issues of equity and access for Tanzanian girls, particularly at and above secondary level. These issues affect another marginalized group too.

Child Marriage and Pregnancy

Child marriage is another challenge facing girls' accessing quality education among teen girls which led to school dropout. Data from questionnaire revealed that majority of respondents (80%) said that, they lack confidence to speak up and make informed decisions against peer pressure in engaging in love affairs due to small gifts, lift and other favours.

Thus, most people in rural areas based on traditional and patriarchal norms where girls' education is not a priority. The evidence data is shown from a focus group discussion (FGD), data collected to many people but there is one interesting argument from one of the participant in the discussion, he shared an evidence of a girl aged 14-year-old who had passed her exams and had been admitted to secondary school but unfortunately, her father do not want her child to continue with school because he has already received a dowry payment from a man aged 35 years old of 4 cows and 500,000/ Tanzania shillings. her father told her, *"you cannot continue with your education, you have to get married because this man has already paid dowry for you"*. She pleaded with him to allow her to continue her education but he refused.

(FGD, male, Bugogwa, 45 years). Furthermore, a health worker from the FGD shared her experience on negative effects of early marriage. She described that there are some negative reproductive consequences for girls and their children when girls birth, including maternal death, obstetric fistula, premature delivery, malnutrition and anaemia. Pre-natal and post-natal health care services, especially in Tanzania's rural areas, are scarce, thus increasing these risks. (FGD, female, Shibula, 32 years)

Poverty

The study findings revealed that some parents/guardians have poor support on girl child education due to their belief on girls' capability compared to boys. The support was also related to poor economic hardship of parents which might lead to poor support of girls needs such as school supplies, food, sanitary pads and other things related to girls' education. Sometimes, marriage is perceived to protect a girl against poverty and provide a reprieve for the family, Mahari "bride price" but, majority of girls may have faced a lot of physical and sexually abuse. From the FGD, one participant explains the incidence of a girl whose husband abused her and could not afford to support her. She said that, "*my husband was very poor, when I would get sick, he would not even have money to take me to the hospital*". (FGD, Female, Bugogwa, 34 years). Furthermore, poverty is considered the leading driver of child marriage in Tanzania.

Menstruation/Absence of changing room /Pad bins and Incinerators

In addition to the above challenges, absence of changing room for girls when they're in menstruation was mentioned. In both schools there is no changing room nor incinerators for burning used menstrual as well as pad bins for disposing used menstrual products.

One a month from the time a girl reaches puberty, there is a chance she will miss school and work for a significant portion of her life because she has her period.

Household Chores

Forced domestic work creates low self-esteem in girls and a lack of interest in education. Most of respondents said this is a very big problem around the area. Adult responsibilities, like taking care of sick parents, or babysitting siblings, tend to fall on girls. Therefore, they miss school and lack time for learning at home.

Gender-Based Violence/Physical and Emotional Violence

Violence against girls is another challenge which affect girls' access to equal quality education and retention. Perpetrators involved including neighbours, guardians, parents and other close family members. Violence affect girls' mental stability which lead to fear, poor performance and eventually school dropout.

Therefore, there is a need to work together with families, teachers, school administration, NGOs, the Government and community leaders to discuss sustainable solutions to girls' challenges. Here are some very brief suggested solutions from respondents, we must continue to strive for keeping this progress moving towards true and full equality.

Apart from barriers, respondents were asked to recommend measures to solve the existing barriers and their explanation is found below:

Creating Awareness

Communication, campaigns, education, and advocacy at all levels of society are very important to changing gender and social norms. Changing social norms are always a very slow process and need intervention from different directions. It is equally important to campaign at the grass-root level, as it is to educate the individual, groups, communities, religious leader as well as the state/nation.

Sanitary materials at school

School need the resources for girls to manage their menstruation and feel empowered to have full control over their bodies. They need things like changing room, napkins/pads, safe water, incinerator and the like.

Encouraging More Women Teachers

Many women teachers should be enrolled to help female student in school to learn. The evidence of a correlation between the number of women teachers and girls' enrolment, provide a strong argument for the

importance of women teachers. Teachers' work should positively impact girls' views of themselves, and gender relations within that community.

Curriculum

Curriculum should also be reflecting gender equality within educational resources such as text books and other learning materials presenting both boys and girls equality. Gender responsive system should be structured throughout school **curricula's** at all levels.

Policy Level Changes

Policy should be focusing of sending more girls to school while also paying close attention not just to enrolment but their attendance. We must begin to incentivize families to send their daughters to school and support them to access higher level of education. Furthermore, policies should focus on banning harmful practices like FGM/C and child marriage, and tracking gender-based violence (GBV) and child trafficking; in conjunction with community-level support, we can provide information and open up the conversation, and hope to prevent it altogether.

4. Discussion of findings

The study aimed at establishing the extent of barriers to girls' accessing quality education. From the study, various themes emerged. Study findings revealed that female achievements are not considered as significant as that of their male counterpart; this is true because the history of accomplishment by influential women usually not taught in our school.

In this study, issue that comes from traditional and religious view is on a child's early marriage stand, and in most cases, the female children have little or no say in the decision made. According to Rodriguez (2019), the marriage under age 18, happens all over the world but occurs disproportionately in developing countries. Parents let their daughters enter child marriage for various reasons. Some believes that they are protecting their children from harm or stigma associated with having a relationship outside of marriage, but child brides who miss out an education are also more likely to experience early pregnancy, malnourishment, domestic violence and pregnancy complications. For families experiencing financial hardship, child marriage reduces their economic burden, but it ends up being more difficulty for girls to gain financial independence without education. Early marriage and pregnancy play a part in the significant gender gap in education. It is estimated that 39,000 girls who are under the age of 18 are married every day. The ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage are Niger 75%, Chad and Central African Republic 68%; Bangladesh 66%, Guinea 63%, Mozambique 56%, Mali 55%; Burkina Faso and South Sudan 52%; and Malawi 50% (UNICEF, 2018). This shocking statistic is one of the reason girls have trouble staying in education. Once married, their role will be to stay at home and do domestic work. The likelihood of these girls then becoming pregnant increases dramatically, causing a complete halt to their educational journey.

In Tanzania, 4 out of 10 girls are married before their 18th birthday. A study by the United Nation Population Funds (NFPA) estimated that 37 percent of Tanzanian women aged 20-24 years were first married or in union before the age of 18, between 2000-2011, Human Right Watch documented cases where girls as young as seven were married (Human Right Watch, 2014). Moreover, child marriage is deeply embedded in Tanzanian society. In many cultures in Tanzania, girls are generally considered ready for marriage when they reach puberty and marriage is viewed as a way to protect them from pre-marital sex and pregnancy that undermine family honour and may decrease the amount of dowry a family may receive. Cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) also contribute to child marriage in some communities. Among the Maasai and Gogo ethnic group, where Human Right Watch conducted some of its research, FGM seen to be very closely related to child marriage and is done primarily as a rite to passage to prepare girls, aged 10-15 years, for marriage (Human Right Watch, 2014). Also, awareness creation in relation to sexual and reproductive health education to girls must be provided to

girls so that they are aware of their biological changes and how to maintain them. And this education should not only have provided to girls but also boys, this suggestion is similar to Machinda, Mbonile and Mtae (2020) who suggested that male involvement is necessary in learning about reproductive health education because it takes two; a girl and boy to get pregnant. Therefore, boys must be engaged at lower levels especially in schools to learn together with girls and boys understanding sexual and reproductive health education so that to make informed decisions in their lives.

Furthermore, poverty is the most important factor that determines whether or not a girl can access education. Even in an area where parents do not have to pay school fees, it can be difficult to keep up with costs of transportation, or uniforms. Parents also often rely on girls' income to support the household, and sending a girl to school means they spend less times helping in the home (World Bank, 2017). In addition, Rodriguez, (2019) revealed that, if the families cannot afford the costs of school, they are more likely to send boys than girls. When parents have to make the decision between buying necessities like food over sanitary napkins, girls are forced to stop learning because they do not, cannot manage their periods. Families will also, allow their girls to enter child marriages if they can no longer afford to provide for them. UNICEF Gender Action Plan of 2022-2025 (2021) suggested that there is a need to reduce financial stress and barriers to accessing income-generating opportunities and services, providing direct access to information, social networks and skills development at family level.

Moreover, menstruation challenges to girls are not only found in Tanzania, it is a stigma around the world and cultural shame attached to the natural process makes girls feel too embarrassed to fully participate in the society during in her period. Rodriguez, (2019) revealed that, in Nepal, for example, menstruating women are seen as impure by their community and banished to hut during their cycles. Some girls end up skipping class because they cannot afford to buy sanitary products or they do not have access to clean water and sanitation to help themselves clean and prevent diseases. Furthermore, when schools lack separate bathrooms, girls stay home when they have their periods to avoid being sexually assaulted or harassed. Girls' with special needs and disabilities disproportionately do not have access to their facilities and resources they need for proper menstrual hygiene. Thus, most girls miss schools during their menstruation period.

Gender-based violence is another issue that, can take many forms including physical and sexual abuse, harassment and bullying. Surviving rape, coercion, discrimination and other types of abuse affects girls' enrolment, lowers their participation and achievements, and increases absenteeism and dropout rates. It is estimated that 246 million girls and boys are harassed and abused on their way to school every year, but girls are disproportionately targeted. Tanzania found that almost 1 in 4 girls who experienced sexual violence reported the incident while traveling to or from school, and nearly 17% reported at least one incident occurred at school or on school property. Thus, parents are less likely to let their daughter travel to school if they have to travel long unsafe distances (Rodriguez, 2019). Violence perpetrators involves relatives, neighbours and other studies reported violence by teachers especially corporal punishment which is not given much attention as one of violence practice, as a result children and youth deepen into absenteeism and poor performance (Stein, Steenkamp and Tangi, 2019). Also, another form of violence among pupils and youth which is not given much attention and required further studies is bullying among fellow students, therefore it is recommended that to establish a child rights -focused school culture, thus to restructure school system to follow the best interests of the child. In Mwanza there is a model school established based on the findings from the project of fighting violence against children and youth, St. Therese Secondary School in Nyashishi, Misungwi in Mwanza Region (Stein, (Stein, Steenkamp and Tangi, 2019)

Around the world, girls spend 40% more times performing un paid chores-including cooking, cleaning, and collecting water and firewood- than boys some of these chores put girls in danger of encountering sexual violence. In Burkina Faso, Yemen, and Somalia, girls between 10-14 years old bear the most disproportionate

burden of household chores compared to boys. In Somalia, girls spend the most amount of time on chores in the world, averaging 26 hours every week (Rodriguez, 2019).

Findings on place where girls' faced challenges concur with Tangi (2019) who revealed that home location contributes to violence and bullying in schools. Again Baines (2013) revealed that, girls are vulnerable as they travel to and from school. They are at risk of physical and sexual abuse which deters school attendance. If the distance between home to school is too far for a day travel, girls are often forced to rent rooms in temporary accommodation, known as "ghettos", which further increases their vulnerability to abuse (Baines, 2013).

Furthermore, the aspect of encouraging more women to take part in teaching career and other sectors is to assist in achieving gender parity at all levels. It is easier when there is a model to look at and follow their footsteps, they act as mentors and coaches. UNICEF (2021) Gender Policy of 2021-2030 emphasizes on addressing barriers to recruitment, retention and carrier mobility for female workers and ensuring equal opportunities for all in different carriers.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This section gives the conclusion of the study and then comes up with the recommendations.

Conclusion

The study concluded that, girls in Ilemela district like many other places still face various barriers in accessing equal quality education. In order to achieve the 2030 agenda as well as goal number 4 of sustainable development goal, always we must focus on dismantling patriarchal values, which oppress women and girls prevent them from reaching their highest potential from family level to schools and other social institutions. Girls and boys should both valued equally and given the same opportunity and necessary requirements to ensure equity and equality in education attained by both genders. Also, the study pin point that the narrative has changed in many ways, as girls now see themselves as more than capable of having an education and have strong desire to attend schools. However, we must continue to create awareness surrounding the benefits of girls' education, as well as informing communities about the effect of harmful traditions including of child marriage, early pregnancy and violence. These conversations are crucial to have within the global community in order to implement sustainable change to gender equality.

Recommendations

This study recommends that it is important to engage parents and other groups in the community to create and implement national action plan to combat girls' barriers to education, in accordance with international good practices, with input from women's and children's right groups, health professionals, and other service providers; coordinate efforts among all relevant ministries; seek sufficient resources to implement the plan. In addition, the government should take the necessary steps to utilize effectively a comprehensive domestic law. The law should criminalize sexual violence in marriage, rape, and all kind of violence (physical, sexual, emotional). Future, there should be a need to address menstruation hygiene management in schools by improving safe learning environments, improving teacher's skills, and supporting gender responsive education programs. Thus, to protect future generation, we must invest in resources and policies that prevent the girls' barriers in accessing equal quality education and schools must have safe environment for them.

6. References

1. Baines, D. (2013). Education for a Better Future in Tanzania. *African Initiatives* <http://www.african.initiatives.org.uk/education-for-a-better-future-tanzania/>
2. Byerengo, V.P, & Onyango, D.O. (2021). School-family-community Partnerships and their Influence on Students 'Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Ilemela Municipality, Tanzania. In Nafhukho, F. M., & Boniface

- Makulilo, A. (Ed.), Handbook of Research on Nurturing Industrial Economy in Africa's Development (357-379). IGI Global. <http://doi10.4018/978-1-7998-6471-4.ch019>.
3. Cresswell, J. W. (2009). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd e.d). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
 4. Cresswell, J. W (2013). Qualitative Inquiry Research Design, Choosing among five approaches, (3th e.d). New York. Sage Publications. Doi.10. 1080/0971923.2011:11892935.
 5. Ebunife, E. (2018). Girls' Education in Nigeria. Retrieved May 20th , 2023 from www.infoguidenigeria.com:https://infoguidenigeria.com/girl-child-education-nigeria/.
 6. Falae, V. (2018). Girl Child Education in Nigeria: Problem and Prospects. Retrieved May, 20th ,2023, from www.logit.ng:https://www.logit.ng/1124635-girl-child-education-nigeria-problem-prospects.html.
 7. Human Right Watch (2014). No Way Out. Child Marriage and Human Right Abuses in Tanzania. Women's Rights Division of Human Right Watch. Retrieved may 25th 2023 from www.hrw.org.
 8. Leadership Report (2017): Introducing the 2017 Workplace Learning Report: To Trends and Challenges Among L & D Leaders. Retrieved May 26th 2023 from <https://www.linkedin.com>.
 9. Machinda, I. Z., Mbonile, J.M. & Mtae, G.H. (2020). The Extent of Male Partners' Participation in Family Planning: A Case of Tarime Disrtrict, Tanzania. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 1(3). Pp 136-144. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2020v01i03.0052>.
 10. Osiobe, E. U (2020). Human Capita. Capital Stock Formation and Economic Growth: A Panel Granger Causality Analysis. *Journal of Economics and Business*, 569-582.
 11. Phondje, W., Kittisarn, A. & Neck, P. A. (2011). The Seven Steps of Case Study Development: A Strategic Qualitative Research Methodology in Female Leadership Field. *Review of International Comparative Management*, vol. 12 (1), pp. 123 – 134. Retrieved May 15th https://www.academia.edu/4793339/The_Seven_Steps_of_Case_Study_DevelopmenA_Strategic_Qualitative_Research_Methodology_in_Female_Leadership_Field.
 12. Rondriguez, L. (2019). 7 Obstacles to Girls' Education and How to Overcome Them. The Global Citizen Movement
 13. Stein, M., Steenkamp, D., & Tangi, F. (2019). Relations of Corporal Punishment to Academic results and Achievements in Secondary Schools in Tanzania. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 7 (8), 85-104. <http://www.ijern.com/journal/2019/August-2019/08.pdf>.
 14. Stein, M., Steenkamp, D., & Tangi, F. (2019). On the Way to Child Rights Focused Schools-establishing a New Inclusive and Violence Free Secondary School in Tanzania. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 7 (11), 71-92. <http://www.ijern.com/journal/2019/November-2019/11.pdf>.
 15. Tangi, F. (2019). Physical and Psychological Bullying in Secondary Schools in Mwanza Region, Tanzania. Thesis. University of Vechta. <http://voado.uni-vechta.de/handle/21.11106/185>.
 16. UNICEF (2020). Girls' Education: Gender Equality in Education Benefits Every Child, UNICEF/UN0284179/Le Moyne.
 17. UNICEF. (2021). UNICEF Gender Policy 2021-2030.UNICEF Gender Equality Section. <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality>.
 18. UNICEF. (2021). UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022-2025. Economic and Social Council. <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality/gender-action-2022-2025>.
 19. UNICEF (2018). Education: The Situation. <https://www.unicef.org/tanzania/education.html>.
 20. UNICEF (2016). Girls' Education: A Lifeline to Development. Retrieved May 18th 2023 from www.unicef.org:https://www.unicef.org/sowc_96/n_girls.html.
 21. World Bank (2017). Girls' Education. Retrieved May 18th2023 from www.worldbank.org:https://www.worldbank.org/on/topic/girlseducation.
 22. World Bank. (2021), Fragility, Conflict and Violenc.worldback.org.
 23. World Bank. (2022), Girl's Education Overview.www.worldbank.org Retrieved on 29thAugust 2023 from <https://www.worldbank.org>.

INFO

Corresponding Author: [Zena Ismail Machinda](#), Department of Geography; St. Augustine University of Tanzania; P. O. Box 307.

How to cite this article: [Zena Ismail Machinda](#), [Veneranda Paulo Byerengo](#), **Barriers Facing Girls' in Accessing Equal Quality Education Opportunities: A Baseline Survey at Bugogwa and Shibula Wards in Ilemela District, Mwanza, Tanzania.** *Asian. Jour. Social. Scie. Mgmt. Tech.* 2023; 5(6): 263-274.