

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DRIVERS OF THE ADVANCEMENT OF  
GIRLS' EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL GIRLS IN THITHA  
LOCATION, CENTRAL DIVISION OF MWINGI DISTRICT

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THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN  
SOCIOLOGY (RURAL SOCIOLOGY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT)*

**DECLARATION**

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any Institution for an award of a degree or any other award.

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## **DEDICATION**

To the Almighty God for life, good health, mental ability and all that I have.

To all those who advocate for equity and equality.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my Project Supervisor, Dr. R. M. Ocharo for his tireless support, guidance and encouragement till the completion of this paper. Special thanks to my parents Mr. Mutinda Mututa and Mrs. Muthio Mutinda who have always encouraged and inspired me to work hard. My untold thanks to: Mr. Macharia, Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library for his assistance in accessing reading materials in the library. The Chief and Assistant Chief, Thitha Location for allowing me and supporting me to carry out the study in the area. The Principal, Deputy Principal and all the teachers in Karung'a Secondary School for their support and cooperation during data collection period.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EFA	Education for All
CDF	Community Development Fund
FPE	Free Primary Education
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NARK	National Rainbow Coalition
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UDHR	United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## **DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

Advancement:	Moving forward for a set purpose
Affirmation Action:	Action taken on a temporary basis in favour of a disadvantaged group so as to enhance equality.
Attitude:	Expression, thoughts or feelings to situations or events.
Culture:	A set of shared ideas, beliefs, values and practices about what is right and wrong, good and evil, desirable and undesirable.
Development:	Acquisition of a broad range of skills through planned activities and experience. It places emphasis on the growth of an individual to enable him/her to face challenges in future.
Disparity:	A difference, especially one connected to unfair treatment
Education:	Longterm learning activity aimed at preparing individuals for a variety of roles in a society as citizens, workers and members of family groups.
Enrollment:	Act of officially joining a course or school
Equality:	Fact of being equal in rights, status, advantages, et ce tera
Gender:	A social construct of women and men, boys and girls and the relationship between them.
Participation:	Active involvement in enrolment, retention, progression, performance and transition in education.
Retention:	Ability to actively remain in school without dropping out
Transition:	The process of changing from one level of study to the next

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study assessed the socio-economic and cultural drivers in the advancement of girls in secondary education and beyond. Girls aged between 14-24 years who are in school and those who have dropped out of school within the last four years were targeted. The paper sought to establish: the frequency of girls advancing to secondary school and beyond, factors affecting advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond, parents' attitude towards advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond and girls' attitude towards advancement to secondary school and beyond.

The study employed a descriptive design. Purposive sampling was used to select study respondents (girls in school and those out of school). Convenient sampling was used to select ten parents and five key informants to supplement the study findings. Data was collected using both primary and secondary methods. Primary data was acquired using questionnaire, key informant's interview and observation. Secondary data was obtained from existing literature in libraries and internet. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics in form of averages, percentages and frequency tables among others. Data presentation was done using pie charts and tables.

The findings revealed that education for girls is accorded great importance by girls themselves, parents and the entire community. All the girls who are in school and those who are out of school expressed commitment and positive attitude towards advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond. However, the number of girls who have attained formal education up to secondary level and beyond is very small. All the respondents unanimously asserted that the status of girls' education in the area is not satisfactory. From the findings, lack of school fees is the biggest challenge facing girls' education in the area. Pregnancy was also cited as a significant factor affecting girls' education. The findings further revealed that the school under study lacked teaching resources like adequate qualified teachers and fully equipped teaching laboratory. This can affect performance of students adversely. From the findings, socio-cultural factors like preference for boys' education, traditional belief in bride wealth and role of women as prescribed by culture are not a major influence of low rates of educated girls in the area. Other factors that affect girls education but in a minor way included poor performance, lack of interest in schooling, household chores and early marriage. The number of boys who have attained formal education up to secondary school level and beyond was found to be equally small.

Based on the finding that school fees is the biggest challenge facing girls' education in the area under study, the study recommends that the School Management should encourage access to bursaries by the needy students to avoid dropping out due to lack of school fees. This will enhance advancement to post secondary education.

To alleviate dropping out of school due to early pregnancy, the paper recommends that guidance and counseling should be intensified to enlighten girls on their reproduction.

To improve students' performance, the paper recommends that the school should have enough qualified teachers to enhance advancement to post secondary education.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0: Background**

Education is a phenomenon that is accorded great importance by people from all walks of life. An individual's level of education is used as a gauge for his or her social status or class in society, job group at work place, income and generally his or her standard of living. In a big picture, an educated population contributes to the general development of a nation and an uneducated population lags a nation behind in development. Education is seen as a weapon to fight against poverty in an individual's life in particular and in a nation in general.

World Education Forum (2000) states that education for all is a basic right at the heart of development. It must be a national and international priority that requires a strong and sustained political commitment, enhanced financial allocations and the participation of all education for all partners in the process of policy design, strategic planning and the implementation of programmes. It is therefore, the responsibility of the government and community to facilitate access to education by all citizens.

University education is the apex of the formal system of education for the education and training of high level manpower for national development (Republic of Kenya, 1988). It is perceived as one of the sure ways of fighting against poverty, achieving development and high standards of living for an individual in particular and for a nation in general. World Education Forum (2000) notes that, Education, starting with the care and education of young children and continuing through lifelong learning, is central to individual empowerment, the elimination of poverty at household and community level, and broader social and economic development.

Kasomo (2009) notes that, it has been acknowledged that girls' education is one of the most important forces of development and that an educated mother raises a smaller, healthier and better-educated family, and is herself more productive at home and at the work place. He further notes that there is a correlation between the narrowness of the gap of girls' education in countries world wide and the level of development in such countries. However, gender equality status in provision of learning opportunities remains one of the major concerns in development of education in many african countries, Kenya not being an exception.

Achievement of university education is associated with high status in society, professional job group, high income and high standards of living. Though educational achievement at all

levels is cherished by all, achievement of post secondary education, especially university level is revered. This is evidenced during graduation ceremonies as the university in question is always flooded with people from all over the country who come to witness the ceremony . Subsequently there is celebration in all styles as people congratulate their loved ones for great achievement.

Giddens (2001:492) notes that in modern age, education and qualifications became an important stepping stone into job opportunities and careers. Schools and universities not only broaden people's minds and perspectives, but are expected to prepare new generations of citizens for participation in economic life.

In its efforts to improve access to education by all citizens, the Government of Kenya has developed a comprehensive education policy known as Sessional paper No. 1,(2005). Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No. 1 (2005:23) says that recent studies on human capital returns in Kenya show that capital returns increase as the level of education goes higher. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology says that the provision of education and training to all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the government's overall development strategy, (Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No. 1,2005:1).

A lot of effort has been put by different entities to equip the Kenyan population with education. When the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) took over power in 2002, Free Primary Education (FPE) was reintroduced by the government in 2003 in efforts to improve the literacy level of the population. In its strategy for achieving a middle income country by 2030 (Vision 2030), the principle of investing in the people is upheld and Kenya recognizes that the education and training of all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the vision (Vision 2030, 2007:78). The vision for education sector for 2030 is to have a globally competitive quality education, training and research for sustainable development. However, this is challenged by the transition from secondary level to university level, as only 3 percent of secondary school students currently enter university, a proportion that does not compare favourably with that of middle income countries.

In addition to the government efforts, non governmental organizations have also participated in the endeavour to fight illiteracy, a good example is the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the Millinium Development Goals (MDG). One of the goals is to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015 for both girls and boys which the government of Kenya embraces. The government of Kenya educational policy also embraces



the Jomtien Declaration of 1990 which officially pronounced “Education for All” (EFA) irrespective of sex, religion, ethnicity, social or economic status (Global Campaign for Education, 2005). Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalization. Achieving EFA goals should be postponed no longer. The basic learning needs of all can and must be met as a matter of urgency (World Education Forum, 2000).

In spite of all the efforts made to provide education for both boys and girls, the number of girls who achieve education is not at par with that of boys. Bradshaw and Wallace (1996:22) notes that ...there is an inequality in educational achievement. Although many children throughout the world have the opportunity to attend primary school, few have a chance to attend secondary school (high school) or college in poor countries. ...Moreover, except for rich countries, fewer girls than boys attend secondary school throughout the world. Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No. 1 (2005:13,17) says that the 1999 population census estimated that there were 4.2 million illiterate adults in Kenya and that illiteracy manifests itself more dramatically among the poor, particularly women who constitute 61 percent of the total illiterate population. It is important to note that poor performance of economy has been manifested by low enrollment, low transition rates, dropout and completion rates, especially among girls and children from poor households.

Republic of Kenya (1988:33) notes that the government has put in place positive measures to enhance women’s access to education. These include: free primary education and, from 2008, subsidized secondary school education include: increased enrollment of girls in pre-school programmes, increased enrollment of girls in primary schools, increased primary school completion rate, increased school retention rate, increased rate of transition of girls from primary to secondary schools to colleges and universities and increased entry of girls to employment. It is evident that the rate of enrollment of girls in high Schools has increased, which means that more girls are now able to access higher education,...however, compared to increase in the number of boys’ enrollment, the number of girls is still lower.

In the endeavour to enhance women’s access to higher education, public universities in the country have introduced “affirmative action” to increase girls’ entry into university and entry into specific courses. This has been accomplished specifically through lowering university

entry point and entry point for specific courses for girls. The number of women enrolled in public universities has also shown slight increase but clearly, parity in education between men and women is yet to be achieved at all levels in Kenya (Republic of Kenya,1988).

Disparity in achievement of higher education is an impediment to Kenya's development efforts particularly in its effort to achieve gender parity in education. Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General speaking at a launch of a non-governmental report on girls education in March, 2005 puts it in the following way:

Study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition and promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation (Giant step for Kenya's School,1)

Since one's occupation is determined by his or her level of education, a lot of gender disparity in holding of high positions in institutions is evidenced in virtually all institutions in Kenya. A good example is seen in Public and even private universities where Chief Executive Officers and Principals of colleges are males with only few females. This translates into little representation of women in decision making which is an impediment to a nation's development in general and warrants redress.

From many studies carried out on educational achievement by the girl child in different parts of Kenya, there is a consensus that girls and women empowerment in general has been seriously impeded by many factors. These include cultural and religious practices, inadequate policy guidelines, poverty and lack of community awareness among others (Hassan, 2009).

However, though these factors may affect girl child educational achievement in most areas, no study has been carried out to ascertain whether the same factors affect girl child advancement to secondary school education and beyond in Thitha Location, Central Division of Mwingi District.

Since education for all and for girls in particular has a lot of influence on individual, community and national development, it is imperative to establish the factors that influence advancement of girls to secondary school education and beyond by girls in Thitha location, Central Division of Mwingi district.

## **1. 1.: Problem Statement**

The government of Kenya and many other stakeholders have put a lot of effort to achieve Education for All (both girls and boys) and to create gender parity in education. In a meeting held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, the participants in the World Education Forum declared the following, “ we , the participants in the World Education Forum, commit ourselves to the achievement of Education for All goals and targets for every citizen and for every society”. They went further to say that without accelerated progress towards Education for All, national and internationally agreed targets for poverty reduction will be missed, and inequalities between countries and within societies will widen (World Education Forum, 2000).

According to Girl Child Network (2003), achievement of gender parity in education in Kenya has remained an elusive dream. Despite the many efforts, men continue to outnumber women in achievement of education at all levels in Kenya (Republic of Kenya: 16,36). De facto equality between men and women in education is yet to be attained (Republic of Kenya: 36). Gender disparity in achievement of high education becomes worse in rural and marginalised areas where in some cases, it is below average.

A comparison between Mwingi district and the neighbouring districts (Kitui, Machakos and Makueni) in the number of boys and girls who enrolled in secondary school between 2003 and 2007 show that Mwingi district had the lowest numbers for both and that the number of girls was worse than that of boys.

According to Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010) more than half of the girls who are supposed to be enrolled in secondary schools are not enrolled and that the enrollment rate of girls in secondary schools is below average. In 2009, out of the total number of girls eligible for enrollment in secondary school, only 16 percent were enrolled and the rest were out of school. This translates to low enrollment rate into post secondary education especially university education since secondary level of education is the transition point to university education.

Though it is evident that enrollment rates have increased due to government’s intervention, it is also clear that the increment has not achieved gender parity in achievement of secondary school education and beyond for girls (especially university education) in Kenya, and much less in Mwingi District. Gender parity in achievement of university education is

yet to be achieved in Kenya. In the 2010 form four class, 97,134 candidates qualified for University. Of these, 60,200 (62 percent) were boys, this means that only 38 percent of girls qualified for university admission (Daily Nation, 28/2/2011). The figures given, however, do not capture regional disparities especially in rural and marginalized areas where achievement of university education by girls is very low.

Given the above evidence, it is clear that gender disparity exists in advancement to secondary education and beyond in Mwingi District. This is despite the government's effort to achieve gender parity at all levels especially in university education through introduction of FPE in 2003 to increase transition rate of girls from primary to secondary schools. In 2008, the government also subsidized the cost of secondary education to increase transition rate of girls from secondary to university (Republic of Kenya:33).

Since achievement of university education is a virtue that is cherished by people from all walks of life and an asset to both the individual and the nation, the state of affairs of girl child's participation in secondary school education and beyond in Mwingi District warrants investigation.

## **1.2: Research Questions**

The study aimed at answering the following research questions:

- i) What is the frequency of girls advancing to secondary school and beyond at household level?
- ii) What are the factors affecting advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond?
- iii) What is the parents' attitude towards advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond?
- iv) What is the girls' attitude towards advancement to secondary school and beyond

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

### **1.3.1 Overall Objective of the Study**

The overall objective of the study is to establish the Socio-economic and cultural drivers of the Advancement of Girls Education among Secondary School Girls in Thitha Location, Central Division of Mwingi District.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- i) To establish the frequency of girls advancing to secondary school and beyond at household level
- ii) To analyse the socio-economic and cultural factors that affect advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond
- iii) To examine the parents' attitude towards advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond
- iv) To examine the girls' attitude towards advancement to secondary education and beyond

### **1.4: Scope and Limitations of The Study**

The study focused on gender factor in participation of girls in higher education in Thitha Location, Central Division of Mwingi District. Specifically, the overall objective was to establish the socio-economic and cultural drivers of the advancement of girls' education among Secondary School Girls in Thitha Location, Central Division of Mwingi District.

The socio-cultural factors are limited to preference for boys' education , traditional belief in bride wealth and the role of a woman in the society as prescribed by culture. For socio-economic factors, the study was limited to household income, household expenditure and affordability of school fees. For social factors, the study was limited to school environment, parents willingness to invest in girl's education and personal interest in schooling of the girl child.

The study sought to establish the frequency of girls who have advanced to secondary school education and beyond at household level, analyse the factors that affect advancement of girls to secondary school education and beyond, examine the parents' attitude towards advancement of girls to secondary school education and beyond and examine the girls' attitude towards advancement to secondary school education and beyond.

The study population is restricted to girls of secondary school age between 14- 24 years who were in school and those who had dropped out of school within the last four years. Though levels of education are generally low in most rural parts of Mwingi District for both boys and girls, the study focused only on girls because their level of participation in secondary school education and beyond is far much lower than that of boys. The study was also limited to Thitha Location, Central Division of Mwingi District due to inadequacy of time and funds.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.0: Introduction**

A lively debate has been on-going on the issue of closing the gender gap in education, a debate which has now found its way to the higher education sub-sector. In contributing to this debate at UNESCO-BREDA Workshops on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, Fay Chung and Sylvie Kodjo at the Abidjan Workshop, Carlos Machili at the Maputo Workshop and Agnes Njabili in Johannesburg demanded a more thorough analysis of the subject- proper understanding of the concept of gender, knowledge of the indicators which inhibit and promote the participation and achievement of girls and women in higher education and what short-term and long-term strategies can be put in place especially by teachers in higher education in Africa to “right the imbalance”.

Many studies nationally, regionally and internationally have been carried out on education for all in general and education for girls in particular. The importance of education and its link to personal, community and national development has been upheld by all of them. The government of Kenya through the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005, Report of the Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond, the Children Act, embracement of UPE in MDGs, embracement of EFA in the Jomtien Declaration and the constitution among other channels have advocated for equal educational opportunities for both girls and boys at all levels of education.

Other stakeholders like FAWE and UNICEF have also emphasized the importance of equality in educational achievement between genders. These studies have, however, unanimously concluded that there are disparities in educational achievement between the boy and the girl child and that corrective measures to address the disparities are imperative. The former UN-Secretary General, Kofi Annan (2005) points out that without achieving gender equality for girls in education, the world has no chance of achieving many of the ambitious health, social and development targets it has set for itself. This chapter will discuss the previous studies carried out on the factors affecting the participation of girls in secondary school education and beyond.

### **2.1: The Importance of Girl Child Education to Personal and National Development**

The EFA 2000 Assessment Country Report notes that the provision of educational and training opportunities has been a standing objective of the Government of Kenya since

independence in 1963. Education has been considered by different stakeholders in the country and worldwide as an important vehicle for socio-economic and political development. It is also now clear that when educational opportunities are opened to girls and women, such benefits are even greater.

Education has led to the greatest social change and the effect is seen where women are most educated since they contribute to the economic welfare of their children and their education (Barasa, 2004). As the African proverb goes, “If we educate a boy, we educate one person. If we educate a girl, we educate a family-and a whole nation”. This is observable in every society, a difference stands out between a family where the mother is educated and a family where the mother is not educated. In the big picture, a difference is also observable in a population where women are educated and in a population where women are not educated. The World Education’s Programs helps girls enroll and stay in school and help women gain access to or create new educational, financial, and social resources in their communities. This helps girls and women improve their own lives, the lives of their families and the conditions in their communities. For parents, and especially mothers, this means creating conditions that ensure their daughters have equal access to basic education, are able to make informed decisions about their futures, and are able to protect themselves from trafficking, sexual exploitation, HIV and AIDS. By improving education opportunities for girls and women, World Education helps women develop skills that allow them to make decisions and influence community change in key areas. In turn, these programs have a positive impact on some of the most profound issues of our times: population growth, HIV and AIDS, peace and security, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

Speaking at a launch of a non-governmental report on girls education in March, 2005 the former UN Secretary-General, Koffi Annan had the following to say:

Study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition and promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation.

According to Oyugi (2008) the education of girls is today widely recognized as the most effective development investment a country can make. It is one of the criteria pathways to promote social and economic development. Female education with its multiplier effects, has been shown to be crucial for advancement of nations (Beijing Declaration September, 1995).

The Millennium declaration in 2000 by 189 heads of state recognized that educating girls is a powerful step towards ending poverty and achieving human rights.

Kasomo (2009) asserts that, as long as the majority of girls fail to proceed with formal education beyond secondary level and as long as college level of education is used as a major criterion in the distribution of well-remunerated jobs and leadership positions, they will continue to be marginalized. Lack of education or acquisition of limited education among women who in Kenya and most other countries constitute over 50 percent of the total population, leads to their inequality representation in all facets of the society including employment, politics, and inevitably in decision making organs like parliament.

It, therefore, goes without saying, that the importance of girl child's education to personal, community and national development cannot be over emphasized. The benefits of educating a girl are immense and inexhaustible to herself, her community and her nation.

### **2.1.1: Status of Girl Child Education in Mwingi District**

It has been observed that there are usually more women joining schools at the primary level, but at transition to high school and beyond, the number drastically reduces. This trend is very practical in the rural and marginalized regions like most parts of Mwingi District. According to 1999 census, the population of women in Mwingi District was 53.5 percent. It is, however, noted that many girls in the District never join primary school. This translates to the fact that they do not acquire formal education at any level. For those girls who manage to join Secondary Schools, the drop out rate is also ranked very high (Mwingi District Development Plan, 2002-2008:22). A comparison between Mwingi district and the neighbouring districts (Kitui, Makueni and Machakos) in the number of boys and girls who enrolled in secondary school between 2003 and 2007 show that Mwingi district had the lowest numbers for both and that the number of girls is worse than that of boys.

According to Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010) more than half of the girls who are supposed to be enrolled in secondary schools are not enrolled and that the enrollment rate of girls in secondary schools is below average. The Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010) cites poverty as a major development challenge in the district (60 percent of the total population live below poverty line). This leads to high rate of dropout as many parents cannot afford to pay school fees. Low literacy level is cited as one of the main causes of poverty in the district. It is noted that, there is a very low representation of women in



education and employment and that there exists profound gender disparities in provision of education and attainment of education at all levels of schooling.

Chege and Sifuna (2006) asserts that, in many respects, girls' chances of qualifying for secondary school are strongly linked to the level of socio-economic development in their localities. They also note that low secondary school enrollment greatly reduce the scope for progress in higher education. Coupled with low secondary school enrollments is the high dropout rate of girls. This rate is estimated to be so high as to result in only a small pool of completers eligible for entry into higher education. The status quo of girls' advancement to secondary school education and beyond in Mwingi District is pathetic and warrants investigation.

## **2.2.: Socio-Cultural Factors**

### **2.2.1: Preference of Boys Education Over That of Girls**

One of the factors affecting advancement of girls to secondary school education and beyond is the traditional preference of boys' education to that of girls by the parents. This becomes worse in marginalised and rural settings where most parents are not educated.

In most societies in Africa, boys are given more attention and value than girls right from birth. Module 9 Empowering Women for Success in Higher Education, notes that, in most parts of Africa, the birth of a boy puts broader smiles on the faces of parents and relations than that of a girl. Consequently, when it comes to opportunities in most spheres of life, boys are given preference over girls. Traditionally, parents have preference for education of boys to that of girls. Indeed, raising a girl is likened to watering a plant in a neighbour's garden. This was the remark of Djenaba Doumbia of the University of Cocody as prop for the socialisation thesis to explain gender inequalities in education in Africa. Hassan (2009) in a study to determine girl child's participation in secondary school education in Central Division of Mandera East District found out that the majority of parents indicated that they educated their girls up to the primary school level and that most of the boys were taken to university, polytechnic and college level of education. This indicates that girls are not given priority in education as the boys are.

Chege and Sifuna (2006) notes that ...for a majority of parents who are able to support the education of only some of their children, sex undoubtedly plays a major part in determining which child is to be educated. Enrollment patterns strongly suggest that parents, when forced

to choose, prefer to educate sons. ...secondary school costs eliminated a larger proportion of females than males from poorer and less educated families.

### **2.2.2: Traditional Belief in Bride Wealth**

Traditional belief in bride wealth is another factor that affect advancement of girls to secondary school education and beyond especially in marginalised and rural areas. This belief poses girls as avenues for monetary gains by the family. Lanyasunya (2008) notes that some community members encourage their daughters to get married in order to get wealth to educate their siblings. Some community members believe that marrying a girl to wealthy men is better than educating her to the highest level since the girl will become a prostitute. This leads the girls to enter into early voluntary or forced marriage hence denying them a chance to advance in education. She further notes that other community members viewed education equally important for both girls and boys but boys were favoured in case of parental low income.

Chege and Sifuna (2006) note that continuing importance of institutions such as bride price, polygamy, adultery fines, and the economic value of girls, especially in the rural areas affects girls' participation in education. Girls are an important source of income in their families, and the need for additional household income often takes priority over education. The high status accorded to marriage and motherhood in many communities impacts negatively on female participation in education.

### **2.2.3: The Place of Woman in Society**

Traditional belief in the place of women in society also affects girls' advancement to secondary school education and beyond. Djenaba Doumbia of the University of Cocody as prop for the socialisation thesis to explain gender inequalities in education in Africa says that, gender is known to permeate every human endeavour resulting into categorisation of roles, activities, responsibilities, careers as suitable for females or for males. Indeed, it has led to what is described as gender stereotyping. Gender stereotyping is defined as a collection of commonly held beliefs or opinions about behaviours and activities considered by society as appropriate for males and for females. Njabili (1999) notes that there are four causes of gender stereotyping, namely, socio-cultural, economic, education and training; and media. Socio-cultural roots emanate from the common-sense belief that the girl's place is in the kitchen (with her mother), while the boy should work in the field (with the father).

Economic root causes suggest that men be providers in the family. ... this tends to negatively impact on the society. ... As a matter of fact, gender is a strong determinant of access to formal education in favour of males. The gap in enrollment and achievement at all levels of education is largely due to gender role expectations and gender stereotyping. Thus any attempt to promote women's access to education must recognise the influence of gender on the teaching and learning as well as policies ( Module 9 Empowering Women for success in Higher Education). The poor participation of women in higher education, both as students and academics, may be linked to the traditional social attitudes regarding the role of women.

While universities may open their doors to women, the apparent contradictions between those aspects of African culture which designate women as mere tools for homemaking and the aims of a modern university to admit women on an equal footing with men, still impede women's access to both higher education and to playing a meaningful role in the development of institutions of higher learning (Module 9 Empowering Women for Success in Higher Education). There are countries like Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland where Women's enrollment in universities is relatively high compared to other African institutions due to socio-economic reasons which are specific to these countries. These countries are characterized by high enrollments of girls at both the primary and secondary levels, thus providing a pool from which to draw university entrants. ... however, inspite of the relatively favourable situation for women advancement at the undergrauate level in these countries, female academic staff have not managed to climb the ladder to high academic leadership as fast as men. This implicate other factors that hinder women's advancement in universities. At the end of the first degree, many girls get married and immediately embark on raising a family, thus limiting their chances for postgraduate training (Module 9 Empowering Women for Success in Higher Education).

Barasa (2004) carrying out a study on challenges facing girl child secondary education in Kinango Division, Kwale district notes that, a few girls have made it upto university, though the community around has less women role models and that the socialisation for girls does not permit them to get higher education. This is because they fear that too much education may make the girls too assertive and lack a husband. Chege and Sifuna (2006) notes that girls' educational and occupational aspirations tend to be shaped by the educational system to conform to the existing definition of the role of women in the society.

All these studies and many others unanimously agree that socio-cultural factors play a great role in influencing girl child participation in education at all levels. However, some households do not practise discrimination over the children, whether boys or girls but give them equal opportunities in all spheres of life including education. It is, therefore, important to analyse the factors that affect advancement of girls to secondary school education and beyond in Thitha location, Central Division Mwingi District.

### **2.3: Socio-Economic Factors**

#### **2.3.1: Household Income**

Household income is a major determinant of participation of girls in secondary education and beyond in almost all settings. Mwingi District is an arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) region with erratic rainfall which cannot support reliable farming practices to supplement household income. This translates into low income and hence poverty in most of the households. Many residents are poor and lack meaningful source of livelihood. This means that as much as they would wish to put their children in school, they may lack income to meet their basic needs besides putting their girl child in school (Mutuku, 2008). Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010) notes that poverty is rampant in mwingi district, with 60 per cent living below the poverty line. The main causes of poverty in Mwingi District include drought, low literacy level, low economic base backed by low purchasing power.

Chege and Sifuna (2006) notes that a girl's chances of attending secondary school, compared to that of boy's depend largely upon the income of her family. Secondary school fees, even in government maintained schools, are high and above the income of an average family. Lanyasunya (2008) in a study on socio-cultural analysis of factors leading to girl child school drop-out found out that the economic status of the family determined whether the girl child completes school or not. Household income plays an important role in the enrollment, retention, performance and drop-out of girls from school because of lack of school fees.

#### **2.3.2: Household Expenditure**

Household expenditure also determines girls' advancement to secondary education and beyond. This is because when household income is limited, money is spent only on what takes priority. In the case where food shortage and low income due to drought is prevalent like most parts of Mwingi district, aspects like provision of food takes priority over education, much less for the girl child. Mutuku (2008) in a study on the gender factor in

girls' participation in high school education in Chuluni Division, Kitui District notes that, as much as parents would wish to put their children in school, they may lack income to meet their basic needs besides putting their girl child in school.

Hassan (2009) found out that, in Mandera East District, lack of school fees kept most of girls out of school. Though some community members viewed education for both boys and girls equally important, boys were favoured in case of low income. This is observable in many other communities in Kenya, where a parent has limited resources to educate his/her children, the girl is likely to be told to drop out of school for the boy to be educated. Where there are no resources at all, the girl can even be forced into marriage so that the bride wealth can be used to pay her brother's school fees. Whenever there are financial constraints for education in a family, the girl stands to lose.

Peninah Mlana, Executive Director, FAWE had the following to say, “ a lot of girls are dropping out of school or not being sent at all because of the poverty of parents. Traditional cultural attitudes are still very strong, especially in rural areas. The little money parents have to scrounge for sending children to school is seen as too big an investment to risk on the girl child”.

### **2.3.3: Affordability of School Fees**

Affordability of School fees is another determinant of girls' advancement to secondary school education and beyond. Though the government of Kenya reintroduced FPE in 2003 and waived secondary education fees in 2008, a good number of households in the country, especially in rural areas are still unable to afford primary and secondary education for their children, especially girls. Lack of school fees has been cited by many researches as a reason behind limited achievement of education, especially by girls.

According to Chege and Sifuna (2006), girls' chances of attending secondary school, compared to that of boys' depend largely upon the income of her family. Secondary school fees, even in government maintained schools, are high and above the the income of an average family.

According to the Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010), poverty is a major development challenge in the district. The poor constitute about 60 percent of the total population. In other words, at least two in every three people are poor. ... a major effect of this is the high rate of school dropouts, as parents cannot meet the education costs. Mutuku

(2008) in a study on the gender factor in girls' participation in high school education in Chuluni Division, Kitui District found out that lack of school fees was the greatest challenge that made girls to be out of school.

FAWE Uganda (2003) indicates that FAWE began a scholarship program for bright but needy girls at secondary school because poverty is a serious bottleneck to girls' education, especially in the disadvantaged rural areas. FAWE members pooled money together amounting to \$10,000 that saw 19 bright but needy girls through high school and one girl at university in 1999.

Though payment of school fees is pointed out to be a key determinant of the level of educational achievement by the girl child, interventions have been put in place to address the issue, such as bursaries, Higher Education Loans Board loans, Constituency Development Fund among others. There are also instances where the parents are well to do financially but still their girls do not achieve secondary level education, not to mention university education.

Kasomo (2009) in a study on the factors militating against the education of girls in the lower Eastern Province of Kenya concluded that lack of school fees is relatively less important in hampering girls' education compared to pregnancy and peer pressure. Given this contradiction and the above mentioned interventions, this study aims to analyse how socio-economic and cultural factors affect participation of girls in Secondary education and beyond in Thitha location, Central Division of Mwingi district.

## **2.4: Social Factors**

### **2.4.1: The School Environment**

As much as the school administration and environment is meant to provide a conducive environment for learning by all means, studies carried out on factors affecting girls' achievement of education at all levels indicate that some of the factors that affect girls educational achievement adversely are school based.

This is regardless of world Education Forum (2000) on EFA urge, that in the learning environment, the content, processes, and context of education must be free of gender bias, and encourage and support equality and respect. This includes teachers' behaviours and attitudes, curriculum and textbooks, and student interactions. Efforts must be made to ensure

personal security: Girls are often especially vulnerable to abuse and harassment on the journey to and from school and at school.

Module 9 Empowering Women for Success in Higher Education says that classroom interactions tend to disfavour females. It is a fact that teachers as well as learners carry into class their societal values of females and males. Thus they set up different levels of academic expectations for males and female learners, which turn out to be self fulfilling prophecy. Further, the curriculum content in various disciplines carry gender bias giving their impression that education is only for males and females are just intruders. ... indeed, there is gender stereotyping whereby business studies is typed feminine while science, mathematics and engineering are typed masculine. Such practice limits women's educational access and opportunity.

The instructional process used can also produce effects on male or female learners, for example, research has shown that, the use of cooperative learning style increases the achievement and interest of females more than the use of competitive learning styles. This is not the case of males in terms of achievement. In cases where learning resources are scarce, girls stand to lose as they are not aggressive enough to compete with boys over the scarce resources and this can affect their performance.

According to Barasa (2004), teacher's attitudes and teaching materials are the most significant implication for female retention in school and that teacher's experience and commitment to student learning emerge as key characteristics for successful learning. Chege and Sifuna (2006) note that the issue of sexual violence and abuse in some schools affect boys and girls, although, the latter are more vulnerable. The main offenders include teachers, workers in boarding schools and school peers. The abuse, which ranges from verbal harassment to physical abuse, leads to withdrawal from school, unwanted pregnancies, and the death of boys and girls through HIV/AIDS (GoK and UNICEF, 1998).

Poor learning environment in developing countries has always been identified as one of the factors that deter girls participation in schooling. Lack of equipment and learning materials, demotivated teachers due to poor pay, poor sanitation and distance to school especially in rural areas also affect girls' participation in school adversely (UNICEF, 1993).

Women for Success in Higher Education says that published statistics of staff in higher institutions in Africa as reported by Mbanefo (1996) show under-representation of women.

Among female staff, only a small proportion are professors. Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, Provosts or principal officers of institutions of higher learning are rarely women even in institutions that have large female student population. Deans of Faculties and Heads of academic and even non-academic departments are predominantly males. Near absence of women in certain disciplines: engineering, agriculture, physics, physical education, architecture, surveying, estate management and such other disciplines that carry masculine label or image record little or no presence of female students or teachers. The report goes on to say that in many disciplines especially in science and technology based courses, males perform better than females and that the number of males who earn first class degree is greater than that of females. This means that the girls have got no role models to ape.

Though the above mentioned factors affect girls educational achievement in schools, there are instances where such factors are almost fully addressed like schools where learning materials are available to all students, schools where its a purely girls schools and hence no chance for harassment from boys, boarding schools where distance to school is not a problem, schools where boys and girls are treated equally and gender stereotyping is not entertained, but still, the performance of girls and the number of those completing school is still lower than that of boys either from the same school or from different schools.

#### **2.4.2: Parents willingness to Invest in Girls' Education**

Among the factors that have been cited to affect girl child participation in education by different researchers is the girl's background in terms of educational level of the parents and commitment of parents to invest in girls' education. It has been observed that, educated parents are more likely to be willing and committed to invest in education of their daughters than uneducated ones.

Chege and Sifuna (2006) notes that ...it is apparent that most of the women who attend universities come from proportionately more advantaged backgrounds. In a study of 130 African students attending the then University of East Africa, it was found that 40 percent of the women in the sample had fathers who had completed secondary education compared to only 7.9 percent of the male students. It is also noted that educated parents are more motivated to seek (and more able to afford) education for their children than those who do not have educational background.



Some parents believe that boys are more intelligent, that they perform better in school and that they are a better educational investment than girls. ... in addition, parents worry about wasting money on the education of girls who are likely to get pregnant or get married before completing their schooling. There is also the strong belief that once married, girls become part of another family and parental investment is lost. In some cases, therefore, lack of money is an excuse for the reluctance of parents and families to invest in the education of girls because they do not perceive the value of education for girls and also because of the socio-cultural perceptions of the role of women in society.

Some parents especially in rural areas who are not educated do not value education of girls much and tend to have little or no interest in investing in their education. Instead, they prefer educating the boy child. Education of girls from such backgrounds is likely to be interfered with by other responsibilities associated with being a girl. FAWE notes that the ascription of being a girl and female for that matter makes girls bear many responsibilities in the home and society. Such responsibilities include food production, the economic well being of their families, care of siblings, household chores and others and that these factors have contributed greatly to hindering the enrollment of girls in school. Yet education of girls has been identified as a major link to national development.

Chege and Sifuna (2006) argue that, some parents encourage the sons to repeat standard eight so that they can perform well in the examinations and proceed to secondary school. The higher proportion of male repeaters gives boys an advantage over girls. In addition, the higher proportion of male repeaters suggest greater parental concern for their sons to advance to higher educational levels. .... It may also express itself in a greater willingness to excuse boys from household responsibilities so that they can study.

Hassan (2009) in a study to determine girl child participation in secondary school education in Central Division of Mandera East District found out that the majority of parents indicated that they educated their girls up to the primary school level and that most of the boys were taken to university, polytechnic and college level of education. This indicate that girls are not given priority in education as the boys.

### **2.4.3: Personal Interest in Schooling**

As the proverbial saying goes, that God helps those who help themselves, all other stakeholders may play their part in helping the girl child acquire education, but if the girl

child herself is not willing to cooperate with them and is not committed to the mission, very little progress might be achieved. It is, therefore, imperative to find from the horse's mouth whether they have interest in schooling or not.

Kasomo (2009) noted that girls have lower educational aspirations as compared to boys and that educational aspirations of females tend to decline compared to their male counterparts as they move up the educational ladder. The study and many other studies also cited pregnancy and peer pressure as main hindrances to girls' educational achievement. This calls for the girl child herself to take responsibility of her own life.

There are instances where a child may be in school, but with no dream, vision or aspiration for the future, they go to school because it is appropriate for them to be in school at that time. Such children may hail from rich families where school fees and any other materials required for education are available and environment at school and at home is conducive for learning. If the child has neither commitment and interest in school nor dream to achieve through education, they then expose themselves to peer pressure which results in negative influence like drug abuse, prostitution, pregnancy, truancy and premature marriage among other perils. Such activities and relationships are detrimental to their education and eventually leads to dropping out of school: in which case, the girl child is to blame.

This is because she personally made the choice to engage in such practices, knowing their repercussions upon her education. It is, therefore, obvious that if the girl does not draw a dream, vision, aspiration and goals for her education and focus on them, no body will do it for her. Consequently, she is likely to have less interest and commitment to education since she is not aiming at anything and she does not know her purpose for being in school. This could be attributed to lack of awareness of importance of education to the person and the community at large. It is a common sense fact that if you know the importance of something, you will do whatever it takes within your power to achieve it.

Other factors that have been cited to affect girl child participation in education by different researchers include drug abuse, indiscipline, disinterest, laziness, and the girls background in terms of educational level of the parents and commitment of parents to girls' education .

There are, however instances where girls and boys from families where parents are illiterate achieve university education. The question here is, " whose self-drive is the motor to education achievement, the girl's or the parent's? The girl's interest and self-drive for

educational achievement should drive the parent's commitment to invest in their education for no body can be more committed to your endeavour in life more than yourself.

Kasomo (2009) says that it is important to find out why girls appear to be "unconcerned" about the glaring benefits of education. As long as the majority of girls fail to proceed with formal education beyond secondary level and as long as college level of education is used as a major criterion in the distribution of well remunerated jobs and leadership positions, they will continue to be marginalized. Lack of education or acquisition of limited education among women who in Kenya and most other countries constitute over 50 percent of the total population, leads to their inequality representation in all facets of society including employment, politics and inevitably in decision making like parliament.

## **2.5: Conclusion of Literature Review**

It is clear from literature that many stakeholders have pooled their resources, ideas, corrective measures, strategies and efforts in all possible ways to achieve gender parity in education in Kenya and many other African countries. However, it is observable that imbalances in participation and achievement in education at all levels still prevail, boys outnumber girls in participation and achievement of education at all levels and gender parity in education is yet to be achieved. The state is even worse in rural areas.

Penina Mlama, Executive Director, FAWE notes that various interventions have been undertaken to address the gender gaps in the education sector and that significant achievements have been scored through these initiatives towards improving girls' access, retention and performance, but the gender disparities are still wide. It is clear, however, that unless quicker and strategic action is taken to address these gaps, EFA goals are unlikely to be achieved.

Although significant progress has been achieved to enhance the access of women to higher education, various socio-economic, cultural and political obstacles continue in many places in the world to impede their full access and effective integration. To overcome them remains an urgent priority in the renewal process for ensuring an equitable and non-discriminatory system of higher education based on the principle of merit (Module 9 Empowering women for Success in Higher Education).

The pattern of reduced access and increased gender disparities continues in the country's 23 public and private universities. Of the nearly 80,000 scholars enrolled in university, over

44,000 are men compared to fewer than 36,000 women, or 82 women for every 100 men. It is now widely accepted that reaching gender parity in higher education will not be possible by 2005. It could prove to be among the most difficult hurdles to cross in Kenya's race to reach its millennium objectives in education (Giant step for Kenya's schools).

Kenya made a commitment to achieve gender parity by 2005 as articulated in National policies and plans (MOEST, 2004:14). Nationally, Kenya has achieved almost near gender parity in participation at the primary school level of Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of 105.8 percent for boys and 103.7 percent for girls. However, this hides regional disparities where the participation of girls is as low as 15 percent, compared to 29.3 percent for the boys in the region.

Kasomo (2009) notes that more boys than girls, particularly in less industrialized countries of Africa, Kenya included continue to go to school and work their way up the educational ladder. Female enrollment has been lower than that of males at all levels of education in Kenya especially at secondary and university levels. World Education Forum (2000) notes that gender-based discrimination remains one of the most intractable constraints to realising the right to education. Without overcoming this obstacle, EFA cannot be achieved. Girls are a majority among out-of-school children and youth, although in an increasing number of countries boys are at a disadvantage. Even though the education of girls and women has a powerful trans-generational effect and is a key determinant of social development and women's empowerment, limited progress has been made in increasing girls' participation in basic education.

As much as girls need education to be prepared to participate fully and equally in the political, social and economic development of their society, it is observable that their number goes down as one climbs up the educational ladder. The Daily Nation of 1 September, 2010 (pg: 5) says that as at 2009, there were more females (3.4 million) compared to males (2.6 million) who confessed that they had never attended school. Further, the attainment of education in the country narrows down from primary through secondary to tertiary and university levels.

Education does not only open livelihood opportunities for women, but also empowers them to stand up against gender discrimination in all spheres of their lives, not only in education. Most rural areas have recorded the poorest transition rate of girls from primary school to secondary school to university and college education. Mwingi District is one of such areas.

Though studies have been done in different parts of the country to establish the factors affecting girls' education, no study has been carried out to establish the factors that affect girls' education in Thitha Location, Central Division of Mwingi District.

## **2.6: Theoretical Framework**

A theory is a reasoned statement or groups of statements, which are supported by evidence meant to explain phenomena. A theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories. It is a reasoned set of prepositions, which are derived from and supported by data or evidence (Kombo and Tromp, 2006:56).

Gender issues have continued to play a key role in the formulation of public policy, not least in the education sector, where the gender gap in many developing countries remains a challenge . ... In contemporary educational theory and practice, feminist thought provides invaluable direction on gender policies that seek to enhance inclusiveness and equality in education- so that it does not discriminate against girls and women or any minority groups (Chege and Sifuna,2006:1).

Research reveals that in order to address gender inequalities effectively and with reasonable results, women's concerns and their roles in both the public and private spheres need to be located in relation to those of men. Further, the educational benefits and the accruing socio-economic and political advantages (or disadvantages) of women need to be analysed and interpreted vis-a-vis those of men. (Chege and Sifuna,2006:7).

The following theoretical perspectives guided the study:

- Structural Functionalism Theory
- Gender Perspective Theory

### **2.6.1: Structural Functionalism Theory**

This theory proposes that a human society is like an organism and is made up of structures called social institutions. These institutions are specifically structured so that they perform different functions on behalf of the society in order for the society to continue existing. According to this theory, as a result of being interrelated and interdependent, one organ can affect the others and ultimately the whole. The whole can also affect one or all the social institutions (Kombo and Tromp,2006:56).

Talcott Parsons' Structural Functionalism theory talks of four functional imperatives for all "action" systems (his famous AGIL scheme). A function is a "complex of activities directed towards meeting a need or needs of the system". Parsons believes that there are four functional imperatives that are necessary for (characteristic of) all systems.

**Adaptation:** A system must cope with external situational exigencies. It must adapt to its environment and adapt the environment to its needs. The behavioral organism is the action system that handles the adaptation function by adjusting to and transforming to the external world.

**Goal Attainment:** A system must define and achieve its primary goals. The personality system performs the goal-attainment function by defining system goals and resources to attain them.

**Integration:** A system must regulate the interrelationship of its component parts. It also must manage the relationship among the other three functional imperatives (A,G,L). The social system copes with the integration function by controlling its component parts.

**Latency (Pattern Maintenance):** A system must furnish, maintain, and renew both the motivation of individuals and the cultural patterns that create and sustain the motivation. The cultural system performs the latency function by providing actors with the norms and values that motivate them for action.

According to Parsons, the four functions are interrelated and through them systems tend towards self- maintaining order, or equilibrium. In his views on change and dynamism, Parsons notes that the generalized abilities of people must be freed from their ascriptive bonds so that they can be utilized by the society. Most generally, this means that groups formerly excluded from contributing to the system must be freed for inclusion as full members of the society. This coupled with the function of adaptation can be used to explain how the society should outgrow the tradition of despising education for women and accord it the importance it deserves. It also urges the society to give equal opportunities to both women and men so as to stop excluding women from the development agenda. Generally, the society should embrace changes that have come up in modern times and recognize education for women as a crucial tool for personal, community, and national development. Traditionally, the place of women was perceived to be in the kitchen, doing household chores, reproduction and minding the family. Education for women was not perceived to be important and their potential in education was also highly doubted. However, in the modern times, things have changed and it has been globally realized that women have a right to equal

opportunities with men in education and all other spheres of life. It has also been realized that education for women plays a great role in their personal, community and national development.

Education for women has, therefore, turned out to be imperative for development at all levels and societies should therefore outgrow the traditional attitudes and mentality that despise education for women. Societies should embrace change and modernity and accord value for education for women so as to include them in development agendas (Ritzer George,1996:233-248)

### **2.6.2: Gender Perspective Theory**

Generally, a 'perspective' is a point of view from which certain decisions are made and/or conclusions are made. A gender perspective, therefore, is a world view that requires particular sensitivity in deducing socially constructed meanings and their implications for the reality of the relations between human beings, who are characterised as either feminine or masculine.

Gender frameworks entail analytical structures that enable us expose discrimination against one gender in terms of division of labour, resource allocation (be it education, economic, or material or non-material benefits), decision-making, cultural expectations and other socially defined or engineered activities and privileges. Gender plays a major role in structuring every aspect of social life, thus constituting one of the most basic and often unquestioned frameworks by which society locates women vis-a-vis men (Chege and Sifuna, 2006:1). In this way, gender functions like a conceptual tool that helps to organise the social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of humanity based fundamentally on biological sexual differences. This often results in mystification of what women and men actually do naturally as biological beings, with assumptions about what women and men ought to do as social beings ( Chege and Sifuna, 2006:1)

Although gender and sexual relations have often been misconstrued to be synonymous, theorists and researchers have demonstrated, quite convincingly, that being a woman or man (as opposed to being female or male) is the result of social interaction, often directed by the interests of men and from men's position of domination over women. In this creation of woman and man, the interaction between social institutions, mainly the school and family, help to reinforce and perpetuate a legendary polarity between the feminine and the masculine,

thus creating gender boundaries that are justified through myths and related social stereotypes. The school, family, and the work place help to legitimise a system of polarised gender relations that has remained one of the most powerful social structures and has continued to survive on unequal power relations between the sexes. (Chege and Sifuna, 2006:2).

This theory sets out the gender boundaries created by society and societal expectations of each gender in terms of achievement, power, occupation and expression among other aspects. It is, therefore, relevant to the study because it gives insights to why there is low participation of girls in secondary school education and beyond in Mwingi District and many other parts of the country, and the continent in general.

## **2.7: Conceptual Framework**

Development cannot take place by itself. It requires an educated, skilled and competent people. Seen from this angle, education becomes the most important factor for development as well as for empowering people. Educated people earn more and are respected by the society. It is because of its tangible contribution in changing the lives of people that education becomes an important part of the development policy in every nation (Training manual for local government representatives in non-formal education, undated)

Studies in many parts of the world have shown that women's education, compared to that of men, correlates strongly with their increased desire to educate their female and male children (Behrman, 1990). ... Although paternal education also promotes children's enrolment, particularly for girls more than boys, Lavy argues that the maternal effects are stronger (Chege and Sifuna, 2006:10). Gender inequality is argued to cause and perpetuate poverty and vulnerability in society as a whole.

Despite a demonstration of the positive effects of female education on national development, the majority of African women have historically continued to receive a relatively inferior education in terms of quality (processes and content), quantity (in terms of numbers that attend school and complete) and performance. In this kind of situation, women are ill-prepared to compete equally with male counterparts for jobs that require formal education or high-level technological skills and professionalism.

Until the first United Nations Conference on women (1975), the role of gender as a key variable in national development issues did not seem important in many developing countries



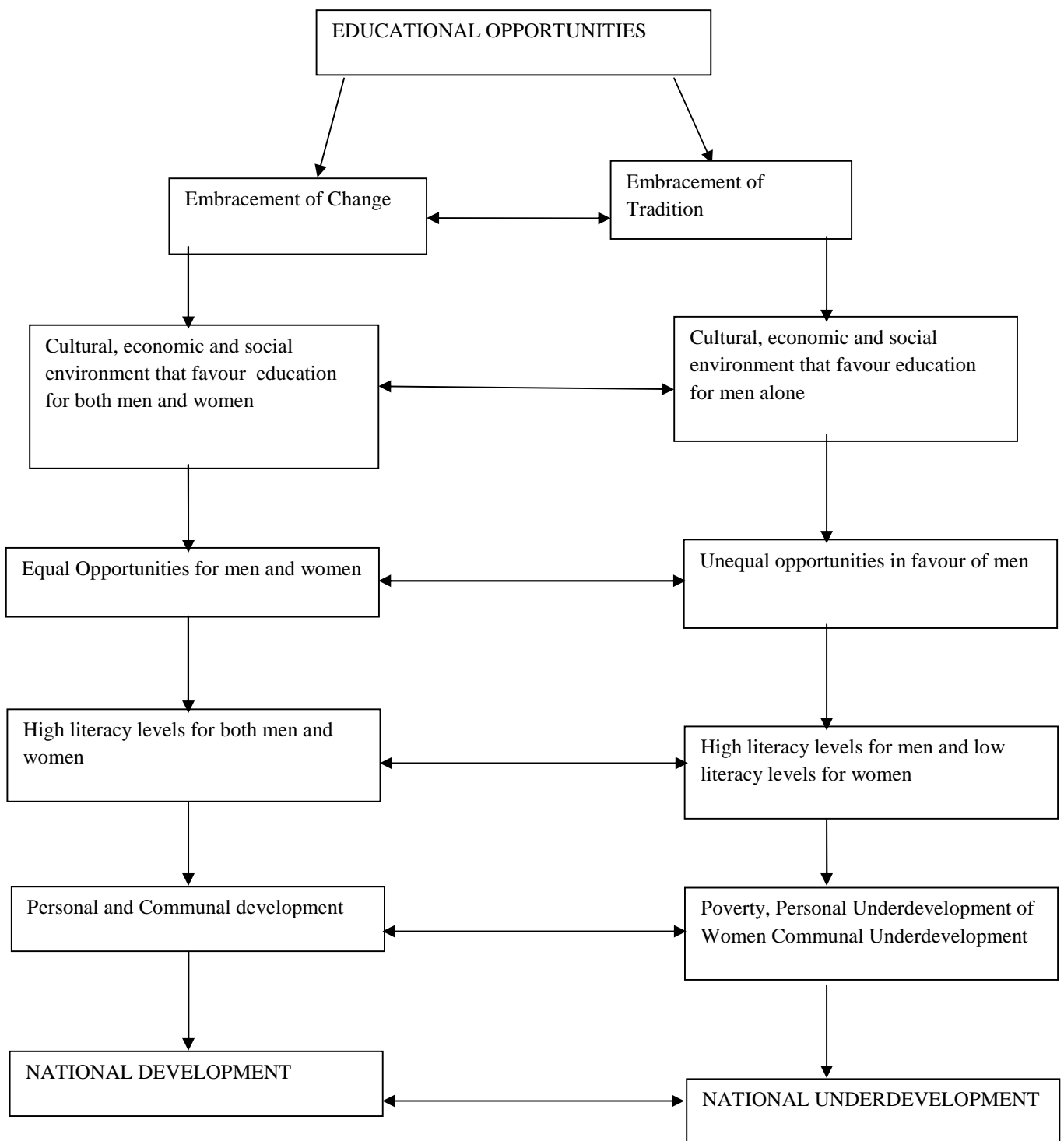
including Kenya. It is during this first UN Decade for Women that national governments agreed to recognise women clearly as the “missing link” in national development and economic success within the human capital investment framework. During this period, questions emerged regarding gender equity and equality of education akin to those raised by 18th Century English feminists such as May Wollstonecraft. In her works, *Thoughts on the Education of Women* (1787) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1789), she argued for a transformation of educational and socialisation processes that were responsible for stunting women’s intellect by teaching them to be subordinate to men. John Stewart Mill in his *Subjection of Women* (1869) pursued the theme of women’s education, arguing that unless the interest of men in sustaining gender boundaries within which women remained relegated to the domestic arena was challenged, women would continue to be discriminated against in education and in public life, contrary to the utilitarian ethics of the greatest good for the greatest number of people, regardless of their sex(Chege and Sifuna, 2006:7).

More than a century later, countries like Kenya found themselves rising to the international awakening of the United Nations General Assembly declaration of 1975 as the International Women’s Year followed by the declaration of 1975-1985 as the first UN decade for women. Governments started to redefine women as significant actors in national development and their role as crucial in development planning. Clearly, there was no way of giving this new definition an operational framework without locating formal education at the centre of women’s empowerment and their full integration into national development endeavours.

...African scholars, mainly women, continue to advocate for girls’ and women’s education, as well as policies that support improved education access, retention, performance, and transition of girls to higher levels.

Researchers and Scholars all over the world have linked education, especially education for women to individual, community and national development. As the proverbial saying goes, if you educate a man, you educate one person, if you educate a woman, you educate the whole community. Illiteracy has been pointed out as a cause of poverty and underdevelopment to both individual, community and nation. Generally, Development theories argue that developed or first world countries comprise of highly educated population while non developed and developing countries comprise of uneducated population. Consequently, the level of education of a population determines the level of development of the nation in question and vice-versa. This is illustrated in the following diagram (Figure: 2.7. 1):

Figure: 2.7.1



## **CHAPTER THREE:        METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0:    Introduction**

This chapter deals with the description of the methods applied in carrying out the research study. It is organized under the following sections: research design, site description, target population, sampling procedures, data collection techniques and tools, data processing and data analysis.

### **3.1:    Research Design**

A research design is used to structure research, to show how all the major parts of the research project work together to try to address the central research questions.

According to Kerlinger (1986), it is the plan and structure of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions. The plan is the overall program of the research and includes an outline of what the researcher will do from the beginning to the end.

The study employed descriptive design. Descriptive design is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). The purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists and it can be used when collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues. The study majorly employed quantitative research method but qualitative research method was also used where necessary.

### **3.2:    Site Description**

The study was carried out in Thitha Location, Central Division of Mwingi District, Eastern Province, Kenya. Mwingi District is one of the thirteen districts in Eastern Province. It borders Kitui District to the south, Machakos District to the west, Mbeere and Meru south District to the north and Tana River District to the east. The District covers an area of 10,030.30 Sq.km. Purposive sampling was used to select the district since it has high levels of illiteracy especially for women. Thitha Location was chosen because it is one of the areas where advancement of girls to secondary school education and beyond is relatively low. It is observable that the area has not been given its due attention in terms of secondary school education for girls.

Mwingi District has got nine divisions namely: Central, Migwani, Muumoni, Kyuso, Tseikuru, Ngomeni, Nguni, Nuu and Mui. Central Division has eight locations, Thitha being one of them. The division covers an area of 1,204.50 Sq. Km and has a population density of 86, being the second highest after Migwani which has a population density of 125. The population of women is estimated to be 53.5 percent. The district shows a very high prevalence of poverty, which is estimated at 60 percent (Mwingi District Development Plan, 2002-2008).

### **3.3.: Target Population**

Brinker (1980), defined a target population as a large population from which sample population is selected. It can also be defined as a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement. It refers to an entire group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common. The study targeted girls aged between 14-24 years who were in secondary school and those who had dropped out of school in the last four years.

### **3.4: Sampling Procedures**

Sampling is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population of interest so that by studying the sample, one may fairly generalize the results back to the population from which they were chosen (Trochim, 2005). Karung'a Mixed Day and Boarding Secondary School was purposively identified since it is the only secondary school in the Location.

The total population of girls in the school is sixty nine and all of them were purposively sampled. The total number of girls who had dropped out of school within the last four years was twenty five and they were all purposively sampled. Convenient sampling was used to select ten parents. Convenient sampling was also used to select five teachers out of nine as key informants. In total, a sample of one hundred and nine respondents was selected comprising of sixty nine girls who were in school, twenty five girls who had dropped out of school within the last four years, ten parents and five teachers (Key Informants).

Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select information rich cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Cases of the subjects are therefore hand picked because they are informative or they possess the required characteristics.

Convenient sampling involves selecting cases or units of observation as they become available to the researcher (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The study employed convenient sampling to select ten parents because it was difficult to find the parents in their homes. Convenient sampling was also used to identify five teachers because it was difficult to find the teachers in their offices.

### **3.5: Data Collection Techniques and Tools**

The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews. Data collection tools used in this study were interview guide and questionnaire .

Questionnaires were administered on girls who were in secondary school, those who had dropped out of school within the last four years and on parents. Interview guide was used to interview the key informants. The questionnaires contained both open and closed ended questions . In closed ended questions, respondents choose from a fixed set of answers while in an open ended question, respondents answer in their own words and this gives them freedom to express their personal views on the subject. This enables the researcher to capture a wide range of views and hence help in understanding the problem better and formulate the appropriate recommendations for remedy.

### **3.6: Data Processing and Data Analysis**

Both secondary and primary data were used in this study. Secondary data was obtained from existing literature from libraries and internet. Research instruments were administered to the respondents to obtain the primary data. The researcher obtained a research permit before embarking on the study. Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of information collected. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics in form of averages, percentages and frequency tables among others. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyse the data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**

### **4.0: Introduction**

This chapter provides detailed analysis of the socio-economic and cultural drivers of the advancement of girls' education among secondary school girls in Thitha Location, Central Division of Mwingi District. The location has only one secondary School called Karung'a Secondary School which is Mixed Day and Boarding. Information from the school registers indicated that the total population of girls in the school is sixty nine and the number of girls who had dropped out of school within the last four years was twenty five. All the sixty nine girls in school and the twenty five girls who had dropped out of school within the last four years were purposively sampled for the study. Ten parents were also sampled for the study while five teachers were sampled as key informants. A total of one hundred and nine respondents were used in the study.

The chapter presents data obtained from all the respondents of the study in line with the objectives of the research outlined in chapter one. The presentation is guided by the following study questions:

- i) What is the frequency of girls advancing to secondary school and beyond at household level?
- ii) What are the factors affecting advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond
- iii) What is the parents' attitude towards advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond
- iv) What is the girls' attitude towards advancement to secondary school and beyond

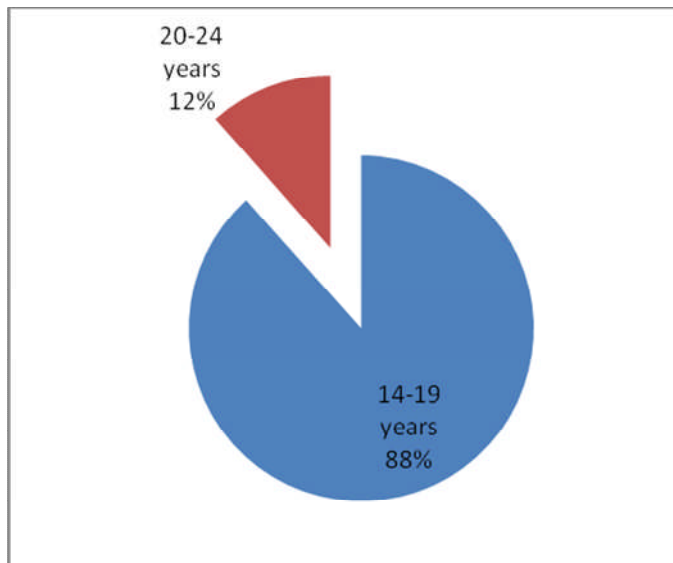
### **4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

This section gives information on age and class of study of girls who are in school, age of girls who had dropped out of school and their class of study at the time they dropped. Information about the parents' occupation, level of education and family size is also outlined.

#### 4.1.1: Age Distribution of Girls Who are in School

Generally, the secondary school age bracket is between 14 to 19 years. Ages of the sixty nine girls in school were taken to establish whether they are within secondary school age or not. The following is a pie chart presentation of respondents' ages.

**Chart 1: Age Distribution of Girls Who are in School**



The findings show that majority (88%) of the respondents are aged between 14-19 years and are therefore within secondary school age bracket. The remaining 12 percent are aged between 20-24 years. This is slightly above secondary school going age bracket since they are over 20 years.

The presence of over-age children in primary and secondary schools can be occasioned by late entry and repetition of classes. This makes the children to be three or more years older above the age bracket for primary and secondary school (Lewin et al, 2011).

#### 4.1.2 Level of Study Distribution of Girls Who are in School

Girls who are in school were asked to indicate their level of study. The responses are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Level of Study Distribution of Girls who are in School**

<b>Level of Study</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Form 1	26	38
Form 2	14	20
Form 3	20	29
Form 4	9	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings show that 38 percent of the girls are in form one, 20 percent are in form two, 29 percent are in form three and 13 percent in form four. The results show a trend where the number of girls seem to decline as one moves from form one to form four hence the form four class has the least number of girls (13%) .

The decline in the number of girls in school with time can be attributed to the fact that many girls drop out of school before completing form four. This is due to various factors that affect the education of the girl child. Some of the factors include lack of school fees and early pregnancy, among others. This is supported by Chege and Sifuna (2006) who argue that, in all secondary schools in the country, the proportionate loss between each successive year of schooling is greater for girls than for boys. They further assert that the higher cost of education in the unaided schools is a major cause of the higher attrition of girls. Other factors include sexual harassment which results in premarital pregnancies, and violence meted out to girls, particularly in mixed secondary schools.

#### **4.1.3: Age and Level of Study Distribution of Girls who Have Dropped Out of School**

The researcher visited the girls who had dropped out of school at their homes to get information on the age and Level of study at which they left schooling. Their responses are given in table 2.



**Table 2: Age and Level of Study of Study Distribution of Girls who have Dropped Out of School**

Age	No. of Girls		Level of Study Dropped Out at							
	F	%	Form 1		Form 2		Form 3		Form 4	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
14-19	18	72	5	20	6	24	7	28	0	0
20-24	7	28	1	4	1	4	4	16	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

The results in table 2 indicate that majority (72%) of the respondents are aged between 14-19 years while 28 percent are aged between 20-24 years. Most of them (44%) dropped out of school at form three followed by 28 percent who dropped out of school at form two. Twenty four percent and 4 percent dropped out of school at form one and form four respectively.

From the findings, the largest number of students dropped out of school at form three which is just one year before sitting for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. This can be attributed to various reasons such as fear of failure at form four due to previous poor performance or being sent out of school because of accumulated school fees balance. This is supported by Ministry of Finance and Planning Report (2000) which noted that young people stop attending school because they have failed their exams while others stop attending school because they do not find it interesting.

Generally, dropping out of school can be caused by many reasons. According to Ngware et al (2006), the factors that block students from school enrollment include lack of school fees, lack of interest, pregnancy, early marriage and work at home among others.

#### **4.1.4: Background Information of Families**

According to Juma et al (2012) family characteristics such as family income, parental level of education and family size determine girls' attainment of secondary education.

This section explores the family background information of the 69 girls who were in school and 25 girls who had dropped out of school within the last four years. The information given is in terms of parents' level of education, parents' occupation and the current number of children in the family.

#### 4.1.5: Parents' Level of Education

The 69 girls who were in school and 25 girls who had dropped out of school were asked to indicate their parents' level of education. The responses are tabulated in table 3.

**Table 3: Parent's Level of Education**

Girls Who Were in School								
Parent's Level of Education	Both parents		Father only		Mother only		Total Frequency per Row	Total Percentage per Row
	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Never been to school	12	17.4	1	1.4	2	2.9	15	21.7
Primary	19	27.5	10	14.5	6	8.7	35	50.7
Secondary	6	8.7	8	11.6	2	2.9	16	23.2
Tertiary	1	1.4	2	2.9	0	0	3	4.3
University	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>							<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>
Girls Who Were Out of School								
Parent's Level of Study	Both parents		Father only		Mother only		Total Frequency Per Row	Total Percentage Per Row
	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Never been to school	10	40	1	4	2	8	13	52
Primary	5	20	2	8	0	0	7	28
Secondary	1	4	2	8	1	4	4	16
Tertiary	0	0	1	4	0	0	1	4
University	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>							<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings show that 17.4 percent of girls who are in school and 40 percent of girls who are out of school come from families where both parents have never been to school. Very few (1.4% ) of girls who are in school and 4 percent of girls who are out of school come from

families where only father has never been to school. The rest (2.9%) of girls who are in school and 8 percent of girls who are out of school come from families where only the mother has never been to school.

Findings on attainment of formal education up to primary level show that a considerable number (27.5%) of girls who are in school and 20 percent of girls who are out of school have both parents who have attained formal education up to primary level. Few girls (14.5%) of girls who are in school and 8 percent of girls who are out of school have only the father who has attained formal education up to primary level. The rest (8.7%) of girls who are in school have only the mother who has attained formal education up to primary level.

Findings on attainment of formal education up to secondary level indicate that 8.7 percent of the girls in school and 4 percent of girls who are out of school have both parents who have attained formal education up to secondary level. Eleven point six percent of girls who are in school and 8 percent of girls who are out of school have father only who has attained formal education up to secondary level. Two point nine percent of girls who are in school and 4 percent of girls who are out of school have mother only who has attained formal education up to secondary level.

Findings on tertiary education indicate that very few (1.4% ) of girls in school have both parents with at least college level of education. None of the girls who are out of school come from families where both parents have attained college level of education. Few families (2.9%) of girls who are in school and 4 percent of girls who are out of school have the father as the only person who has attained formal education up to college level. Results on university education show that none of the girls has any parent who has attained university level of education.

From the findings, most of the parents have either never been to school or have only attained formal education up to primary level. Very few have attained formal education up to secondary and college level.

This imply that the literacy level of the parents is very low. Many studies associate parental literacy with commitment and willingness to educate children in a family. On the other hand, parental low literacy is associated with laxity to educate children, especially girls. This is supported by Ngware et al (2006) who noted that more educated parents are likely to provide a more conducive learning environment for their children than uneducated ones.

Kabeer (2004) further noted that mothers’s education is more powerfully associated , than that of father’s with the likelihood of children going to school, especially girls.

#### 4.1.6: Parents’ Main Occupation

The income of a family has implications on the family’s ability to access basic needs. The researcher sought to establish the parents’ main occupation of the sixty nine girls in school and twenty five girls who are out of school. Responses are presented in table 4.

**Table 4: Parents’ Main Occupation**

Occupation	Girls in school				Girls out of school			
	Father		Mother		Father		Mother	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Unemployed	38	55.1	54	78.3	14	56	24	96
Farming	2	2.9	0	0	9	36	1	4
Employed	29	42	15	21.7	2	8	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Results in table 4 show that 55.1 percent of girls in school and 56 percent of girls who are out of school reported that their fathers are not in formal employment. Most of the girls (78.3%) who are in school and 96 percent who are out of school reported that their mothers are not in formal employment.

It is evident from the findings that the rate of unemployment of parents of both girls who are in school and those who are out of school is very high. This is a challenge to the parents because it translates to low income and in most cases poverty. Such parents might be unable to meet all the requirements of the family, especially education for the children. This is supported by Chege and Sifuna (2006) who noted that socio-economic factors play a major role in girls’ access to secondary education. A girl’s chances of attending secondary school, compared to that of a boy, depend largely upon the income of her family.

The results also indicate that 36 percent of girls who are out of school and 2.9 percent of girls who are in school reported that their fathers’ main occupation is farming. Four percent of girls who are out of school reported that their mothers’ main occupation is farming. Mwingi district is characterized by inadequate rainfall which cannot support meaningful farming. This means that the harvest is unlikely to be adequate for food requirements in a family hence one cannot rely on farming as a means of livelihood. This is in agreement with Kaloi et al (2005) who noted that the rainfall pattern in the district is bimodal but erratic, and unreliable.

This unreliability makes the district a disaster (drought) prone area. The shortness of the seasons and unreliability of rainfall makes crop failure an endemic feature, particularly for households growing the drought intolerant crops such as maize and beans.

Results on the number of parents who are employed show that 42 percent of girls who are in school and 8 percent of girls who are out of school indicated that their fathers are employed. A few (21.7%) of girls who are in school reported that their mothers are employed.

From the above findings, the number of parents who are employed is small (less than 50%). This means that the other proportion of the population is unemployed. This poses a challenge to the parents in terms of meeting the basic requirements of the family.

It was established during the study that most of the parents who are said to be employed work as casual labourers in the school, others run kiosks in the shopping centre which are poorly stocked and the rest work as casual labourers in the construction industry. Earnings from this kind of employment are limited, irregular and unpredictable. Income of such parents is unlikely to be adequate for the family requirements and for education of the children.

The family background information discussed above indicate that the level of unemployment of parents in the area under study is very high. Although it was reported that some parents practise farming, the climatic conditions of the area cannot support meaningful farming hence farming cannot be relied on as a means of livelihood. The combination of high level of unemployment, temporary employment and poor climatic conditions result in low income in the families and hence poverty in the area. This means that affordability of school fees among the parents might be a challenge.

The area under study is characterized by high poverty level. Many families struggle to meet the high cost of secondary education. The Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010) cites poverty as a major development challenge in the district (60% of the total population live below poverty line). This leads to high rate of dropouts as many parents cannot afford to pay school fees.

#### 4.1.7: Family Size

Girls who are in school and those out of school were asked to indicate the current number of siblings in their families. The number of children in a family is used to determine the size of the family. Responses on family size are tabulated in table 5.

**Table 5: Family size**

No. of Siblings	Girls in school		Girls out of school	
	F	%	F	%
1-2	0	0	2	8
3-4	9	13	9	36
5 and above	60	87	14	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings in table 5 show that 8 percent of girls who are out of school reported that the current number of siblings in the families where they come from is between one and two. Thirteen percent of girls who are in school and 36 percent of girls who are out of school reported that the current number of siblings in the families where they come from is between three and four. The rest (87%) of girls who are in school and 56 percent of girls who are out of school reported that the current number of siblings in the families where they come from is five or more.

The above findings reveal that more than half of the families for both girls in school and girls who are out of school are large with up to five or more siblings. This is contrary to the New sessional paper No. 3 (2012) on population for National Development that proposes the mean ideal number of children per family to be three as opposed to the current four in order to control the growth of Kenya's population.

Having large families of up to five or more children means that many resources are required to meet the needs of the family. The parents have large families but low income meaning that their income might not be enough to meet the family requirements in terms of food and education for the children. According to Ngware et al (2006) low income implies that a household can only squeeze its budget to cater for the most basic needs. In some cases, most basic needs might not include education for the children, especially where the number of children is big. This is supported by Giddens (2006) who argue that large families are seen

as partly responsible for ‘economic backwardness’, since a bread winner with many mouths to feed can hardly be expected to save money for investment purposes.

#### 4.2: MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings address the study objectives and the following study questions:

- i) What is the frequency of girls advancing to secondary school and beyond at household level?
- ii) What are the factors affecting advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond
- iii) What is the parents’ attitude towards advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond
- iv) What is the girls’ attitude towards advancement to secondary school and beyond

#### 4.3: The Frequency of Girls Advancing to Secondary School and Beyond

Secondary school education plays a key role in providing the youth with opportunities to acquire human capital that will enable them to pursue higher education and to improve their skills leading to higher labour market productivity (Ngware et al, 2006).

The study sought to establish the number of girls who have attained secondary school education and beyond. Responses from 104 respondents are presented in table 6.

**Table 6: Frequency of Girls who have advanced to Secondary School and Beyond**

No. of Girls in a family	Secondary		College		University	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0	70	67.3	94	90.3	104	100
1	28	26.9	9	8.7	0	0
2	5	4.8	1	1.0	0	0
3	1	1.0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>

As indicated in table 6 above, 67.3 percent of the families have no girl who has attained secondary school education. About a quarter (26.9%) have only one girl who has attained secondary school education. The rest (4.8%) and 1 percent have two and three girls respectively who have attained secondary school education.

Findings on college education indicate that majority (90.3%) of the families have no girl who has attained college education. Eight point seven percent have one girl who has attained

college education and 1 percent have two girls who have attained college education. None of the families had a girl who has attained university education.

From the findings, it is clear that the number of girls who have attained secondary school education and beyond is very low. The number declines as one goes up the educational ladder (the number of girls who have made it to college is less than those who have made it to secondary and none of them has attained university level of education).

The findings are similar to those of Kiriti and Tisdell (2005) studying on family size, economics and child gender preference in Nyeri district. They found out that very few women reach secondary school and there was none who had attained university education.

Low attainment of secondary school education can be attributed to high level of dropping out of school by the girls. According to Chege and Sifuna (2006), girls face many challenges in schooling ranging from lack of school fees, early pregnancies, long distance to school and family demands among others. These interfere with their education and sometimes lead to dropping out of school. They further note that as girls advance in schooling, obstacles that reduce their chances of completing the primary cycle and proceeding to secondary school increase. In all secondary schools in the country, the proportionate loss between each successive year of schooling is greater for girls than for boys.

This is further supported by the Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010) which noted that many of school age children in the district are not in school and for the few who are in school, the drop out level is very high. This is because the parents are very poor and cannot afford to pay school fees.

The low attainment of college education and non attainment of university education could be occasioned by low transition rate from secondary school to college or university. According to the Vision 2030 (2007) the key challenge in education is transition from secondary level to university level, as only 3 percent of secondary school students currently enter university. This proportion does not compare favourably with that of middle income countries. This is further supported by Chege and Sifuna (2006) who noted that low secondary school enrollment reduces the scope for progress in higher education. Gender dimensions in education continue to face serious challenges from low rates of female participation, transition, performance and educational achievement.



Generally, the low attainment of secondary and post secondary school education could be partly occasioned by high level of parental illiteracy. It is argued that children from well educated parents have high chances of joining good schools, remaining in school and eventually performing well at form four. This is supported by Juma et al (2012) researching on Impact of Family Socio-Economic Status on Girls Students' Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Kenya. He concluded that, parental level of education influence academic achievement of girls in secondary schools.

Another factor that can affect the achievement of post secondary education is the quality of the school. Schools with inadequate resources in terms of qualified teachers, reading books, libraries, and teaching laboratories imply that the quality of education offered is poor. This leads to poor performance of students hence making none proceed to university. Quality and equality in education are inextricably linked..... Poor or marginalized children, who are more likely to have illiterate parents and less access to reading materials in the home, are more dependent on their teachers for their learning than are better-off children. As a result, poor instruction perpetuates inequalities because it is more often the most marginalized children who become school leavers, either through failure or voluntary termination (USAID, 2008).

#### **4.3.1: Frequency of Boys who have advanced to Secondary Education and Beyond**

The number of boys who have attained secondary school education and beyond was sought from 104 families for comparison purpose. Results are presented in table 7.

**Table 7: Frequency of Boys who have advanced to Secondary School and Beyond**

No. of boys	Secondary		College		University	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0	84	80.8	96	92.3	104	100
1	16	15.4	7	6.7	0	0
2	4	3.8	1	1.0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>

The results in table 7 above indicate that 80.8 percent of the families have no boy who has attained secondary school education. A few (15.4%) have only one boy who has attained secondary school education and the rest (3.8%) have two boys who have attained secondary school education.

Majority ( 92.3%) of the families have no boy who has attained college education, a few (6.7%) have only one boy who has attained college education and the rest (1%) have two boys who have attained college education. None of the families had a boy who has achieved university education.

The findings reveal that advancement of boys to secondary school and beyond is equally low in the area and the number also decline as one moves up from secondary to college and to university level.

Though existing reports indicate that preference for boys' education is common in many parts of the country, it does not seem to be the case in this area because both boys and girls seem to have very low educational attainment. This could be as a result of high poverty levels in the district making the parents unable to pay school fees for the children. According to the Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010) poverty in the district is prevalent and 60 percent of the population live below poverty line. This means that the parents are unable to maintain their children in school as the secondary school fees is too high for them. This leads to small numbers of boys and girls advancing to secondary school and beyond. This is in agreement with a Ministry of Health Publication (2006) on the Status of Women and girls in Kenya. The report noted that massive poverty has crippled many families' efforts to educate their children despite introduction of free primary education.

#### **4.4: Factors that Affect Advancement of Girls' Education**

Existing reports show that education for both boys and girls is affected by many factors which range from household level of income, level of education of parents, number of children in a household, traditional believes and many others.

This section gives analysis of socio-cultural, socio-economic and social factors that affect advancement of girls to secondary education and beyond in Thitha division.

##### **4.4.1: Social-cultural Factors**

The factors are restricted to preference for boys education (respondents were asked to indicate whether preference for boys' education influence low rates of educated girls), traditional believe in bride wealth (respondents were asked to indicate whether traditional believe in bride wealth influence low rates of educated girls) and the role of women as prescribed by culture (respondents were asked to indicate whether the role of women as

prescribed by culture influence low rates of educated girls) Findings from 104 respondents are presented in table 8.

**Table 8: Social-cultural Factors that Affect Advancement of Girls' Education**

Factor	Yes		No		Total (F) Per row	Total (%) Per Row
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Does preference for boys' education influence low rates of educated girls?	29	27.9	75	72.1	104	100
Does traditional belief in bride wealth influence low rates of educated girls?	30	28.8	74	71.2	104	100
Does the role of women as prescribed by culture influence low rates of educated girls?	36	34.6	68	65.4	104	100

From table 8 above, few (27.9%) of the respondents indicated that preference for boys' education influence low rates of educated girls while majority (72.1%) indicated that it does not. Views on whether traditional belief in bride wealth influence low rates of educated girls or not show that a few (28.8%) of the respondents indicated that it does while most of them (71.2%) indicated that it does not. Results on whether the role of women as prescribed by culture influence low rates of educated girls or not show that minority (34.6%) of the respondents indicated that it does while majority (65.4%) indicated that it does not.

The findings reveal that socio-cultural factors are not a major influence of low rates of educated girls in this area. This is because it is only less than half (30.4 percent on average) of the respondents who believe in them. This imply that boys and girls are fairly given equal education opportunities.

Many studies on girls' education agree with the Gender Inequality Theory that claim that men and women are situated in society not only differently but also unequally and are therefore given unequal opportunities in all spheres of life for preservation of old standing values and stereotypes (Ritzer, 1996). They conclude that boys and girls are not given equal education opportunities. An example is Hussein (2009), in a study on factors affecting girls' education in Central Division of Mandera East District. He noted that the community confessed that education for girls is not important and preference for boys' education was prevalent.

Though the opinion of many studies agree with the theory, it is however, practically not the case here. This is because opinion of the majority (69.6 percent on average) of the

respondents is contrary to the gender inequality theory. This is because they asserted that boys and girls should be given equal education opportunities. This is a signal that the people are outgrowing old traditions that despise importance of girls' education and are embracing change and getting to accord importance to girls' education.

The parents admitted that previously, preference for boys' education was common but the phenomenon is diminishing and people have realized that education for girls is equally important. This is supported by Chege and Sifuna (2006) who noted that in many parts of the country, secondary education is valued for daughters, as well as for sons, however, when it comes to acute severe inadequate school fees for both, the girl stand to lose.

The general change of perception of the population can be explained by the fact that as societies gradually undergo modernisation, some of the backward traditions that affect human rights adversely either die out, people outgrow them or they are abolished by the government.

The government of Kenya has played a big role in eliminating some of the practices that discriminate against girls' education in many ways. A good example is the Constitution of Kenya No 43 (1) which asserts that every person has the right to education and No. 53 which asserts that every child has the right to free and compulsory basic education. This is backed by the Children's Act (2001) and the Education Act (2012) which states that every child is entitled to free and compulsory primary education the provision of which shall be the responsibility of the government and the parents.

Parents are, therefore, charged with the responsibility of ensuring that children (both boys and girls) of school going age are in school. The parent also has a duty to protect the child from neglect, discrimination and abuse. Violation of this is a crime and legal action can be taken against the parent in question. The Kenya government has outlawed forced teenage marriage and its perpetrators can be jailed. This is a development in the society which has favoured the girl child education since many parents who despised girls' education are forced to obey the law in fear of being prosecuted.

This has almost silenced some of the practices that influence girls' education adversely like forced early marriage, preference for boys' education and forcing girls to remain at home and do household chores instead of going to school.

Campaigns to protect girls from early marriage and other practices that interfere with their education are prevalent. A good example is the church. A catholic Bishop in Kuria district protesting against teenage girls being pulled out of school and forced to get married had the following to say “to ensure that girls go to school, we have launched campaign against child marriages and made it one of our resolutions to build schools in all the parishes for girls” (Finke, 2003).

The Government’s African Inland Church Girl’s Primary School in Kajiado district shelters primary school girls from the Maasai community who have been rescued from forced marriage by well wishers and those who have ran away from their parents after being forced to leave school and get married. The school Principal had the following to say, “today, 85 percent of the school’s students go on to secondary school and several have completed university with advanced degrees. I am even starting to see encouraging changes in people’s attitudes towards education for girls” (Finke, 2003).

Non Governmental Organisations also campaign for equal education opportunities for both boys and girls. According to Amnesty International, everyone has the right to education- which should be available and free to all at least at the primary level. The United Nations’ Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948 asserts that every one has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. As part of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), the Commission on Human Rights urged member states to give full effect to the right to education and to guarantee that this is recognized and exercised without discrimination of any kind: to take all appropriate measures to eliminate obstacles limiting effective access to education, notably by girls, including pregnant girls, children living in rural areas and children belonging to minority groups.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is geared towards ensuring that all children realize their right to education, and that every child has the opportunity to develop to his or her full potential.

Under International Human Rights Law, governments are responsible for creating laws and service agencies to protect the right to education for all. Citizens can then use the legal system and other available mechanisms to prosecute individuals or groups who violate human rights.

Such interventions have created great awareness on importance of education for both boys and girls in societies. They have also instilled fear among parents who are victims of despising girls' education. This is because failure to take a child to school is a violation of the child's right and can lead to prosecution of the parent. The parents have no option but to obey the law. All these could be a reason behind the opinion of the majority of respondents that boys and girls should be given equal education opportunities.

#### 4.4.2: Socio-economic Factors

The factors are limited to household income, household expenditure and affordability of school fees. The indicator for measuring household income is parent's main occupation while the indicator for measuring household expenditure is the current number of children in a family. Both household income and household expenditure are used to determine affordability of school fees. Responses on the parent's main occupation are given in Table 9.

**Table 9: Parents' Main Occupation**

Main Occupation	Girls in school				Girls out of school			
	Father		Mother		Father		Mother	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Unemployed	38	55.1	54	78.3	14	56	24	96
Farming	2	2.9	0	0	9	36	1	4
Employed	29	42	15	21.7	2	8	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings in table 9 indicate that 71.3 percent (on average) of both girls in school and girls who are out of school reported that their parents are not in formal employment.

High level of unemployment in a family can be as a result of parental low literacy which limits access to a well paying job. This means that the family income is limited and might not be enough for all the family requirements, especially education for the children.

According to Stevens and Schaller (2009), parental unemployment has a pervasive and insidious impact on childrens' educational achievement and children from families with

unemployed parents hardly attain complete education. This is because unemployment is associated with loss of income, which means that parents have less money for food, health care, housing and other necessities.

This is supported by Ayres (1995) who argued that if a person fails to secure employment, then that means of acquiring food (through getting a job, earning an income and buying food with that income) fails. He further noted that over a typical year, the poor spend nearly all their income on consumption of one sort or another, and at least half of this consumption is likely to be in the form of food. Generally, high level of unemployment is an indication of limited access to basic requirements in a family, especially education for the children and it also leads to poverty.

Though some parents (23.9 percent on average) are said to be employed, it was established during the study that most of them work as casual labourers with limited and irregular pay. This imply that their income is minimal and affordability of school fees might be a challenge to them.

A few parents are said to be farmers but the rainfall pattern of the area is erratic and the climatic conditions cannot support meaningful farming hence one cannot rely on farming as a means of livelihood. This is supported by Kaloi et al (2005) studying on Food Security Status of Households in Mwingi District. He noted that the rainfall pattern in the area is bimodal but erratic , and unreliable. This unreliability makes the district a disaster (drought) prone area. The shortness of the seasons and unreliability of rainfall makes crop failure an endemic feature, particularly for households growing the drought intolerant crops such as maize and beans. This means that the crop harvest per family is unlikely to be adequate for family food requirements. The harvest has, therefore, to be supplemented with buying food. When it comes to family expenditure, food requirement then takes priority over school fees.

To measure the family size of parents, both girls who are in school and those who are out of school were asked to give information on the number of siblings in the families they come from. Responses on family sizes are presented in table 10 below.

**Table 10: Family Size**

No. of Siblings	Girls in school		Girls out of school	
	F	%	F	%
1-2	0	0	2	8

3-4	9	13	9	36
5 and above	60	87	14	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Findings on family size for both girls in school and girls who have dropped out of school indicate that majority (71.5 percent, on average), of the girls come from large families of up to 5 or more siblings.

A possible cause of large families of up to five or more children can be literacy level of parents. Parents with low literacy levels are associated with large families and vice-versa. According to Kiriti and Tisdell (2003), Kenyan women have more children, especially in rural areas, than in most developing nations. This is believed to be an impediment to Kenya's economic development. They further assert that education of a woman has been identified as being a factor influencing family size.

This is in agreement with findings of Mburugu and Adams (2004) studying on Families in Kenya who noted that a difference of slightly more than two children exists between women with no education and women with at least some secondary education.

The government and other stakeholders have been carrying out family planning campaigns in efforts to control population growth in the country. The New Sessional Paper No. 3 (2012) on Population for National Development proposes a mean ideal number of three children per family as opposed to the current four in order to control the population growth.

Cwako (1997) Studying on Married Women's Ideal Family Size Preferences and Family Planning Practices: Evidence from Rural Kenya noted that the ideal family size for the sample was 4.4.

A family with up to 5 or more children can then, be regarded as a large family since it is above the New Sessional Paper No. 3 (2012) on Population for National Development proposal of an ideal family size of 3 children per family. Having a large family means that more resources are needed for the upkeep of the family. In most cases, parents of such children might be unable to meet the educational requirements of the children. This is supported by Treiman (2005) who argued that there is a negative effect of the number of



siblings on childrens' educational attainment because each additional sibling reduces the family resources available to each child.

The area receives inadequate rainfall and residents hardly harvest enough food for their families hence food requirement in the family takes priority over other needs like school fees. This means that most of the parents might be unable to afford school fees for their children.

According to Kaloi et al (2005) households with 5 or more members are more likely to be food insecure compared to households with less than 5 members. Giddens (2006) further noted that large families are seen as partly responsible for 'economic backwardness', since a bread winner with many mouths to feed can hardly be expected to save money for investment purposes.

The combination of high levels of unemployment, Low income, Poor harvest and large family size results in limited resources to meet the family requirements. This means that affordability of school fees for the children is a challenge. This is supported by Juma et al (2012) studying on Impact of Family Socio-Economic Status on Girl Students' Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Kenya: A Case Study of Kisumu East District who noted that family income and family size influenced academic achievement of girls in secondary schools.

Majority (98.6%) of the 69 girls in school admit that school fees is a major challenge in their education while 40 percent of the 25 girls who have dropped out of school admit that they dropped out due to lack of school fees. All the ten parents interviewed and the key informants rate school fees as the biggest challenge facing girls' education in the area.

The area is characterized by high poverty level and many families struggle to meet the high cost of secondary education. Chege and Sifuna (2006) noted that socio-economic factors play a major role in girls' access to secondary education. A girl's chances of attending secondary school, compared to that of a boy, depend largely upon the income of her family. The Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010) cites poverty as a major development challenge in the district (60% of the total population live below poverty line). This leads to high rate of dropouts as many parents cannot afford to pay school fees.

#### 4.4.3: Social Factors

The social factors are limited to school environment, parents willingness to invest in girls' education and personal interest in schooling on the part of girls.

The first factor measured is school environment. The school based factors are measured in terms of teachers' attitude towards education for both girls and boys and availability of teaching facilities in the school. To measure the teachers' attitude, students were asked to rate the teachers in terms of availability to guide students, paying attention to students' concerns, encouraging students to work hard and showing a balanced expectation on both girls' and boys' performance. Respondents' views are presented in table 11.

**Table 11: Teachers' Attitude**

Question	Excellent		Very Good		Good		Poor		Very Poor		Total (F) Per Row	Total (%) Per Row
	F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
How would you rate your teacher's availability to guide students	43	62.3	14	20.2	10	14.5	0	0	2	3	69	100
How would you rate your teacher in terms of paying attention to students' concerns	36	52.1	17	24.6	13	18.8	1	1.4	2	3	69	100
How would you rate your teacher in terms of encouraging students to work hard	60	87	5	7	2	3	2	3	0	0	69	100
How would you rate your teacher in terms of showing a balanced expectation on both girls' and boys' performance	44	64	13	18.8	5	7	3	4.3	4	5.8	69	100

From table 11 above, 62.3 percent of the students rated teachers' availability to guide students as excellent, 20.2 percent rated them as very good, 14.5 percent rated them as good and 3 percent rated them as very poor. The findings indicate that teachers in school are available to guide students. This is because majority (62.3%) of the students rated them as excellent, 20.2 percent rated them as very good and 14.5 percent rated them as good.

In terms of paying attention to students' concerns, 52.1 percent of the students rated the teachers as excellent, 24.6 percent rated them as very good and 18.8 percent rated them as good. Very few ( 1.4 %) rated them as poor and 3 percent rated them as very poor. The results imply that teachers pay attention to students' concerns. This is evidenced by the

majority (52.1%) of the students who rated the teachers as excellent in terms of paying attention to students' concerns.

In terms of encouraging students to work hard, 87 percent of the students rated the teachers as excellent, 7 percent rated them as very good, and 3 percent rated them as good. Three percent of the students rated them as poor. It is clear from the results that teachers in school encourage students to work hard. This is indicated by 87 percent of the students who rated them as excellent in terms of encouraging students to work hard.

When it comes to showing a balanced expectation on both girls' and boys' performance, 64 percent of the students rated the teachers as excellent, 18.8 percent rated them as very good and 7 percent rated them as good. The rest (4.3%) rated them as poor and 5.8 percent rated them as very poor. From the findings, it can be concluded that teachers show a balanced expectation on both girls' and boys' performance. This is indicated by 64 percent of the students who rated teachers as excellent in terms of showing a balanced expectation on both girls' and boys' performance.

From the above findings, it can be deduced that teachers have a positive attitude towards their students and are therefore committed to them. This is because most of the students (66.4% on average) rated them as excellent.

Teachers' attitude and commitment towards their students is imperative for the success of the students. According to Barasa (2004), teacher's attitude and teaching materials are the most important implication for female retention in school. Additionally, teacher's experience and commitment to student learning emerge as key characteristics for successful learning.

Though the teachers attitude towards their students is positive, it was established during the study that the number of qualified teachers in the school is inadequate. This means that the teachers have the right attitude to teach but they are not qualified to give quality and competitive teaching and this can lead to poor performance of students. According to Olatunde and Nyauma (2012) students' academic performance is greatly influenced by the qualification of teaching personnel in secondary schools.

The students were asked to give information on teaching facilities in terms of adequacy of teaching laboratory, qualified teachers, reading books and sanitation. The results are given in table 12.

**Table 12 Teaching facilities in School**

Teaching Facilities	Inadequate		Adequate		Total Frequency Per Row	Total Percentage Per Row
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Teaching laboratory facilities	37	53.6	32	46.4	69	100
Qualified teachers	57	82.6	12	17.4	69	100
Reading books	19	27.5	50	72.5	69	100
Sanitation	46	66.7	23	33.3	69	100

From the above table, 53.6 percent indicated that teaching laboratory facilities are inadequate, while 82.6 percent indicated that qualified teachers are inadequate. Twenty seven point five percent indicated that they do not have enough reading books and 66.7 percent indicated that the sanitation facilities in school are poor. Inadequacy of the same facilities is also confirmed by the key informants.

Inadequacy of crucial facilities like teaching laboratory, qualified teachers and reading books can lead to poor performance of students. This is because it denotes that the students do not get the right quality of education and hence cannot compete favourably with students from well furnished schools.

According to Olatunde and Nyauma (2012), a good school should have adequate facilities which help the teachers to effectively teach and pupils to effectively learn in a convenient and comfortable environment. They further assert that the qualification of teaching personnel and presence of learning facilities like adequate books, libraries, teaching laboratories and good sanitation enhance students' academic performance and vice-versa.

This is further supported by Chege and Sifuna (2006) who assert that unavailability of learning resources and physical facilities, school types, availability of teachers and their qualifications determine performance in schools. Generally, the continued negative effects of poverty, unfavourable socio-cultural practices, gender-insensitive physical environments in schools, long distances to schools, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic combine to disadvantage girls' education.

The second factor measured is Parents' Willingness to Invest in Girls' Education.

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children get access to education (Children Act 2012). Views on parents' willingness to invest in girls' education are presented in Table 13.

**Table 13: Parents' rating of importance of girls education**

Aspects Pertaining Girls' Education	Very Important		Important		Not Important at all		Total (F) Per Row	Total (%) Per Row
	F	%	F	%	F	%		
How would you rate the importance of educating girls	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	100
How would you rate the importance of investing in girls' education	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	100
How would you rate the importance of monitoring girls' progress in school	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	100
How would you rate the importance of giving girls adequate time to study after school	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	100
How would you rate the importance of paying school fees for girls to go back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	100

The parents' willingness to invest in girls' education was measured by asking the parents to rate certain attributes in terms of very important, important and not important at all as far as importance of girls' education is concerned. The attributes include: educating girls, investing in girls' education, monitoring girls' progress in school, giving girls adequate time to study after school and paying school fees for girls to go back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy. All the parents (100%) agreed that fulfilling the above duties is very important. This indicates that the parents are willing to educate their daughters.

Contrary to the expectation on parents' stand towards paying school fees for the daughter to go back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy, the parents involved in this study agreed that they are willing to take their daughters back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy. This is in agreement with 1994 National Symposium on Education of Girls held in Machakos that agreed on formulation of guidelines for re-admission into the mainstream of formal education of adolescent mothers who have dropped out of school due to pregnancy.

The findings are opposed to other studies where many parents especially in the rural setting take pregnancy as an excuse to cut off their daughters' education. Some parents even fail to educate all the girls in a family if one gets pregnant before completing school in fear that the others might do the same. Lanyasunya (2008) studying on factors affecting girls' education in Samburu District noted that, parents in Samburu district did not wish to take their

daughters back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy but they took it as an excuse to marry them off.

The third factor measured is Personal Interest in Schooling . Though there are many challenges that face education for both girls and boys, sometimes the child might just be disinterested in schooling and end up dropping out. It is important to establish whether the girls themselves are interested in schooling or not. Findings on personal interest in schooling from the girls who are in school are presented in table 14.

**Table 14: Personal Interest in schooling of Girls**

Question	Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Not at all		Total (F) Per Row	Total (%) Per Row
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Do you do your home work in good time	53	76.8	16	23.2	0	0	0	0	69	100
Do you study after school hours	48	69.6	20	29	0	0	1	1.4	69	100
Do you discuss your career aspirations with your parents	40	58	19	27.5	2	2.9	8	11.6	69	100

Girls interest in school was measured using the following indicators: doing homework in good time, studying after school and discussing their career aspirations with parents.

Majority of them (more than 50%) indicated that they do their home work in good time, study after school and discuss their career aspirations with their parents.

The girls were further asked to give their opinion on importance of education in self, community and national development. All the girls in school (100%) agreed that education is very important in self development, development of the community and in national development.

All the 25 girls who had dropped out of school asserted that girls' education is very important in self development, community development and national development. When asked whether if given another chance they were willing to go back to school, they all agreed that they are willing to go back to school because they believed that education is key in shaping their future lives.

All these indicate that the girls are interested in schooling and are committed to their education. The low attainment of education by girls can be attributed to other factors like lack of school fees due to high level of poverty in the area, inadequate teaching resources in school and inadequate qualified teachers among others.

**4.4.4: Reasons given by girls who had dropped out of school as to why they actually dropped**

Girls who have dropped out of school were asked to give reasons as to why they actually dropped and the results are given in table 15.

**Table 15: Reasons Given by Girls Who have Dropped Out of School as to why they Actually Dropped**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Lack of school fees	10	40
Pregnancy	8	32
Poor Performance	2	8
Lack of Interest	2	8
To Help in household chores	1	4
To Get Married by Choice	2	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

The results show that majority (40%) of them dropped out of school due to lack of school fees, 32 percent due to early pregnancy, 8 percent due to poor performance and lack of interest in schooling respectively. Four percent dropped out of school to help their mothers at home while 8 percent dropped out of school to get married by choice.

The findings show that lack of school fees is the highest cause of dropping out of school followed closely by early pregnancy. Early pregnancy causes many girls to drop out of school. This is in agreement with Lanyasunya (2008), researching on factors affecting girls education in Samburu district who noted that many girls had dropped out due to early pregnancy.

Though the school under study is a mixed day and boarding one, most of the girls are day scholars because their parents are unable to pay the boarding fee for them. The distance to school is very long and this can expose the girls to danger of being raped or being lured to bad relationships in exchange of money which can lead to early pregnancy. This is supported by Naila (2004) who noted that poverty, along with peer pressure leads young school girls

to get involved in sexual relationships with fellow students and teachers in school and ‘sugar daddies’ outside. This is likely to lead to early pregnancy and hence dropping out of school.

Kasomo (2009) in a study of the factors militating against the education of girls in the lower Eastern Province of Kenya further noted that lack of school fees is relatively less important in hampering girls’ education compared to pregnancy and peer pressure.

The area is characterized by high levels of poverty and hence the parents are unable to afford school fees for their children. Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010) indicates that 60 percent of the population live below poverty line hence the reason why the greatest percentage of girls dropped out of school due to lack of school fees.

#### **4.4.5: Factors affecting girls education articulated by Key Informants**

Findings from key informants reveal that the rate of dropping out of school of girls is higher than that of boys, the number of girls decline as one moves up from form one to form four and that the number of girls in school is less than that of boys.

They rated the factors affecting advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond as follows: School fees, pregnancy, preference for boys education, expectation for girls to get married instead of going to school, expectation for girls to help their mothers instead of going to school, lack of interest and poor performance.

The key informants unanimously confessed that most of the parents are very poor and cannot afford to pay school fees for their children.

They admitted that the school gets some bursaries from the Constituency Development Fund and donations from well wishers but the funds are usually inadequate compared to the number of needy students. In addition, they pointed out that the school does not have adequate qualified teachers, adequate teaching facilities like fully equipped teaching laboratory and reading materials.

#### **4.5: Parents’ Attitude Towards Advancement of Girls to Secondary Education and Beyond**

Parents’ attitude towards advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond was assessed using certain attributes. These include: educating girls, investing in girl’s education, monitoring girl’s progress in school, giving girls adequate time to study after school and



paying school fees for girls to go back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy. Responses from ten parents are presented in table 16.

**Table 16: Parents attitude towards girls education**

Attribute	Very Important		Important		Not Important at all		Total Frequency Per Row	Total Percentage Per Row
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%		
Educating girls	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	100
Investing in girls' education	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	100
Monitoring girls' progress in school	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	100
Giving girls adequate time to study after school	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	100
Paying school fees for girls to go back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	100

The above findings indicate that all the parents (100%) agree that educating girls, investing in girls' education, monitoring girls' progress in school, giving girls adequate time to study after school and paying school fees for girls to go back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy is very important.

Many studies carried out on Girls' Education reveal that majority of parents are unwilling to take their daughters back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy. Some parents especially in the rural setting take pregnancy as an excuse to cut off their daughters' education. In some cases, parents even fail to educate all the girls in a family if one gets pregnant before completing school in fear that the others might do the same. This is supported by Lanyasunya (2008), researching on factors affecting girls' education in Samburu District. She found out that parents in Samburu district did not wish to take their daughters back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy. They took it as an excuse to marry girls off.

The findings in this study, however indicate that parents involved expressed willingness to take their daughters back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy. This is in agreement with 1994 National Symposium on Education of Girls held in Machakos that agreed on formulation of guidelines for re-admission into the mainstream of formal education of adolescent mothers who had dropped out of school due to pregnancy.

All the parents further admitted that education for both girls and boys is equally important. In their view, both boys and girls deserve equal opportunities in education and none should be given preference over the other. This is in agreement with the Liberal Feminism Theory that emphasizes on human rights, equal opportunities for men and women and affirmative action required to redress past injustices so as to create equality between men and women in all aspects of life.

Parents who participated in the study admitted that previously boys were given preference over girls in education. According to them, this phenomenon is diminishing since people have realized that education for girls is equally important. According to Chege and Sifuna (2006), in many parts of the country, secondary education is valued for daughters, as well as for sons. However, when it comes to acute severe inadequate school fees for both, the girl stands to lose.

Whereas many studies indicate that boys' education is preferred over that of girls, the respondents involved in this study agreed on equal opportunities. Hussein (2009), in a study on factors affecting girls' education in Central Division of Mandera East District found out that the community admitted that education for girls is not important and preference for boys' education was prevalent. However, in this study parents showed willingness to educate their daughters but their income is too low to afford secondary school fees. According to UNESCO (2005), many Kenyans live below poverty line and are hence pre-occupied with other survival needs but not education.

Generally, the results show a change of perception on the part of the parents towards education for girls. This is clearly expressed in the parents' views on preference for boys education and in payment of school fees for girls to go back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy. They have outgrown tradition, adopted and embraced change as far as girls education is concerned. This is supported by Parsonian Structural Functionalism. In his view on change and dynamism, Parsons notes that the generalized abilities of people must be freed from their ascriptive bonds so that they can be utilized by the society. Most generally, this means that groups formerly excluded from contributing to the system must be freed for inclusion as full members of society. This, coupled with the function of adaptation, can be used to explain how the parents have outgrown tradition of despising education for girls. Instead, they give them equal opportunities with boys and are willing to take them back to

school after dropping out due to pregnancy. They have embraced change in order to fit in the changing society.

Girls in school and those out of school were asked to rate their parents' commitment in connection to the following attributes: paying their school fees, giving them enough time to study after school, encouraging them to work hard in school and in monitoring their progress in school. Responses from 69 girls in school and 25 girls out of school are tabulated in table 17.

**Table 17: Parents commitment towards girls' education**

<b>Girls in School</b>								
<b>Parent's Commitment</b>	<b>Very Committed</b>		<b>Less committed</b>		<b>Not committed at all</b>		<b>Total (F) Per Row</b>	<b>Total (%)Per Row</b>
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>		
How would you rate your parent's commitment in paying school fees for you	65	94.2	3	4.4	1	1.4	69	100
How would you rate your parent's commitment in giving you enough time to study after school	50	72.5	17	24.6	2	2.9	69	100
How would you rate your parent's commitment in encouraging you to work hard in school	64	92.8	5	7.2	0	0	69	100
How would you rate your parent's commitment in monitoring your progress in school	54	78.3	11	15.9	4	5.8	69	100
<b>Girl Out of School</b>								
<b>Parent's Commitment</b>	<b>Very committed</b>		<b>Less committed</b>		<b>Not committed at all</b>		<b>Total (F) Per Row</b>	<b>Total (%)Per Row</b>
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>		
How would you rate your parent's commitment in paying school fees for you	20	80	3	12	2	8	25	100
How would you rate your parent's commitment in giving you enough time to study after school	18	72	5	20	2	8	25	100
How would you rate your parent's commitment in encouraging you to work hard in school	18	72	6	24	1	4	25	100
How would you rate your parent's commitment in monitoring your progress in school	19	76	2	8	4	16	25	100

The findings in table 17 above show that 94.2 percent of girls who are in school and 80 percent of girls who are out of school indicated that their parents are very committed in paying school fees for them. A few of them (4.3% of girls who are in school and 12 percent of girls who are out of school) indicated that their parents are less committed in paying school fees for them. The rest (1.4% of girls who are in school and 8 percent of girls who are out of school) indicated that their parents are not committed at all in paying school fees for them. The results show that parents are very committed in paying school fees for their daughters. This is confirmed by 94.2 percent of girls who are in school and 80 percent of girls who are

out of school who asserted that their parents are very committed in paying school fees for them.

In terms of giving girls enough time to study after school, 72.5 percent of girls who are in school and 72 percent of girls who are out of school indicated that their parents are very committed. A few (24.6 percent of girls who are in school and 20 percent of girls who are out of school) indicated that their parents are less committed in giving them enough time to study after school. The rest (2.9%) of girls who are in school and 8 percent of girls who are out of school indicated that their parents are not committed at all in giving them enough time to study after school. The findings indicate that parents give their daughters enough time to study after school. This is because most of the students (72.5% ) of girls in school and 72 percent of girls who are out of school) asserted that their parents are very committed in giving them enough time to study after school.

Majority (92.8%) of girls who are in school and 72 percent of girls who are out of school indicated that their parents are very committed in encouraging them to work hard in school. A few (7.2%) of girls who are in school and 24 percent of girls who are out of school indicated that their parents are less committed in encouraging them to work hard in school. Four percent of girls who are out of school indicated that their parents are not at all committed in encouraging them to work hard in school. The results indicate that parents encourage their daughters to work hard in school. This is evidenced by 92.8 percent of girls in school and 72 percent of girls who are out of school by asserting that their parents are very committed in encouraging them to work hard in school.

A big percentage (78.3%) of girls in school and 76 percent of girls who are out of school indicated that their parents are very committed in monitoring their progress in school. A few (15.9%) of girls who are in school and 8 percent of girls who are out of school indicated that their parents are less committed in monitoring their progress in school. The rest (5.8%) of girls who are in school and 16 percent of girls who are out of school indicated that their parents are not committed at all in monitoring their progress in school. From the findings, it is clear that parents monitor the progress of their daughters in school as indicated by 78.3 percent of girls in school and 76 percent of girls who are out of school.

Generally, it can be deduced from the findings that parents are very committed to the education of their daughters. This is evidenced by 84.5 percent, on average, of both girls in

school and those out of school who asserted that the parents are very committed in aspects pertaining their education.

The parents expressed their commitment towards education for their daughters but due to high poverty levels in the area, affordability of school fees is a challenge to them. According to Community Education Services Kenya (2013) one of the biggest challenges parents face is school fees. The primary needs of food, nutrition, health and care for younger siblings keep many from school.

#### **4.6: Girls Attitude Towards Advancement to Secondary School and Beyond**

Many studies nationally, regionally and internationally have been carried out on education for all, in general, and education for girls, in particular. The importance of education and its link to personal, community and national development has been upheld by all. Education Forum (2000) says that education, starting with the care and education of young children and continuing through lifelong learning, is central to individual empowerment, the elimination of poverty at household and community level and broader social economic development.

Though the benefits of education are immense, it takes a personal decision on whether to embrace education or not. When other factors that affect girls' education are assumed to be addressed, the researcher sought to find out whether girls themselves are interested in schooling or not.

Girls attitude towards their education was measured using specific indicators. These include their opinion on importance of education in self, community and national development. They were also assessed in terms of doing homework in good time, studying after school, discussing career aspirations with parents, their career aspirations and whether one had a role model or not. The results from girls who are in school are presented in table 18.

**Table 18: Girls commitment towards their education**

Question	Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Not at all		Total (F) Per Row	Total (%) Per Row
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Do you do your home work in good time	53	76.8	16	23.2	0	0	0	0	69	100
Do you study after school hours	48	69.6	20	29	0	0	1	1.4	69	100
Do you discuss your career aspirations with your parents	40	58	19	27.5	2	2.9	8	11.6	69	100

From table 18 above, 76.8 percent of the the girls who are in school indicated that they do homework in good time, 69.6 percent indicated that they study after school and 58 percent indicated that they discuss their career aspirations with their parents. On average 68 percent of them expressed commitment towards their education. All the girls agreed that education is very important in self development, development of the community and in national development. They further indicated that they wish to achieve university level of education. All these indicate that the girls are committed to their education, have career goals and have a positive attitude towards their education.

When asked whether they have role models and career aspirations, they gave their role models as honourable Beth Mugo, late Prof. Wangari Maathai, honourable Kalonzo Musyoka, their class teacher, their principal, honourable Charity Ngilu, Mrs. Nancy Baraza and honourable Martha Karua. They also indicated that they aspire to become doctors, teachers, lecturers, lawyers, pilots, engineers, nurses and accountants.

Girls who had dropped out of school agreed that education for girls is very important in self development, development of the community and in national development. Personal commitment towards their education was measured by asking them whether they did home work in good time, studied after school hours, discussed their career aspirations with their parents and whether they would go back to school if given another chance. Responses are tabulated in table 19.

**Table 19: Commitment of girls who had dropped out school to their education**

Question	Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Not at all		Total (F) Per Row	Total (%) Per Row
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Did you do home work in good time	19	76	2	8	4	16	0	0	25	100
Did you study after school hours	15	60	6	24	4	16	0	0	25	100
Did you discuss your career aspirations with your parents	16	64	4	16	5	20	0	0	25	100

The findings show that 76% of the girls indicated that they always did their homework in good time, 60 percent indicated that they studied after school and 64 percent indicated that they discussed their career aspirations with their parents. On average, 67 percent of them expressed commitment towards their education. When asked whether given `another chance

they would go back to school, the girls admitted that they are willing to go back to school. The girls also indicated that they had role models and career aspirations. They aspired to become secondary school teachers, doctors and pilots. They gave their role models as Justice Njoki Ndung'u, Class teacher, School principal, honourable Martha Karua, Late Prof. Wangari Maathai, honourable Charity Ngilu, Prof. Olive Mugenda and honourable Beth Mugo.

These results show that girls' attitude towards their education is positive and that they are ambitious. Few girls (8%) indicated that they sometimes did not do their homework in good time while others (16%) indicated that they rarely do their homework in good time. This could be attributed to the fact that the distance to school is very far and by the time the girls get home from school, it is either too late for them to do home work or they are too tired to do so.

#### **4.7: Status of Girls' Education in Thitha Location**

All the respondents in this study agreed that the status of girls' education in the area under study is not satisfactory. When asked to give suggestions as to what should be done to curb the situation, they suggested that girls should be encouraged to work hard in school, awareness campaigns should be carried out on importance of girls education, guidance and counselling to be intensified to girls to reduce early pregnancy, government should increase bursaries to help girls from the very poor families remain in school and that there is need for construction of more secondary schools in the area.

The key informants disclosed that more boys are in school than girls. According to the key informants, very few girls go beyond secondary school education. This is partly because the area is characterized by extreme poverty which makes school fees unaffordable for most parents. The other factors that distract girls' education but in a minor way are peer pressure and cultural beliefs. They said that such factors have kept the advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond very low.

## **5.0: CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter presents the summary and conclusion of the study. It gives recommendations drawn from the findings of the study as presented in chapter four. Recommendations for future research related to the topic of the study are also given.

### **5.1: Summary**

The research used primary sources of data including questionnaires, key informants interviews and observations to establish the following:

- i) The frequency of girls advancing to secondary school and beyond
- ii) Factors affecting advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond
- iii) Parents' attitude towards advancement of girls to secondary school and beyond
- iv) Girls' attitude towards advancement to secondary school and beyond

#### **5.1.1: Advancement of Girls to Secondary School and Beyond**

The number of girls who have advanced to secondary school and beyond is very small. Out of 104 families involved in the study, 26.9 percent have only one girl who has attained formal education up to secondary level. A few families (4.8 percent and 1 percent) have two and three girls respectively who have attained formal education up to secondary level. Majority (67.3%) of the families have no girl who has attained secondary school education.

Attainment of college education is also very low. Very few (8.7%) of the families have one girl who has attained college education while 1 percent have two girls who have attained college education. The largest percentage of the families (90.3%) have no girl who has attained college education. None of the families has a girl who has attained university education.

It can, therefore, be concluded that the number of girls who have advanced to secondary school and beyond is very small. This is because majority of the families (67.3% and 90.3 percent) have no girl who has attained secondary school and college education respectively. In addition, no family has a girl who has attained university education.

Advancement of boys to secondary school and beyond was assessed for the purpose of comparison. The number of boys who have attained secondary school education and beyond



is equally low. Few families (15.4%) have one boy and 3.8 percent have two boys who have attained secondary school education. Majority (80.8%) of the families have no boy who has attained secondary school education.

A small number of the families (6.7%) have one boy who has attained college education while 1 percent have two boys who have attained college education. The rest (92.3%) have no boy who has attained college education. Additionally, no family has a boy who has attained university education.

### **5.1.2: Factors Affecting Advancement of Girls to Secondary School and Beyond**

Socio-cultural factors like preference for boys' education, traditional belief in bride wealth and role of women as prescribed by culture are not a major influence of low rates of educated girls in the area. This is because only 30.4 percent, on average, of the respondents felt that such factors influence low rates of educated girls in the area. The rest (70% on average) felt that such factors do not influence low rates of educated girls. Majority of the respondents were of the view that girls and boys should be given equal opportunities in education.

Socio-economic factors like parents' occupation and size of the family are a major determinant of a family's ability to afford school fees for the children. Majority (71.3% on average) of the parents of both girls in school and girls out of school are not in formal employment. High level of unemployment is an indication of limited access to basic requirements in a family. This makes affordability of school fees a challenge to the parents and also translates to poverty.

The area under study receives inadequate rainfall and residents hardly harvest enough food for their families. Food requirement in a family takes priority over other needs like school fees.

It was also established that 72 percent, on average, of the parents have large families of up to 5 or more children. This means that more resources are needed for the upkeep of the family and the parents might be unable to afford school fees for their children's education.

The combination of high level of unemployment, low income, poor harvest and presence of large families imply that access to basic requirements in a family is a challenge to the parents. The parents are, therefore, unlikely to afford school fees for their children.

Ninety eight percent of girls in school indicated that school fees is a major challenge in their education. The largest percentage (40%) of girls who had dropped out of school dropped due to lack of school fees. Further, all the key informants (teachers) and parents rated school fees as the biggest challenge facing girls' education in the area.

From the findings, it is clear that lack of school fees is the biggest challenge facing girls' education in the area. This is because most of the parents are poor and affordability of school fees is a challenge to them. According to Mwingi District Strategic Plan (2005-2010), poverty is a major development challenge in the district. It is documented that 60 percent of the total population live below poverty line. This leads to high rate of dropouts as many parents cannot afford to pay school fees.

School environment factors like teachers' general attitude towards students and adequacy of teaching facilities were assessed. Teachers' attitude towards both girls' and boys' education in school is positive. This is in terms of availability to guide students, paying attention to students' concerns, encouraging students to work hard and showing a balanced expectation on both girls' and boys' performance. This is evidenced by 66 percent of the students who rated them as excellent, 18 percent rated them as very good and 11 percent rated them as good.

Teaching facilities in school are inadequate in terms of teaching laboratory facilities and qualified teachers. This is evidenced by 53.6 percent of students who indicated that teaching laboratory facilities are inadequate and 82.6 percent who indicated that qualified teachers are inadequate. Inadequacy of qualified teachers was also confirmed by key informants (teachers). Most of the students (66.7%) indicated that sanitation in the school is poor.

Inadequacy of crucial facilities like teaching laboratory and qualified teachers can lead to poor performance of students since it denotes that, students do not get the right quality of education. They, therefore, cannot compete favourably with students from well furnished schools. At the same time, advancement to post secondary school education is hampered.

Pregnancy was cited the second highest cause of dropping out of school after lack of school fees. Thirty two percent of girls had dropped out of school due to pregnancy. This means that pregnancy affects girls' education significantly. Other factors that affect girls education, but to a small extent, are poor performance, lack of interest in schooling, household chores and early marriage.

### **5.1.3: Parents' Attitude Towards Advancement of Girls to Secondary Education and Beyond**

All the parents were of the view that the following attributes concerning girls' education are very important: educating girls, importance of investing in girls' education, monitoring girls' progress in school, giving girls adequate time to study after school and paying school fees for girls to go back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy.

Surprisingly, parents expressed willingness to take their daughters back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy. This is opposed to many studies where parents refuse to take their daughters back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy. In addition, the parents asserted that both boys and girls deserve equal education opportunities.

On average, 84 percent of girls in school and 75 percent of girls who had dropped out of school indicated that their parents are very committed to their education. This indicates that they are willing to invest in girls' education. It is also a confirmation that their attitude towards advancement of girls to secondary school education and beyond is positive.

### **5.1.4 Girls' Attitude Towards Advancement to Secondary School and Beyond**

All the the girls in school and those out of school unanimously agreed that education is very important in self development, development of the community and in national development. The girls expressed commitment to their education as indicated by 68 percent of girls in school that they do homework in good time, study after school hours and discuss their career aspirations with their parents.

More than 90 percent of the girls in school and those out of school indicated that they have role models and career aspirations. Additionally, they indicated that they aimed to achieve university education. Girls who had dropped out of school expressed willingness to go back to school if given another chance. All these indicate that girls have a positive attitude towards advancement to secondary school and beyond. They are interested in schooling and are committed to their education.

### **Conclusion**

The study observed that education for girls is accorded great importance by girls themselves, parents, teachers and the entire community. However, the number of girls who have attained secondary school education and beyond is very small compared to those who have not. None

of the families had a girl who has attained university education. All the respondents of the study agreed that the status of girls' education in the area is not satisfactory. The biggest challenge facing girls' education in the area is lack of school fees. Pregnancy also affected girls' education significantly as 32 percent of the girls who had dropped out of school had dropped due to pregnancy. The school in question was found to have inadequate qualified teachers, inadequate teaching laboratory facilities and poor sanitation which is a challenge to advancement of students to post secondary education.

It was further observed that the number of boys who have attained formal education up to secondary school and beyond is equally small. None of the families had a boy who has attained formal education up to university level.

## **5.2: Recommendations of the Study**

In accordance with the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The study revealed that lack of school fees is the biggest challenge facing girls' education in the area. It is, therefore, recommended that the School Management should encourage access to bursaries by the needy students to avoid dropping out due to lack of school fees. This will enhance advancement to post secondary education.
2. The study found out that a considerable number of girls had dropped out of school due to pregnancy. It is recommended that guidance and counselling in school should be intensified to enlighten girls on their reproduction so as to alleviate dropping out of school due to pregnancy.
3. The study confirmed that the school lacked enough qualified teachers. It is recommended that the School should have enough qualified teachers to enhance advancement of students to post secondary school education.

### **5.2.1: Recommendations for further research**

1. The study majorly focussed on girls' education, another study majoring on boys' education should be carried out to find out whether there are other crucial factors affecting boys' education besides lack of school fees.
2. The study focussed on an area in the rural setting, another study on urban setting is recommended to bring up comparative findings.
3. All the respondents of the study agreed that the status of girls' education in the area is not satisfactory, another study should be carried out to find out how advancement to secondary school and beyond for girls can be enhanced

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