

**GENDER DIMENSIONS IN DROPOUT RATES AT SECONDARY SCHOOL IN SIAYA COUNTY,
WESTERN KENYA**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the three most important people in my life – my very supportive husband Horace, and children Louise and Eddie. Your encouragement, love, perseverance and prayers gave me the energy to soldier on. You will forever remain God's special gift to mummy. Thank you for your understanding, and very valuable support.

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to examine the gender dimensions in dropout rates at secondary school level in Siaya County of Western Kenya. It sought to investigate and identify the key factors that influence school dropout rates of boys and girls in secondary schools in Siaya. The overall objective of the study was to explore the gender dimensions in dropout rates in secondary schools in the County and ascertain factors that influence this dropout. The study was guided by the liberal feminist theory of education.

This was a cross-sectional descriptive study. The sample population consisted of 50 male and 50 female dropouts from 31 public secondary schools in the County. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, direct observation, key informant interviews and narratives and secondary sources. Quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS (version 11.5), and findings presented in tables of frequencies and percentages as well as bar charts. Qualitative data were analysed according to emerging themes and interpreted in relation to the research objectives. Quantitative data were obtained from school records through liaison with school administration and Constituency Education Offices.

The study found that as much as gender stereotypes and norms still exist among the Luo community in Siaya County, the community now gives equal opportunity for education to both boys and girls. However, many parents and guardians are unable to pay school fees regularly for their children due to their poor socio-economic status which leads to high dropouts. The study concludes that high poverty levels which result in lack of school fees, early pregnancies, forced repetitions and indiscipline, the impact of HIV and AIDS together with a non-supportive home environment, are key factors that contribute to dropout rate at secondary level education in the County. The study, therefore, recommends the establishment of mechanisms by the County Government to ensure a transparent, fair and gender responsive method of identifying genuine needy cases for allocation of bursaries and also for addressing the many cases of early pregnancies and low value for education which are some of the key drivers of secondary school dropout for both boys and girls in Siaya County.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Land
EFA	Education For All
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GII	Gender Indicator Index
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GP	Gender Parity
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SID	Society for International Development
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
UoN	University of Nairobi

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Education is not only a key determinant of the lifestyle and status an individual enjoys in society, but it is also a key factor in determining development trends, particularly in today's world. Studies have consistently shown that one's educational attainment has a strong effect on health behaviours and attitudes (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010:15). The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report for 2013 asserts that education not only boosts people's self-confidence and enables them to find better jobs, but it also empowers citizens to make demands for services such as health care, social security and other entitlements (UNDP, 2013:5).

An education of quality is considered by all populations to be the key to a brighter future, not just because it helps individuals to achieve greater self-fulfilment but mainly because, in most societies, formal schooling improves the individual's employment prospects and earnings. Secondary education is crucial in a young person's life as it is the level at which skills that improve his or her opportunities for getting employment are acquired. It is also the level that provides a country with the desired workforce for its development (UNESCO, 2012a: 229). Kenya, like other countries in the world, has signed up to achieving the goal of eliminating gender disparities and the targets of attaining gender equality by 2015 as stated in the 2000 Dakar Framework of Action and Millennium Development Goal 3 (Chege and Sifuna, 2006: xiv).

Similar to many African countries, a long history that dates back to the colonial period and even earlier presents trends of gender inequality in education in Kenya. Such is the experience in other areas like the labour market, political leadership and social and economic spheres (Chege and Sifuna, 2006: xiii). Unfortunately, the gender inequalities that existed in Kenya before and during the colonial era did not change even after the country gained its independence. The social and cultural considerations that often impede the education of girls and even boys continued to exist within the Kenyan communities and were not affected by the attainment of independence. This has contributed a great deal to the existing gender inequalities in education today. Rural communities generally continue to live as they used to do before independence. Gender stereotypes continue to be observed as dictated by the respective cultures and patriarchal systems. Colonialism had established an institutionalized bias in employment and educational opportunities, especially for women who ended up being even more deprived in the system and thus more vulnerable due to their limited education in comparison to the men. This resulted in lack of the necessary technical knowledge and cognitive skills required for the professional market. As a result, the rural woman in particular, has remained professionally disadvantaged with limited career options and thus confined to the domestic sphere and relegated to the informal labour market (Were et al., 1991: 4, 5).

Over the years, Kenya as a country has managed to make remarkable progress and achievements in increasing access to education for all. However, the colonial gender ideology has played its part in hindering the realization of gender parity, equity and equality in all the regions in the country, especially in those regions that were not favoured by the colonial

educational, economic and political policies. Obstacles to education for the different genders are often region-specific and seem to hinge on various factors that include perceived irrelevance and opportunity costs that are linked to educating either a boy or a girl, and cultural beliefs and practices that portray the education of girls, for example, as an unwelcome challenge to male hegemony. Other issues such as school cultures, formal curricula that at times perpetuate traditional gender boundaries and employment opportunities as well as socio-cultural attitudes continue to impact on the education of both girls and boys in the country (Chege and Sifuna, 2006: XIII-XIV).

Poverty is known to influence dropout in secondary level education in Kenya, and the introduction of free primary and subsidized secondary level education has left several statutory school levies which are still a heavy burden on an impoverished population (Mbani, 2008:44). This was further highlighted in a report by the Ministry of Education in 2010 which depicted the effect of high poverty level in the country which had worsened the plight of many poor households who could no longer afford education for their children. This came despite the introduction and existence of free education at primary school level and subsidized secondary level education in the country. School dropout is also closely linked to multi-dimensional socio-economic factors relating to the society, the school and the home environment that surround the child as a whole. These not only influence performance but even attendance and learning, thereby facilitating the student's ability to disengage from school or compelling the parents to withdraw their children from school (Gulbaz et al., 2011:125).

Kenya has, however, continued to struggle with the challenge of putting into place mechanisms that would ensure greater gender equality in education across the regions by striving to position gender as a key defining factor in the provision of equal education for all. In their study on girls' and women's education in Kenya, Chege and Sifuna send out a clear message throughout different chapters that "since independence in 1963, levels of gender gap between boys and girls in education have been consistent and appear in every sub-system of education"(Chege and Sifuna, 2006:XII). While the gap is also caused by unequal access to education by boys and girls, their inability to complete the entire cycle of a given education system also contributes to not only widening but also sustaining this gap in education.

This study set out to explore the factors that influence school dropout rates of boys and girls at secondary school level in Siaya County of Western Kenya and the gender dimensions in this dropout. The study aimed at bringing out sex differences in education by focusing on poverty and the cultural beliefs and practices that are perceived to influence school dropout at secondary level, and to highlight the loss that both boys and girls suffer as a result of sex bias in society and in school. The study also looked at the home and school environments as important variables influencing school dropout. Gender differences in the study refer to how the various factors that influence secondary school dropout rates affect boys and girls differently on the basis of their gender.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While many cultural and traditional practices among communities in Africa and specifically in Kenya still discriminate against the girl child in education, the boy child is equally affected by some of the gender discrimination and stereotypes that exist in society, thus impacting on his quest for quality education through dropout from the education system. Indeed, the general emphasis on the girl child by governments has also disadvantaged the boy child who has ended up being indirectly neglected within the education system. Many projects that are aimed at enhancing the access of the girl child to education at different levels have often (if not always) ignored the boy child, his needs and vulnerability in certain situations. The general assumption has always been that the boy child is already advantaged by virtue of his gender and does not therefore need any more attention.

A review of literature points out the fact that boys' education may equally be problematic if not addressed purposefully and in the context of girls' education. A study by Chege et al. (2011) proposes an interrogation of the emerging patterns of gender and education of girls and boys whereby the underachievement and eventual dropout of boys is becoming more evident the world over. They reveal that the extent to which girls are disproportionately excluded from education is higher at secondary level than at primary level. This seems to increase further from lower to upper secondary level education and is therefore indicative of a problem that needs to be looked at to ensure retention and higher completion rates at secondary school level by both boys and girls (Chege et al., 2011:29). The review further suggests that more studies seem to be focused on access to school, as opposed to dropout. However, for those studies that address

dropout, the discussions do not directly focus on dropout but are embedded into other factors, with very little in-depth qualitative accounts of reasons for dropping out from school based on interviews with and life histories of dropouts from both genders. Lastly, when addressing dropout, the studies tend to concentrate on girls with very little attention being paid to boys. This gives relevance to this study that sought to address the issue of dropout rate from a gender dimension to highlight how both girls and boys are affected.

The Ministry of Education's Education Statistical Booklet for 2003-2007 depicts Nyanza Province (now Nyanza Region) as one of the areas in Kenya with the highest school dropout rates at secondary school level. The dropout rates are very high with significant gender dimensions. For example, in the years 1999 and 2003, the Province recorded the highest dropout rate at 9.5 per cent. A sharp increase was experienced in dropout rate from 4.6 per cent in 1999 to 9.5 per cent in 2003 with the girls' dropout rate recorded at 10.3 per cent from 5.2 in 1999 (Republic of Kenya, 2009:27). The dropout rate for boys was equally high at 9 per cent in 2003 from 4.1 per cent in 1999. The Province also recorded the highest number of orphans enrolled in the country at 37,026 (22.3% of the total secondary school enrolment) (Republic of Kenya, 2009:19). With the region having the highest dropout rates among all the eight provinces in the country, it is evident that there is a problem of retention of students in secondary schools in Nyanza Region that needs to be addressed.

This scenario raises questions on the causes of the high dropout rate in secondary school for both boys and girls within the region. The questions revolve around the gender stereotypes and

norms of the community that place more value on one gender against the other, the economic factor, especially poverty, that results in scarcity of resources, hence forcing parents to choose between which child to educate and, lastly, the school and home environments as places for socialization with a great impact on one's attitude to learning. The study, therefore, sought answers to the following specific questions:

- i. What gender stereotypes, norms and practices impact on learning and contribute to dropout rates at secondary schools for boys and girls in Siaya County?
- ii. How does poverty contribute to dropout rates for boys and girls at secondary schools in Siaya County?
- iii. To what extent does the school and home environments contribute to the dropout rates at secondary schools for boys and girls in Siaya County?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

To explore the gender dimensions in dropout rates and ascertain factors that influence the high dropout rates for male and female students at secondary school level in Siaya County?

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To establish the gender stereotypes and norms that influence the low retention and high dropout rates for boys and girls at secondary schools in Siaya County.

- ii. To examine the impact of poverty on the gender dimensions in dropout rates at secondary schools in Siaya County.
- iii. To evaluate the home and school environment and their influence on the gender dimensions in dropout rates at secondary schools in Siaya County.

1.4 Assumptions of the Study

In analysing the gender differences in school dropout at secondary level education among girls and boys in Siaya County, this study revolved around the following basic assumptions:

- i. There is a high rate of dropout of both girls and boys in secondary level education in Siaya County of Western Kenya, and both are affected equally by the same factors.
- ii. Gender stereotypes and norms, and poverty are the main variables that influence school dropout of both girls and boys in Siaya County.
- iii. Dropout at secondary school level in Siaya County is highly influenced by the non-friendly school environment.
- iv. The home and societal environment is one of the main contributors to school dropout at secondary school among students in Siaya County.

1.5 Justification of the study

National statistics continue to highlight high dropout rates in both primary and secondary schools in what is now Nyanza Region. This brings about the need for specific research on the reasons behind these high dropout rates and how they impact on both girls and boys.

Addressing the inclusive gender differences in this high dropout rate in Nyanza also highlights some of the reasons for the poor performance in national examinations by students from the region. The findings from this study therefore have both academic and policy relevance.

From an academic perspective, this is a basic research which contributes to knowledge in the area of school dropout and the related issues of sex differences in education; and, like any gender responsive study, it exposes sex differences in education with the intention of eliminating them. While it may not influence situations in other counties in the country, the study is a gateway for other researchers to explore reasons for high dropout rates in secondary schools in other counties with high dropout rates. Moreover, it contributes knowledge to the anthropology of education. Lastly, this study has set a foundation to be built upon by others for further research.

At policy level, the study is likely to inform policy decisions at the County level, especially in strategic planning by the County government for improved performance, access and retention of students in the education system within the County. The study is expected to contribute to an understanding of school dropout from an anthropological perspective since most of the studies in this area have been done by educationists. In this context, the information provided by the study is expected to be used by professionals who are interested in looking for solutions to the problem of school dropout from an anthropological perspective with a view to advocating against specific cultural beliefs and practices that continue to reduce the value of

education within a community, where formal learning is perceived as a waste of time and uneconomical to both the individual and the household.

1.6 Scope of the study

This study focused on boys and girls who had dropped out of secondary schools in Siaya County before completing the official four years of secondary level education in Kenya. The study looked at the gender stereotypes and norms, poverty, and the school and home environments as variables that impact on education in the County, thereby influencing the dropout rates. It was guided by the liberal feminist theory of education.

1.7. Limitations of the study

While this was a cross-sectional qualitative and quantitative study, the focus was more on qualitative data which makes it impossible to quantify all the data collected, hence the inability to come up with patterns to explain the nature of relationships between variables. This means that findings of the study cannot be generalized to other counties, thereby limiting their comparability to other regions. Siaya County is quite large with six vast sub-Counties which makes a comprehensive research in all the six sub-counties very expensive. In some schools, the administrators were not always willing to provide information on dropouts for fear of victimization. As such, information on admissions and number of students per year for the 2010/2013 cohort was at times withheld by some school administrators, forcing the research team to get correct data from the Constituency Education Offices. Lastly, some respondents expected financial support from the study while others expected to be taken back to school. The same expectation was encountered among the narrators. To avoid any misunderstanding,

the purpose of the study and its importance for the County was explained to the respondents before commencement of the interview and voice recording.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Gender: Refers to the socially ascribed roles of males and females by a given society (UNESCO, 2011a:4).

Gender inequality: This is the different unequal treatment of an individual on the basis of his or her gender.

Gender equality: This is the lack of any form of discrimination or unequal treatment on the basis of a person's gender. It is a legally and constitutionally binding concept that is a right of every individual in any given society (Chesoni, 2006:197). Gender equality in the context of this study referred to the right to access and participation in education to completion of the study cycle. The study, therefore, used the concept within the context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a recognized and prohibited form of discrimination (United Nations, 1948: Article 26).

Gender equity: This refers to the existence of fairness in sharing of resources, opportunities and benefits by all persons irrespective of their gender.

Gender parity: Is another word for fairness or equality in sharing of resources. It refers to things like both genders having equal opportunities and receiving equal treatment.

Gender Parity Index: In the context of this study, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) reflects females' level of access to education compared to that of males.

Gross enrolment ratio (GER): Refers to the number of students enrolled in secondary school level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population in the theoretical age group for that particular level of education (UNESCO, 2012b: 21).

Net enrolment rate (NER): Refers to the proportion of children in the appropriate age group for a particular level of education (secondary in the case of this study) who are actually enrolled in school (UNESCO, 2012a: 21).

Dropout: Refers to early withdrawal of students from school or any level of education without completing the required number of school years/cycle.

School environment: Was used in this study to refer to the physical environment in the school as well as the human interactions therein such as teacher-student interactions and relationships as well as student-to-student relationships.

Poverty: Is an economic state that afflicts those whose earnings and living standards are below a given threshold.

Employment: Refers to the access to productive work that leads to a source of income which is sufficient to cover the basic needs of an individual.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the research problem. The literature is reviewed from a general global perspective on both gender and school dropout to the national level. It discusses poverty, as well as the cultural, school and home-based factors as independent variables that influence school dropout and ends with a discussion of the theoretical framework that guided the study.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Gender stereotypes and norms

In an effort to explain why there are fewer girls compared to boys at all levels of Kenya's education system, why more girls drop out of school than boys and why girls under-perform relative to boys, Kibera (2002) in a research paper presented at a strategic planning workshop, gives some of the reasons from a cultural perspective where education is perceived to be more important for boys than for girls, since the boys have to play their role as breadwinners. Kibera also talks about the social aspect where it is believed by members of the society, especially men, that educated women are "less feminine" and cannot therefore be easily controlled by their husbands due to their material/financial independence (Kibera, 2002:11).

Nyamongo (2000), on the other hand, argues in his paper that different communities have a different outlook to the formal value of education, hence the variations in rates of dropout from one community to another, especially in relation to the girl child. In the Borana

community, for example, a girl's marriage elevates her father's socio-economic status as a result of the bride wealth and livestock he receives (Nyamongo, 2000:60). Dropout rate is higher in such a community from upper primary to secondary school level among girls since they are expected to learn how to become good wives and good mothers and are considered ready for marriage immediately they attain their puberty. In the same community, the bride wealth drops drastically if a girl gets pregnant before marriage. This leads to girls being given away early for marriage to avoid any economic loss. In such poor pastoral communities, early female marriage is seen to have opportunity costs both to the individual and to the community (Nyamongo, 2000:60).

Colclough et al. (2000:4) highlight societies where men take over all the main leadership roles thereby leaving nothing to inspire girls to continue with schooling. In such societies, girls are married at a younger age than boys, thereby limiting their likelihood of continuing with education. Whenever households are forced by circumstances to make decisions on educational access, trade-offs between children are made. In such cases, studies indicate that many households prefer the education of boys over girls with girls' education often deemed as less important, thus resulting in dropout. This view is supported by Boyle et al. (2002), Admassie (2003) and Odaga and Heneveld (1995, cited in Nekatibeb, 2002). The nature of marriage where girls move into the household of the husband is also seen as bringing no profit to the original family, thus restricting the perceived need for her education. In this case, the education of boys is seen as having more value than that of the girl since it is expected to bring more economic rewards (Boyle et al., 2002; Hunt, 2008).

In Ethiopia, for example, research shows that long stay by the girl in schooling is believed to make her unable to do housework which in turn jeopardizes her chances of getting a husband. Some parents are also known to believe that giving girls more education is a way of destroying the girls' lives. Such families believe that girls are not only too old for marriage, but even when they do get husbands, they become disrespectful (Hunt, 2008:8). Similarly, in Guinea the community lacks motivation to educate girls since schooling of girls at whatever level is seen as irrelevant to her future roles which lie in family care and marriage (Boyle et al., 2002:46). A study by ILO/IPEC (2004:19) concurs and highlights the tendency to withdraw girls from school earlier than boys in the belief that a girl does not need to be too educated since it might reduce her marriage potential. This supports Obeng (2002) who found that in some societies, the fear of daughters getting pregnant before marriage leads to the girl being withdrawn from school prematurely and given/forced into marriage.

Mbani (2008) reveals in his study that initiation is a factor that determines roles played by both boys and girls in society. These roles influence attitudes of parents towards the education of their children as they are already seen as adults who are fit enough to start their own families in the case of boys and to bring wealth in the case of girls. This corroborates Sifuna's (1980) findings which identified cultural reasons, for example, the notion of being considered adult after circumcision, as key factors that contribute to school dropout. The ceremonies that surround the preparations and actual performance of the rites of passage in some societies may overlap with the school calendar, and thereby result in disruption of schooling of the child concerned. This may lead to dropout as the child's performance takes a nose dive. Also, this

move into adulthood is sometimes detrimental to the individuals' future as the "new" adults may see themselves as being too grown up for school. Such practices are common in Guinea and Ethiopia as stated by Colclough et al. (2000), Nekatibeb (2002), Boyle et al. (2002), and Kane (2004), and always affect boys and girls differently. Research also highlights the relationship between dropout and the age of girls whereby reaching puberty is an indication of maturity and time for marriage for girls or simply to preserve their reputation (Rose and Al Samarrai, 2001; Nekatibeb, 2002). This study made an effort to find out the cultural factors that contribute to dropout in a community where initiation rites such as circumcision and female genital cutting are not part of the traditional practices.

2.2.2 Poverty

Since the historic World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, and the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, where the world committed itself to focusing on access to quality education for all, the level of awareness on the importance of gender equality in education has grown significantly (UNESCO, 2001:2). Over this period, there have been gains made in some areas, while at the same time, new challenges have emerged. From a human rights perspective, access to quality education for all is a right that must be a priority for all governments. Unfortunately, a large number of young people are still excluded from accessing basic education globally while many of those who enrol do not complete primary or transit to secondary school level (UNESCO, 2001:2). The Global Monitoring Report for 2012 highlights lack of role models in education as leading to drop out of boys from school (UNESCO, 2012a:117). However, it adds that lower learning achievement by boys often results from a

disadvantage related to poverty just like for the girls. The report further emphasizes that for a country to achieve gender parity and gender equality in education, both boys and girls must be provided with equal chances to access and stay in school as well as equal opportunity in learning (UNESCO, 2012a:111).

The EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2012 also emphasizes the importance of secondary level education as the level at which young people acquire skills that improve their opportunities of getting employment. This is even more critical in sub-Saharan Africa where secondary education does not just provide one with a means for escaping poverty but it is also the immediate means of equipping the youth with the knowledge and skills they need to secure decent livelihoods in today's globalized world. The report further stresses the importance of a secondary education of high quality that caters for the widest possible range of abilities, interests and backgrounds and highlights the fact that it gives countries the educated workforce they need to compete in today's technologically driven world (UNESCO, 2012a:229).

The problem of dropout is shared across the globe with both the richest and the poorest countries having it as a key issue of concern within their respective education sectors. Differences in school completion are more obvious between children from urban and rural areas where it is much less for the richest of households (Bledsoe, 2002). Bledsoe is supported by Brown and Parks (2002), whose research in rural China found poor and credit constrained children three times more likely than other children to drop out of primary school. This is supported by both statistical and empirical researches which suggest that children from better-off households are less likely to drop out of school while those from poorer households are

more likely not to complete the education cycle at whatever level (Hunt, 2008:7). Failure to complete the education cycle, especially at secondary level, is a particular problem for children from poor families as they end up being trapped into poverty.

In Europe, the European Commission (2010) found that factors such as poor family background among other factors such as child vulnerability, change of place of residence or school, mental disability, history of disengagement from school, poor performance in school, the need to contribute to family income or caring for family members, etc., are likely to contribute to learners dropping out of school. More recently, in the *World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education (UNESCO, 2012b)* UNESCO Director-General pointed out that the quest for gender equality and parity in education is being hampered by the global economic crisis which is deepening inequalities, not to mention cuts in education budgets and stagnation of development support (UNESCO, 2012b: 1).

In Africa, poverty is identified as one of the major factors that cause boys and girls to drop out of school. This has led to the push by African States for the abolition of school fees (The World Bank and UNICEF, 2009). However, even this free education has not solved the problem of dropout since many hidden costs have continued to make education unaffordable for many households. At the time of independence and again in the eighties, many African governments made many declarations aimed at ending illiteracy and promising attainment of education for all children in their countries by the year 2000. Unfortunately, many of these dreams were not

effectively realized as economic hardships and unworkable policies led to the collapse of many of Africa's civil society and educational systems (Obeng, 2006:544).

In a background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, Sabates et al. (2010:4) singled out poverty as a factor that influences the demand for schooling, not only because it affects the inability of households to pay school fees and other costs associated with education, but also because it is associated with a high opportunity cost of schooling for children. The report further revealed that age-specific dropout rates for older children increase drastically after the age of 10. The study also found that in some countries like Niger in 2006 and Burkina Faso in 2003, more than one-quarter of 14-year-olds who started school dropped out (Sabates et al., 2010:5). This is because the opportunity cost of schooling increases significantly for older children together with pressure to work or to get married. Such an occurrence is reported in Malawi, Rwanda and Uganda where over-age children in school is also a problem and non-completion of primary school remains relatively high. The report further highlights the fact that dropout has more than one single cause and depicts it as a process rather than the result of one single event (Sabates et al., 2010:9).

Dropout is very common in some countries where adolescent boys often drop out of school in order to join the labour market. In their study on factors contributing to boys dropping out of secondary schools, Mapani and Mushaandja (2013), point out that in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, for example, much attention has been given to girls' than boys' educational issues which has led to many boys dropping out of school. However, because of poverty, many of these dropouts look for jobs in the South African mines so they

can remit money to their families. In households where income levels are low, children are often called on to supplement the household income either through wage-earning employment themselves or taking on additional tasks to free up other household members for work. This becomes more apparent as the children get older and the opportunity cost of their time increases (Mapani and Mushaandja, 2013:23).

Apart from poverty at the household level, poor economic performance of a country can contribute to several factors which end up causing children to drop out of school. This is often experienced in many developing countries where governments sometimes lack either the financial resources or the political will to meet the educational needs of the citizens (Hillman and Jnker, cited in Mapani and Mushaandja, 2013:23). An example is Ghana where lack of proper governmental support is reported to place a considerable economic burden (with regard to funding education) on parents and children. While the country has a legal guarantee for free education, school fees continue to be charged in primary schools – a situation which the school authorities say forces many parents to withdraw their children from the school system (Obeng, 2006:546). Due to the inability of parents to support their children's education, many female students often sleep with older men for money. This normally leads to early unwanted pregnancies and consequently dropping out of school by the girl (Obeng, 2002). Obeng further highlights in her study that some Ghanaian children, both boys and girls, have to work to support their parents for household survival and are often used by the parents to sell things in the open market even during school hours instead of being in school, and emphasizes that poverty is a key factor in causing dropout.

How households regard education and schooling and the importance placed on it also determines whether the child stays in school or not. Poor households often consider education to be a “relative luxury” and do not see its worth (Hunt, 2008:8). Research also shows that in many households, especially in Africa, when the cost of schooling is found to be too high, families are often forced to choose the child to remain in school. In such cases, girls are the most likely to be withdrawn from school in order for their brothers to be educated (Hunt, 2008:8). This is supported by Osinde (2011) whose findings reveal a majority of parents confessing that in cases of financial constraints, they would prefer sending a boy to school as opposed to a girl (Osinde, 2011:29). However, Colclough et al. (2000:1) hasten to point out that while poverty is a key factor in causing dropout, engendered outcomes such as these are the product of cultural practice, rather than of poverty.

A cross-country review of literature on school dropout identifies studies carried out by Porteus et al. (2000), Ranasinghe and Hartog (2002), Vavrus (2002), Boyle et al. (2002), Brown and Park (2002), Dachi and Garrett (2003), Birdsall et al. (2005), UIS and UNICEF (2005), Bruneforth (2006) and Cardoso and Verner (2007), as other works of literature that highlight the links between poverty and school dropout. Similarly, researchers such as Colclough et al. (2000), Brown and Park (2002), and Hunter and May (2003) link the cost of schooling, including such things as fees, as a central reason for dropout. A research carried out by Colclough et al. (2000) in Ethiopia and Guinea to identify the constraints affecting participation and performance of boys and girls in school, especially in rural areas, revealed that many of those who had dropped out cited lack of money to pay school expenses as an important reason for dropping out. Boyle

et al. (2002) concur with this finding in their research in Zambia and Uganda. The above findings are also supported by Jartsjö and Elofsson (2012) in their study on reasons for young females' dropout from secondary school in Matemwe, Zanzibar.

At Independence in Kenya, the new national government faced a dilemma in the pressing need for trained middle-level and upper-level human power for government service and for the commercial and industrial sectors of the country's economy. This resulted in a restructuring of secondary and higher level education because it was believed that the goal of formal education was to prepare students to work in the modern sectors of the economy. Education was therefore identified as a priority at all levels and was promoted as a key indicator for social and economic development. The trend continues to-date as education is still viewed by Kenyans as a vehicle for social mobility and national economic development (Amukowa, 2013:198). Unfortunately, education reforms in the country since the 1980s have led to increased cost of education and a heavy burden on households as well as scarcity of instructional materials such as text books, and support services such as school uniforms (Gachukia, 2004).

Following the Oslo Conference in 1997, Kenya's Economic Survey highlighted the rise in poverty levels in the country as a major factor that discourages parents from investing in their children's education, especially since the majority were found to be living below the poverty line (Republic of Kenya, 1997). Indeed, even the introduction of free primary education in recent years has not helped poor households much since many parents still have difficulties in paying the many school levies that are charged (Amukowa, 2013: 210).

Such works as Amukowa's support the findings of Mbani (2008) who also identifies poverty, among other factors, as influencing dropout in secondary level education in Kenya. He further identifies several statutory school funds such as development fund, school bus fund, school uniform fund, sports fund, etc., as being unaffordable to poor parents, thus leading to students being sent away from school (Mbani, 2008:44). The findings are also supported by those of Nyaga (2010) who agrees with both Achoka's (2007) and Wanjiru's (2007) findings. Achoka, however, adds violence, politics and self-esteem to the list and goes a notch higher by identifying the effects of these factors as increased crime, restlessness, impoverished persons/misfits, tormented people, unskilled workers, death, drug addicts/social misfits, sulky people, etc. (Achoka, 2007:7).

In the recent past, the Government of Kenya has endeavoured to improve access to and retention of students in secondary level education, but the problem of wastage through school dropout has continued to persist (Wanjiru, 2007:vi). Both Achoka (2007) and Wanjiru (2007) agree that secondary school dropout in Kenya is alarming and Wanjiru reveals in her study that in a period of ten years, 1992-2002, every secondary school cohort suffered not less than ten per cent school dropout (e.g., the highest dropout rate for the girls was 50% in the 1997/2000 cohort). The average dropout and completion rates for girls in the period under consideration were 20% and 80%, respectively. For the boys it was 14% and 87%, respectively. The research highlights some of the reasons that lead to the pandemic secondary school dropouts as poverty, early pregnancies/marriages, HIV and AIDS, drug abuse and low self-esteem (Achoka, et al., 2007:282).

2.2.3 The School and Home Environments

2.2.3.1 School Environment

The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) report (UNESCO/IIEP, 2012) highlights the fact that many governments have attempted to ensure the provision of education as a basic human right but still some disadvantaged groups have continued to fall behind. The report further indicates that while there has been much improvement in gender parity with respect to school participation rates since 1999, the question of gender equality in education needs to go far beyond parity to include issues such as the need for a safe and non-discriminatory school environment, the presence of enough teachers to act as gender role models, un-biased curriculum content, an un-biased teacher-based dynamics in the classroom plus teacher training in gender equality issues (UNESCO/IIEP, 2012:2).

Additional factors affecting motivations and decision-making relating to educational access are also crucial in understanding dropout. Perceptions of how education will influence the lifestyle and career possibilities/probabilities, and life chances in the labour market are shown to be factors in both early withdrawal and sustained access in different contexts. Perceived quality of education and the ability of children to make progress through the schooling system can affect the priority placed on schooling within the household (UNESCO/IIEP, 2012:2).

The dropout phenomenon is recorded in many empirical studies such as the probit analysis of the gender dimensions of Dropout in Basic Education in Pakistan as being closely linked to

multi-dimensional socio-economic factors relating to the society, the school and home environments that surround the child as a whole. These variables cause the dropout of students either by influencing their decision to disengage from school or compelling parents to withdraw their children from schooling. They also influence the attendance, performance and learning, thereby contributing towards school dropout (Gulbaz et al., 2011:125).

Findings of a research initiative launched by the Forum for Women Educationalists (FAWE) in 2009 indicate that a significant number of African girls do not succeed in their studies at primary, secondary and higher education levels. Many fail, are dismissed or dropout for various reasons. Primary schools in Malawi, for example, are often places of intolerance, discrimination and violence for girls while in Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Madagascar and Senegal, primary schools have been found to reproduce gender stereotypes in many ways (FAWE, 2011:3). This is a key contributing factor for dropout at whatever level of education. Issues of sexual harassment by teachers often lead to dropout by girls who feel frustrated by a non-friendly or non-protective school environment. Other factors cited by Sabates et al. (2010:5) include distance to school, poor quality of education, inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, inappropriate language of instruction, teacher absenteeism and school safety in the case of girls. Gendered social practices within households, communities and schools, are also highlighted as influencing differing patterns of access to education and retention in the programmes for girls and boys.

Research also suggests that excessive corporal punishment in schools can affect class attendance and learning of both boys and girls as highlighted by a study in Ghana by Ananga

(2011:38) which found that boys dropped out of school to avoid corporal punishment while most of the girls preferred to endure it. In most cases, the students are punished for offences such as persistent disobedience, aggression towards teachers, aggressive and threatening behaviour and even verbal abuse (Kane, 2006, cited in Hunt, 2008). Lack of diversity in teaching and poor pedagogical skills result in the school being viewed by students as boring and repetitive. This is more common among boys, in particular, who tend to dropout from school whenever they find school work to be less challenging with content that they deem irrelevant to their aspirations (Slade and Trent, 2000:211). In most cases, such boys focus more on looking for jobs to make money and ignore the fact that having education leads to stable and better paying jobs (Mapani and Mushaandja, 2013:7).

However, while talking about the school environment and its impact on dropout, the students' attributes such as the attitude towards school by individual students, especially boys, is also an important factor for consideration. Some boys tend to find school boring and see being in class as a waste of time. This results in little effort being put in school work which leads to low grades and consequently dropout. Peer influence is another factor that is linked to dropout from school. This is more rampant among boys as a consequence of association with friends who have dropped out of school, do not see the value of education or are participating in drug and alcohol abuse and smoking (Mapani and Mushaandja, 2013:28). These findings are also highlighted by Mudemb (2013) in his study on causes of dropout among boys and girls from secondary schools in what is now Ugenya Sub-County of Siaya County.

On the other hand, Nekatibeb (2002) highlights the attitude of teachers towards the students and teaching practices in the classroom as a factor that often contributes to dropout. Both Kabesiime (2007) and Ondere (2012) concur with Nekatibeb that teachers who encourage equal participation of boys and girls in class increase the completion rate of girls' education in secondary schools. Other issues that are revealed by the reviewed literature include the embarrassing language used by teachers towards over-age students and even towards girls who have given birth in front of other students/classmates, some of whom are far much younger; lack of support for those girls who go back to school after delivery; and class repetitions which makes students get tired of school, feel inadequate and even lonely as their age-mates progress to higher classes, thereby accelerating dropout. This teacher-student harassment is identified as a problem by several researchers such as Colclough et al. (2000), Hunter and May (2003), Hunt (2008), and Jartsjö and Elofsson (2012). The findings are also supported by Ondere (2012:34).

Nyaga (2010:45) found that lack of school fees, low performance, family problems, pregnancy and student's personal factors such as discipline, peer group influence, drug and substance abuse, are key variables that influence dropout. Nyaga further observes that a student's personal attributes can lead to dropout from the formal educational programme. The variables in this case include students' characteristics and pregnancies which are often induced by peer pressure in and outside the school environment. Students' peer groups, if not guided, can lead to devastating results such as engaging in drug and substance abuse, early sexual debut, etc. These render the student vulnerable to early pregnancies and diseases such as HIV and AIDS,

thus resulting in her or his inability to continue with education. While pregnancies will directly impact only on the girl child, drug and substance abuse is a serious problem among boys Nyaga (2010). This is also supported by Mudemb (2013:67).

Distance from school is another factor that leads to school dropout, especially among girls who are often deterred by vulnerability to sexual harassment on the way to school. Examples are given by Nekatibeb (2002) from Mali where most girls state that living far from school and having to walk long distances to school discourages them. Many studies such as those cited by Hunt (2008) in her cross-country review of literature indicate that the long distance girls cover to school makes them expend a lot of energy on the way to school, often on an empty stomach and hence less motivation to continue with schooling. This is confirmed by a study in Guinea which shows that close proximity to school had a positive motivating impact on girls' participation in school, while most girls stated in a similar study in Mali that living far away from school and having to walk discourages them (Nekatibeb, 2002). This is supported by Ainsworth et al. (2005) whose findings in Tanzania indicate that dropout increases in areas where distance to school is longer. The problem is worse in rural areas where there are no good roads and vehicles hence children have to walk for long distances through difficult terrain and dangerous environment which not only tires and discourages them but also affects their academic performance.

In some cases, in an effort to perform well in national examinations, some schools in Kenya do "thinning" in Form Three where entry examination is done to select those who can proceed to Form Four. In such cases, those who do not get the minimum grade as set by the teachers are

asked to repeat or look for alternative schools. The shame of repeating or going to other schools makes some students dropout while those who repeat end up with the wrath of their parents who claim not to have money to “waste” on repeaters (Mbani, 2008:43).

A report on a study by the Physical and Psychosocial Development Organization (PHYDO Kenya, 2011) to the District Education Officer in Ugenya sub-County describes Nyanza as a region that is endowed with a good number of private and secondary schools but highlights the fact that the number of dropouts is ever increasing. The report further highlights lack of basic facilities and inadequate teachers to meet the demand for education as some of the issues that influence this dropout despite the many positive initiatives such as free primary education (PHYDO Kenya, 2011:3).

2.2.3.2. The Home Environment

Empirical research highlights the home environment as very important because, if not conducive for learning, it is known to impact negatively on a student’s performance, often resulting in dropout from school. The amount of income coming into the household and the possible expenditures available, the value that is given to education and the extent to which cultural beliefs and practices influence decisions within the household are some of the factors within the home environment that impact on the education of a child. Researchers such as Nekatibeb (2002), Obeng (2002), Wanjiru (2007) and Hunt (2008) suggest that in some cases, children are withdrawn from school by parents, especially in rural areas to assist in household chores like baby-sitting younger siblings, collecting firewood and fetching water, and caring for

sick loved ones and relatives. These tasks are performed by girls, but where there are no girls in the family, the boys are used to perform the same duties (Wanjiru, 2007:17). Mbani (2008:48) concurs with Wanjiru and states that when parents do not have enough funds to educate their children, preference is always given to the boy child because boys are regarded as heirs in the family. In some cases girls are even married off to help raise funds to educate sons.

Factors such as the location of the individual's home environment such as urban or rural areas have an impact on whether a child becomes vulnerable to dropout and eventually drops out of school or not (Hunt, 2008). In discussing the relationship between family background and dropout, Hunter and May (2003:3) refer to youths from poor families, from single parent families, children of poorly educated parents, and children with fewer role models in higher education as being more likely to drop out of school. A similar finding had previously been recorded by Al Samarrai and Peasgood (1998:19) in their research in Tanzania.

Another factor that influences dropout in the home environment is bereavement among family members, especially parents. This is because orphaned children experience financial constraints and often find themselves succumbing to child labour to enable them provide for younger siblings and eventually they are forced to drop out of school. The situation is even worse for girls who normally drop out to be care-givers to siblings or are steered into marriage by their guardians. The period of illness of a loved one is always a tough time for the children who in most cases end up suffering from low concentration levels in school as they try to cope with life at home and in school (Akunga et al., 2000:56).

The emergence of HIV and AIDS has created more problems for gender equality in education since the girl child is disproportionately negatively affected by the pandemic, whether infected or not. This, of course, does not exclude the trauma and impact that the loss of a parent or both has on the boy child as well, and the fact that often they are forced by such circumstances to assume household head responsibilities at a very tender age. In South Africa, for example, research shows that the HIV statistics for young women are shockingly high while, globally, a quarter of all new HIV infections are of women aged between 15 and 24, with the vast majority of the young women living in sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations, 2012:30). However, biology as well as social, cultural and economic factors have continued to make women much more vulnerable to HIV than men. While there is vulnerability at the physiological level, women's lack of power to negotiate for safe sex exposes them to even a higher risk of infection. Women are also the ones who carry the responsibility of caring for relatives and loved ones who are living with HIV (United Nations, 2012:30).

Studies such as that of Kerry Cullinan have highlighted an acute feminisation of the AIDS pandemic especially in Africa where it is said that the disease has a woman's face (Cullinan, 2012:30). In some African countries, such as South Africa, young women are recorded to be twice or seven times more likely to be infected with HIV than young men. The ailing of parents affects both boys and girls in different ways since the breadwinner has to be replaced as well as taken care of. The situation worsens with the total loss of parents as both genders become household heads at a very young age and are forced to drop out of school in order to care for their siblings. Children whose fathers have died live with their mothers while very few children

whose mothers have died live with their fathers. This renders maternal orphans virtual orphans since they are forced to relocate to new households and often unfamiliar environments (Hunt, 2008:20). Gender dimensions to vulnerability of schooling after parental bereavement is evident since girls are often forced to drop out to become care givers to siblings. The situation is even worse where a girl loses her mother (Hunt, 2008:21).

However, the home environment goes beyond the family and also refers to the condition of the house that the children live in and what is used as a source of energy. In Siaya County, for example, seventy per cent of residents live in homes that have earth floors with only 29% living in homes with cement floors. The remaining 1% lives in wood or tile floors. Bondo sub-County has the highest share of cement floors at 42% while Gem has the lowest at 21% (KNBS and SID, 2013:13). Walls are brick or stone, mud or cement. According to a study conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics in partnership with the Society for International Development in 2013, most homes in the County have corrugated iron sheets for roofing (66%) while grass and makuti roofs constitute 32% of the homes. Only 4 per cent of the population in Siaya use electricity as the main source of lighting, 21% use lanterns and 73% use tin lamps. About 83 per cent of the residents use firewood for cooking while 14.5% use charcoal (KNBS and SID, 2013:13, 14).

The educational level of members of a household has been identified by researchers as being particularly influential in determining whether children go to school as well as their retention within the system. Researchers such as Juneja (2001) and Pryor and Ampiah (2003) indicate that non-educated parents cannot provide the support or often do not appreciate the value of

education. Children from such households have no role models to inspire and motivate them to see the value of schooling and often end up dropping out of school. It is also evident from the literature reviewed such as that of Achoka (2007), Wanjiru (2007) and others, that children whose parents have received some sort of schooling are more likely themselves to stay in school longer.

Moreover, the poor or absolute lack of parental support in both the academic and social lives of boys only leads to apathy towards education, and eventually dropout (Mapani and Mushaandja, 2013:26). The gender and education level of a parent often influences the gender of the child to access school and how long she or he stays in there. For some researchers, the level of education of the father has a lot of influence on the education of the boy while a mother's level of education influences the education of the girl. They indicate that the fact that educated mothers give more preference to girls' schooling is indicative of their having stronger preference for their daughters to get education, and also that their education gives them increased household decision-making power which enables them to negotiate for the education of their daughters (Al Samarrai and Peasgood (1998:395). Scott-Jones (2002, cited in Hunt 2008), on the other hand, agrees that the education level of the father influences that of the boy and states that educated fathers or male family members are likely to encourage boys to complete their education.

2.2.4 Pregnancy

Pregnancy has been identified by many studies as a significant cause of dropout for teenage girls from school. Poor performance, low economic status, frequent temporary withdrawal from school, institutionally led discriminatory practices coupled with the many domestic demands that are often placed on them, are cited as some of the factors that make girls more vulnerable to early pregnancy (Nekatibeb, 2002; Boyle et al., 2002; Hunter and May, 2003; Kane, 2004). Pregnancy is, however, a problem that is unique to girls. In some countries like Kenya and Botswana, girls are allowed to go back to school after delivery. However, many opt not to return due to fear of ridicule, intimidation, social branding and harassment by the school community (Dune and Leach, 2005:28). Re-entry into school for the girls who have delivered may also depend on whether the girl has someone to take care of her child or if she is the sole care giver (Grant and Hallman, 2006:5).

2.2.5 Gaps in the Literature Review

This literature review suggests the need for up-to-date information on school dropout of both boys and girls derived from research to support government strategies. For example, an IIEP e-discussion Forum on Gender Equality in Education in October 2011 revealed that, globally, 39 million girls were not enrolled in either primary or secondary level education while two thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate adults were women (UNESCO/IIEP, 2011:4). Such research findings give us insights into the existing gaps despite efforts that have been made as well as highlight the emerging issues in the area of gender equality that need intervention. The same

forum highlighted the fact that boys are becoming more and more disadvantaged as a result of the extensive focus on girls' education (Chege et al 2011:29).

The literature also points out to the fact that boys' education may equally be problematic if not addressed purposefully and in the context of girls' education. A study by Chege et al. (2011) proposes an interrogation of the emerging patterns of gender and education of girls and boys whereby the underachievement and eventual dropout of boys is becoming more evident the world over. They argue that the gender and education targets as articulated by both EFA goals and the MDGs shall remain unattained if the focus on girls' education is maintained in the absence of focus on the education of boys (Chege et al., 2011:29). This gives relevance to this study that sought to address the issue of dropout rate from a gender dimension to highlight how both girls and boys are affected. The study by Chege et al. (2011) reveals that the extent to which girls are disproportionately excluded from education is higher at secondary level than at primary level. This seems to increase further from lower to upper secondary level education and is therefore indicative of a problem that needs to be looked at to ensure retention and higher completion rates at secondary school level by both boys and girls (Chege et al., 2011: 59).

The review further suggests that more studies seem to be focused on access to school, as opposed to dropout. Even for those studies that talk about dropout, the discussions do not directly focus on dropout but are embedded into other factors. However, when addressing dropout, the studies tend to concentrate on girls with very little attention being paid to boys.

Lastly, the literature reviewed has shown very little in-depth qualitative accounts of reasons for dropping out from school based on interviews with and life histories of dropouts from both genders. This study provides greater depth and understanding of the issues raised in the reviews by its qualitative nature and the provision of voices of dropouts as they give accounts of their life experiences. Another gap in the literature reviewed is a clear recommendation on how the dropouts (both boys and girls) can be re-absorbed back into the school system.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the liberal feminist theory of education. Liberal feminism has its roots in the writings of, among others, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), John Start Mill (1806-1873) and Harriet Tailor Mill (1807-1858), most of whom argued that both men and women have the capacity to reason and should therefore be educated to enhance their rationality with a view to benefitting society as companions as opposed to mere wives. Liberal feminists aim at the creation of equal opportunities, particularly in education and place of work, and pursue the introduction of legislation and attitude change without seeking revolutionary change in society.

Liberal feminism is also known as “modernist” theory and emphasizes equal individual rights and liberties for men and women and does not focus on sexual differences. It looks at women’s interests as being best served by striving to attain a state of affairs where the standards, expectations and opportunities for women and men are the same. Its proponents believe that nobody really benefits from gender inequalities in education, and that men and women, boys and girls are both harmed by these inequalities. They, however, point out that while existing

gender inequalities benefit nobody, they are particularly harmful to women (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008:98).

Liberal feminism is an approach of the theory of feminism that specifically focuses on gender inequalities in education. The role of feminist thinking in shaping the theory of equality and equity is critical in addressing gender issues in education. Feminist theoretical frameworks constitute theorisation of the causes of women's oppression and subordination (Chege and Sifuna, 2006:3, 4). Proponents of this theory include Karl Marx in the 19th century, Kate Millett (1970), Anne Oakley (1974), Sylvia Walby (1990, 1997), Weiner (1994), Valerie Bryson (1999), and Pamela Abbott et al. (2005). Feminism has been used to explain the origin of gender inequalities by various scholars. For example, Ann Oakley (1974), while discussing the cultural division of labour, concludes that gender roles are culturally rather than biologically determined. This can be conceptualized as shown in Figure 2.1.

Feminism was relevant to this study because it focuses on the gender dimensions of dropout rate from the education system of both girls and boys. The theory also focuses on gender inequalities in education and their harmful effects on both boys and girls. The theory assisted in explaining dropout as a variable that depends on the discriminatory factors and gender roles as prescribed by society. The study's aim was to identify these factors and roles and to make recommendations that could lead to effective ways of addressing the dropout problem in Siaya County. This is in line with the belief by liberal feminists that the most effective way to address gender inequality is by seeing to it that both girls and boys have the same opportunities for education and professional training as equal individuals in the society.

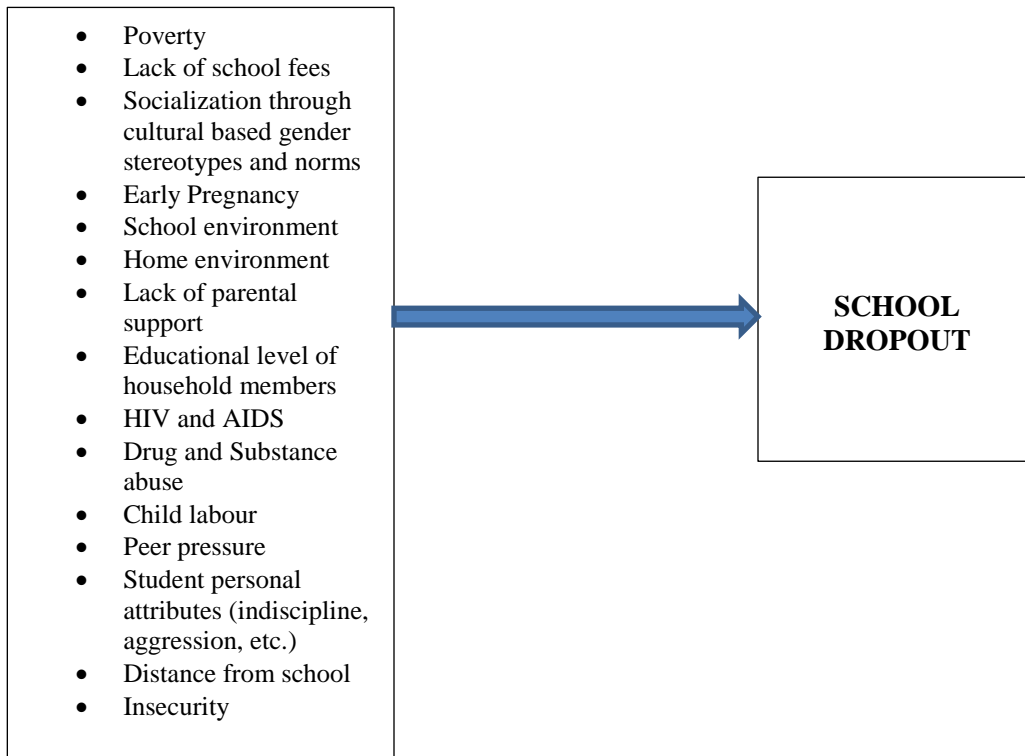


Figure 2.1: Theoretical Model

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents information on the methodology that was used in the study. It gives information on the research site and research design as well as the study population, sample population, and sampling procedure. Data collection methods, data processing and analysis as well as important ethical considerations for the study are also addressed.

3.2 Research Site

3.2.1 Location

This study was done in Siaya County of Western Kenya. Siaya is one of the six counties in Nyanza Region of Western Kenya and has a surface area of 2,530 km². The county (Figure 3.1) borders Busia County to the North, Vihiga and Kakamega Counties to the North-East, Kisumu County to the South-East and Homa Bay County across the Winam Gulf to the South, with Lake Victoria (the third largest fresh water lake in the world) to the West (Republic of Kenya, 2013:3).



Map 3.1: Location of Siaya County in Kenya (Source: Republic of Kenya, 2013:4)

The County is divided into six administrative sub-Counties, namely, Gem, Ugunja, Ugenya, Bondo, Alego Usonga (Siaya) and Rarieda, with 12 divisions and 50 locations (Republic of Kenya, 2013:6).

3.2.2 Physical and Demographic Features

Siaya County is composed of three major geomorphologic areas (dissected uplands, moderate lowlands and Yala swamp) with different relief, soils and land use patterns, and an altitude that rises from 1,140m in the eastern parts to 1,4000m above sea level in the west. The fertility of the main soil type in Siaya ranges from moderate to low. However, some parts of the county such as Siaya, Ugenya, Ugunja and Gem sub-counties have exposed rocks which include basalts, desites and rylites (producers of coarse and fine aggregates used in the construction industry). Generally, a large portion of the County has underlying murram with poor moisture retention (Republic of Kenya, 2013:5). The County has two main rivers, Nzoia and Yala. Yala Swamp, the third largest of Kenya's wetlands, is situated on the deltaic sediments of the Nzoia and Yala Rivers at the point they drain into Lake Victoria. The Swamp also filters sediments, nutrients and pollutants from the waters entering Lake Victoria from the Nzoia and Yala River Catchments (Republic of Kenya, 2013:23).

The average population density in Siaya is 354.6 persons per square kilometre, with settlements being higher in the agro-ecological zones and fish landing bays. Large nuclear settlements are experienced along fish landing beaches such as Misory, Luanda Kotieno, Kamarigo in Rarieda sub-county; and Wichlum, Usenge, Uhunya, Honge and Nambo in Bond sub-county (Republic of Kenya, 2013:5). The Kenya Government's population estimate for Siaya County in 2012 was 885,762 inhabitants, 419,227 males and 466,535 females (Republic of Kenya, 2013:28).

3.2.3 Socialization of Children in the Luo Community

Siaya County is predominantly inhabited by the Luo, a Nilotic people believed to have migrated from Southern Sudan down the River Nile and settled mainly along the shores of Lake Victoria in Western Kenya between 1490 and 1517 (Ogot, 2009: 85). The Luo are a patriarchal society where in the past elders were responsible for governance and set laws which they enforced as a unit for the benefit of the entire community. Like their fathers, sons also observed hierarchy with the eldest of the first wife being supreme despite age differences with the sons of the other younger wives.

Growing up in the traditional Luo community at an early age did not depict a rigid separation of the sexes in play groups although there was a clear distinction between the tendencies of the two sexes in any single gathering. However, the activities that the children engaged in were imitative of the real activities in adult life with female children imitating the activities of the women and concentrating especially on those that led to the preparation of food and care for babies. On the other hand, the male children built houses, dug gardens and moulded bulls, motor cars, trains and carts (Ominde, 1987:13). At about the age of eight and nine years, the training of a girl was part of a long process of education geared towards marriage life (Ominde, 1987:20). In the absence of the mother, the young girl was already expected to be responsible for seeing that food that is already prepared was given to the males and younger members of the family. During this period, the male children were seen to part ways with their female counterparts and form their own separate play groups. A clear emergence of gender divisions was seen within the community at this stage. As the children grew older, the separation

became even more enhanced, with the girls having to eat with the mothers while their brothers ate with the father (Ominde, 1987:20).

While disciplinary training of school-going age children was theoretically a paternal as well as maternal responsibility in the Luo community, in practice, the mother played a much more important role than the father, especially in as far as the girl child was concerned. This is because it was against the mother that future blame for inefficiency in normal domestic chores would be directed (Ominde, 1987:21). Generally, a Luo father played a rather detached role in bringing up his children; however, he retained a deep seated interest in his growing daughter as a future promise of wealth (Ominde, 1987:25). As the Luo girl grew up, she expressed fear and submissive attitude towards her older brothers and sisters. However, while the attitude decreased towards her sisters as a result of the sharing of activities within the home, it did not change much towards the boys. Among boys, this attitude of superiority existed into adulthood, weakening only with the independence that came with adult life. They became more tyrannical with their younger brothers and sisters with the behaviour leading to frequent quarrels and fights (Ominde, 1987:25).

The traditional education given by the parents is strictly utilitarian with its main aim being to prepare the girl for her future as a wife in a family and as a mother of children. The school-going age was the period when male and female children in the Luo community parted company. While young girls became more and more occupied with domestic work such as fetching water and firewood, tending to babies and watching the fires, the male children of the same age continued to play in groups with little to do beyond herding and playing in gangs. This

made it much easier for boys to go to formal school as they were not as occupied as the girls. Moreover, not much attention was paid to the boy child in as far as strict discipline was concerned. This early training made the girl more advanced in maturity than her male counterpart and enabled her to take on family duties at which boys of the same age did not succeed (Ominde, 1987:27). Unfortunately, this training and the responsibilities that came with it had the effect of overloading the girl's school going period and thereby limiting the time she had for other activities. This has continued over time and has significantly impacted on the performance of the Luo girl in the formal education system.

Education was further provided in the olden days through oral literature which was passed to the children in a "Siwindhe" by a grandmother. Both boys and girls were taught their roles in society and traditions of the community in this manner. Girls who had come of age were separated from the younger children and entrusted to an elderly woman who was expected to be the first to pass on knowledge to them through riddles, folk tales, songs, etc. The same elderly woman was to teach them what was expected of them by the community. Segregation in gender was observed at meal times, during family functions and also in various roles assigned to each gender by the community. For example, male members of the family all ate separately in a "duol" or kraal which was situated at the centre of the homestead while girls and women ate together (Ogot, 2009: 740).

The cultural pattern of the Luo community is such that children are born into a ready-made pattern of life which they are forced to follow right from childhood. Training to fit into this

culture starts at school-going age (8 and 9 years). The women end up growing into a life of conservatism which is maintained throughout in life. The male children, on the other hand, have greater freedom at the same age with very little supervision and restrictions (if any). While the occupation of the girl keeps her more at home, the boy child moves around a larger area by virtue of the privileged upbringing that it gets from the society where aggressive behaviour is openly praised as a positive male attribute (Ominde, 1987:30).

3.2.4 Economic Activities

Economic growth is essential for increasing the choices that are available to an individual in any set-up. A strong economic growth provides resources to be used in supporting health care, education and other sectors that are critical for the well-being of residents. Economically, 47.56 per cent of the population in Siaya County is estimated to be poor with poverty incidences of 57.93 per cent in the rural region and 37.91 per cent in urban areas. The infrastructure in the County is composed of a road network of which 283.2 km is bitumen, 741.3 km gravel land and 1, 161.8 km of earth roads (Republic of Kenya, 2013:16, 36).

The County depends on subsistence farming, livestock keeping, fishing, rice farming and small-scale trading as its main economic activities. The main food crops include maize, sorghum, millet, beans, cowpeas, cassava, sweet potatoes and finger-millet while the main cash crops include cotton, rice, sugar-cane and groundnuts. Its main resources are agricultural land, fisheries, indigenous forests, rivers and timber. On the other hand, the main tourist attractions

are Yala Swamp and Wetlands, Ndanu Falls, Lake Kanyaboli and Lake Victoria (<http://www.softkenya.com/Siaya-county>).

Unfortunately, the County has no major processing and manufacturing industries except for small-scale firms that utilize locally available raw materials in their production and process. These include rice processing small-scale firms, sugar processing juggaries, bakeries and *jua kali* industries. There is a good mining potential with gold having been mined in the County for considerable time on subsistence basis in shallow excavations in Bondo, Alego Usonga, Ugunja, Rarieda and Gem sub-Counties. Other minerals such as fluorite, granite and black sand are also found in the County (Republic of Kenya, 2013:25, 26). In 2012, the county's labour force was projected to be 430,300 out of whom 189,181 were men and 241,119 were women. At the same time, the county has high levels of unemployment (41,565 people) which comprises the youth (Republic of Kenya, 2013:26).

3.2.5 Educational Facilities

In 2013 Siaya County had a total enrolment of 2232,691 pupils in 636 schools (119,269 males and 113,422 females) at Primary school level, with a teacher to student ratio of 1:49. Sixty-four per cent of the residents of Siaya County have Primary level of education only (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics & SIDS, 2013:12). There are 179 secondary schools in the County, with an enrolment of 33, 780 students. Out of these, 20,233 are males and 13,547 are females. The completion rate is at 49.3 per cent (Republic of Kenya, 2013:29). Those with secondary level education or above constitute 16 per cent of the population, with Bondo and Rarieda sub-

Counties having the highest share of residents with a secondary level of education or above at 18%, while Ugenya sub-County has the lowest at 15%. The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) in public and private secondary schools in 2011 was 21:1 and 10:1, respectively. These were lower than the Provincial PTR of 23:1 for public secondary schools and 15:1 for private schools (Republic of Kenya, 2011:28). Public and private secondary schools are recorded in the school mapping report of 2011 to be having a class size of 32:1 and 12:1, respectively, compared to the provincial average class size of 30:1 and 23:1 for public and private schools, respectively.

Siaya County boasts of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (formerly Bondo University College), Siaya Medical Training College, Bondo Teachers' College and 14 youth polytechnics as its main tertiary Institutions. A total of 2,759 students are enrolled in these institutions (Republic of Kenya, 2013:30). Generally, Siaya has a literacy level of 51 per cent with 79.75 per cent of the population classified as able to read and write, while 18.25 per cent cannot read and write (Republic of Kenya, 2013:29), and 20% of the residents have no formal education. Ugenya sub-County has the highest share of residents with no formal education at 24% (KNBS & SIDS, 2013:12).

3.2.6 Health Facilities

Siaya County has seven sub-County hospitals (Matangwe, Madiany, Siaya, Yala, Ambira and Ukwala); 32 health centres and 110 dispensaries. However, these facilities suffer from inadequate staffing, poor infrastructure and poor state of the road network which hinders easy access by the community. The most prevalent diseases include malaria/fever, HIV and AIDS, respiratory diseases, diarrhoea, pneumonia and diseases of the skin. The Kenya AIDS Indicator

Survey (KAIS) Final Report for 2012 reveals a decline in HIV prevalence in other regions in the country (from the last survey in 2007) except for Nyanza region, where HIV prevalence is highest among women and men and the rates have remained unchanged since 2003 (Republic of Kenya, 2014a:35).

The county had an HIV adult prevalence of 17.8 per cent in 2011 with an estimated number of 85, 056 adults living with HIV. A total of 15,287 children from 18 months and above are also estimated to be living with HIV (UNAIDS, 2013:2). Seventy-nine per cent of households are living with orphans and have no support (<http://www.softkenya.com/Siaya-county>). The majority of young people in the County are faced with the challenges of high prevalence of HIV and AIDS and a high death rate due to drug and substance abuse. There still exist retrogressive cultural beliefs and practices that have impacted on the number of children being immunized. Only 18 per cent embrace the use of contraceptives as a result of myths and misconceptions, socio-cultural practices and lack of access to health facilities (Republic of Kenya, 2013:28-29).

3.2.7 Water and Sanitation

While the County borders the largest fresh water lake in Africa, water scarcity is still experienced in the county with the Siaya and Bondo (SIBO) Water and Sanitation Scheme as the main water supplier. The rural population depends on various types of water sources for domestic needs with streams being the main water points. However, a large number of such water points are seasonal and cannot therefore be used during drought (Republic of Kenya, 2013:28). In the County, only 36% of residents use improved sources of water (protected

spring, protected well, borehole, piped into dwelling and rain water collection), while the remaining 64% rely on unimproved sources (KNBS & SID, 2013:16).

Siaya County does not have a planned sewerage system in any of its urban centres. Only 5.9 per cent of the households have access to piped water while 75.3 per cent use latrines. There is no significant gender differential (male-headed versus female-headed households) in use of improved sanitation by the residents of Siaya (Republic of Kenya, 2013:28).

3.2.8 Gender Inequality Index

The gender inequality index (GII) in Siaya reflects gender-based disadvantage in three key dimensions, reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. The index depicts a loss in potential human development as a result of the inequality between female and male achievements in the three dimensions. Children living in poor households, the disabled and the youth constitute vulnerable groups with high inequalities (Republic of Kenya, 2013:15).

3.3 Research Design

This was a cross-sectional descriptive study. Data were collected using structured interviews, narratives, key informant interviews, observation, and secondary sources. Data from the structured interviews were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) programme and findings are presented in tables of percentages and frequencies, charts as well as graphics.

Secondary data were analysed using content analysis. The focus was on school attendance from form 1 to 4 with a view to analysing the progress of students and transition rates through the entire secondary school cycle. Findings of secondary data are presented in tables of frequencies and percentages, and in graphics. Qualitative data collected using key informant interviews, narratives and observations, were analysed using emerging themes and the findings are presented using verbatim quotes, narratives and selected anecdotes.

3.4 Study Population

The study population was composed of male and female students who had dropped out of formal secondary level education from public schools. The unit of analysis was the individual male and female student dropout.

3.5 Sample Population and Sampling Procedure

The sample population consisted of 100 secondary school dropouts, 50 females and 50 males. The study used a multi-stage sampling procedure. Selection of schools was done on the basis of the number of schools in the sub-county and information on the total number of students enrolled in a school. This information was obtained from the sub-County Education Office. The first stage of sampling was random for each sub-county, after which the schools were clustered to see if they all fitted into the sampling frame of single sex day and boarding public schools as well as mixed boarding and day public schools. The third stage of sampling was purposive and it was done on the basis of high, medium and low enrolment rates and by looking at the

sampling frame as well as whether the school was a public government school or privately owned. A total of thirty one public secondary schools were sampled for the study.

School-based data sheets (enrolment and attendance) were used to identify the students who had dropped out of school through liaison with the school administration. A snowball sampling method was used to get information on other school dropouts within the sub-county that were known to those being interviewed. It was not easy to get all the dropouts in their homes and the schools were not able to assist. Thus, the researcher employed the snowball sampling technique which is normally used to get at the hard to find study elements. Households/families of children who had dropped out of school were selected on the basis of information obtained from the school register and after consultations with the school administration.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

3.6.1 Structured Interviews

A structured questionnaire (Appendix I) was used to collect bio-data from students who had dropped out of school, the educational background of the parents of the dropouts, their socio-economic status and what made the student drop out of school.

3.6.2 Observation

Data from observation was gathered through an observation checklist (Appendix II) based on the school environment (i.e., availability of toilets for both boys and girls and their condition);

distance from the school (if day school) to the nearest homestead; provision/availability of school meals; use of students to perform chores for teachers such as fetching water, firewood, etc.; class size; student-teacher and student-toilet ratios and the daily classroom register. The observation was also extended to the households/home environment of students who had dropped out of school.

3.6.3 Key informant interviews

A key informant interview guide (Appendix III) was used to collect information from the following individuals in the County: County Director of Education; Deputy Head teachers (equal gender representation); Guidance and Counselling teachers (equal gender representation); County Director of Culture; Administrative Government officials (4 chiefs); and Community leaders (1 female and 1 male leaders). These informants provided information on the factors that influence school dropout of male and female students in the County and how these factors impact on gender equality. There were six key informants who were selected on the basis of the role each plays in enhancing education in the County; as a community leader; as the custodian of the law/County Government Administrator; and as a gender in education advocate. The selection was done in such a way that the information collected was representative of the entire County.

3.6.4 Narratives

Data were also collected through narratives whereby the voices of boys and girls who have dropped out of school were listened to as they narrated their stories. A tape recorder was used

to capture the narratives. This enabled the study to capture and identify the issues that are common to the two genders as well as those that are unique to either gender.

3.6.5 Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary sources of data consisted of both published and unpublished documents. They were used to identify the research problem but also used throughout the study period.

3.6.6 Content Analysis

Data on enrolment, transition and completion rates were obtained from the respective school records. The data were obtained through the school records and classroom registers with the assistance of the Deputy Head teachers in the sampled schools. The study traced the path of students who enrolled in Form 1 in 2010 and the time they finished the secondary school cycle of four years in December 2013. The data were disaggregated by sex for a clearer view of the gender dimensions in dropout rate per school year.

3.6.7 Data Processing and Analysis

Processing of quantitative data was conducted by cleaning the information gathered, coding the data, and entering the data into a computer. The data were then analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) programme version 11.5. Qualitative data were analysed according to emerging themes and in consistency with information gathered earlier during interviews.

3.6.8 Ethical Considerations

Privacy of the respondents was respected and strictly observed in the course of the interviews by ensuring that the interviews were not conducted in an open place within hearing of other people. Where possible, the parents or guardians were requested to allow the researcher to talk to the respondent in private. Such a request was always granted. For those respondents who were interviewed outside the home environment, the interviews were often conducted in the privacy of the researcher's car. Most of the dropouts were eighteen years and above. However, for under-age dropouts, parental consent was sought for their participation in the study. No names of the respondents have been included in the study. The respondents will therefore remain anonymous. Information gathered in the course of the study has not been and will not be leaked out to unauthorized persons.

CHAPTER FOUR

REASONS FOR DROPOUT RATE IN SECONDARY LEVEL EDUCATION IN SIAYA COUNTY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the survey results on secondary school dropout rates in the study area. The chapter starts by describing the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. It then describes the findings on the reasons for the dropout rates in secondary school in the County.

4.2 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

4.2.1 Age and Gender of the Respondents

Fifty male dropouts and 50 female dropouts at the secondary education level were interviewed in this study. The age of the respondents fell in the 15 to 21+ age bracket. A cross tabulation was done to get the gender dimension of the respondents. At the time of the survey, most of the respondents were in the 17-20 age-bracket at 35% and 36%, respectively. Female respondents were more in the 17-18 age-bracket while male respondents were mostly in the 19-20 age-bracket. There were very few males in the 15-16 age-bracket but more in the higher age-bracket of 19-21+. Figures 4.1a and 4.1b below illustrate the gender and age of the respondents at the time of the interviews and at the time of dropping out of school, respectively. The figures also present the gender dimension in the age of the dropout in

secondary education level in the County. The lowest age at which a respondent dropped out of school was 14 years while the oldest respondent dropped out of school at the age of 18+ years. The dropout age is comparable at 16 and 17 years with males dropping out more at 16 years while females dropped out most at 17 years.

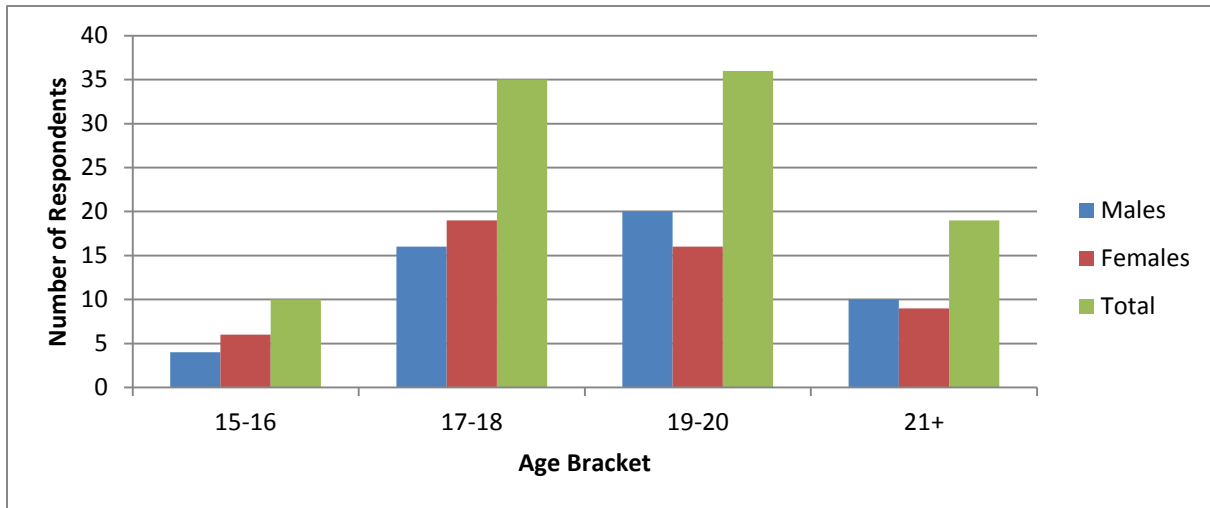


Figure 4.1a: Gender and Age of Respondents at the time of interview

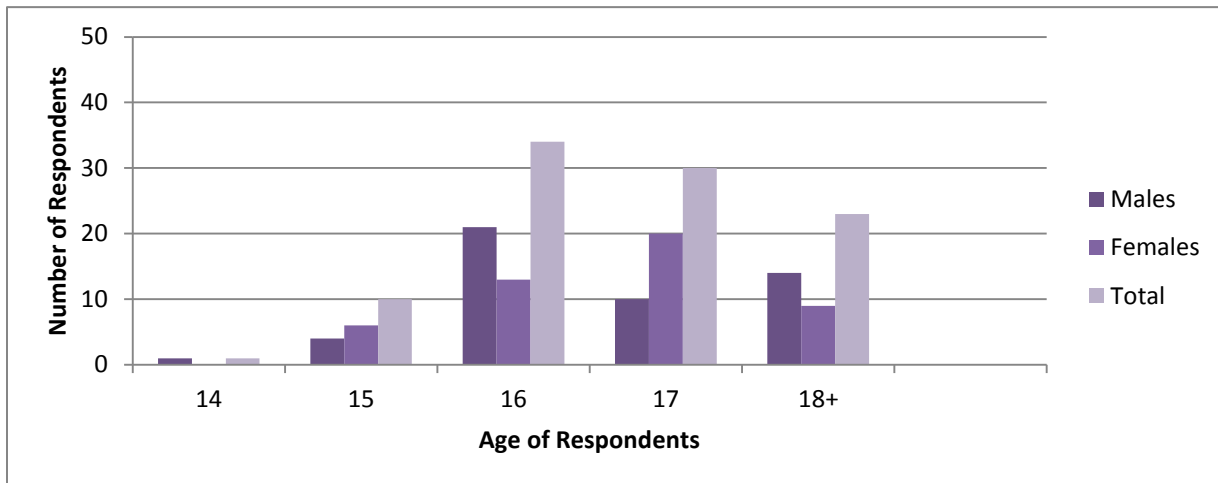


Figure 4.1b: Gender and age of the respondents at the time of dropping out of school

4.2.2 Educational level of the respondents at the time of dropping out of school

Slightly more than half ((51%) of the respondents dropped out of school in Form Two followed by 26% in Form One (Table 4.2). Only 2% of the respondents had dropped out in Form Four. The frequency in dropout rate was high for both boys and girls in Form Two at 48% and 54%, respectively. More boys dropped out in Form One than girls while a slightly higher number of girls dropped out in Form Three than the boys (22%). No male respondent dropped out in Form Four while 2% of the Form Four dropouts were females. Many of the dropouts had accrued fees balance in Form One and part of Form Two. With the schools insisting on the no-return to school without fees rule, the respondents were forced to stay home in the hope that their parents or guardians would get the money to pay the fees balance owed to the schools. This was the case for both male and female respondents who dropped out due to lack of school fees. Many of the female respondents dropped out because of early pregnancies. The only dropouts in Form Four (2%) were females who had to leave because of early pregnancies.

Table 4.2: Educational level and frequency of dropout rate of the respondents

Form level	Frequency (F) (Males)	Percentage	Frequency (F) (Females)	Percentage	Total (F)	Total (%)
1	16	32	10	20	26	26
2	24	48	27	54	51	51
3	10	20	11	22	21	21
4	0	0	2	4	2	2
	50	100	50	100	50	100

4.2.3 Occupation of respondents at the time of the interview

The respondents confided that life was not easy for them but that there was nothing that they could do to change their situation. Most of the male respondents were employed as motorcycle (boda boda) riders or were involved in brick making to earn a living. In some cases, the owners of the boda boda motor cycles were known to be teachers from the same schools where the respondents had been learning. Some of the male dropouts were engaged in sand harvesting while others were employed as farm hands. Finally, others had no proper occupation and were found idling at the shopping centres and market places. The survey was informed that many of the school dropouts go to big towns such as Nairobi to look for jobs. Most of the male respondents who find their ways to the big cities end up being employed as watchmen, gardeners and as casual labourers in construction sites. Figure 4.3 gives a clear view of what the secondary school dropouts do.

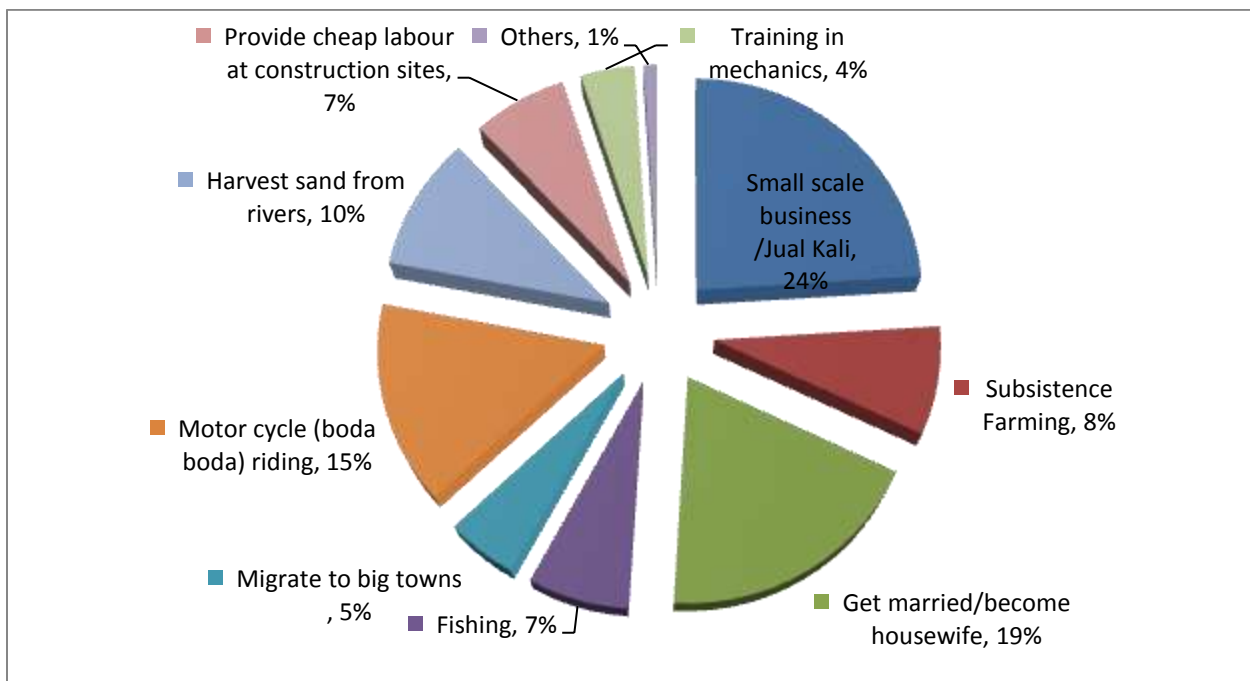


Figure 4.3: Occupation of school dropouts

Many of the female respondents were found staying at home with their families doing the daily household chores and helping their mothers to till the family land for livelihood. Unfortunately, those who had stayed home from school for over one year had ended up getting pregnant and had babies to look after on top of their daily chores. Others had got married and had families to take care of. Most of the female respondents who had dropped out due to pregnancy had the desire to go back to school but were unable to do so since the parents (especially the fathers) were no longer willing to pay their school fees. Only one of the respondents did not express the desire to go back to school if given the opportunity. She explained that she had since got married and had a family and home to take care of.

The study was also informed that many of the female dropouts either get married or migrate to big towns to look for employment as house helps. In most cases, they are taken to towns by relatives who often employ them in their own homes or they get for them such jobs. Thus, it was quite difficult to get female respondents since many of them had relocated to the big towns and were working as house helps or had got married after staying at home for some time. For those who were married, it was evident that they were already trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty which they would find hard to get out of with their level of education. The observation in a number of households visited indicated that parents themselves, especially mothers, encourage their daughters to go and work as house helps for people in big towns. This is not only for financial support but also to reduce on the number of mouths to feed within the family.

The study established that a majority of the respondents had attended mixed day schools. This was followed by mixed boarding schools and girls only boarding schools in that order (Figure 4.4). The least number of respondents attended boys only day and boarding schools at two per cent for each category. The responses from the respondents are a reflection of the situation in the County where most of the schools are mixed day or Mixed Day and boarding, with very few all girls’ and all boys’ schools. Siaya County has a total of 179 secondary schools (Republic of Kenya, 2013:29).

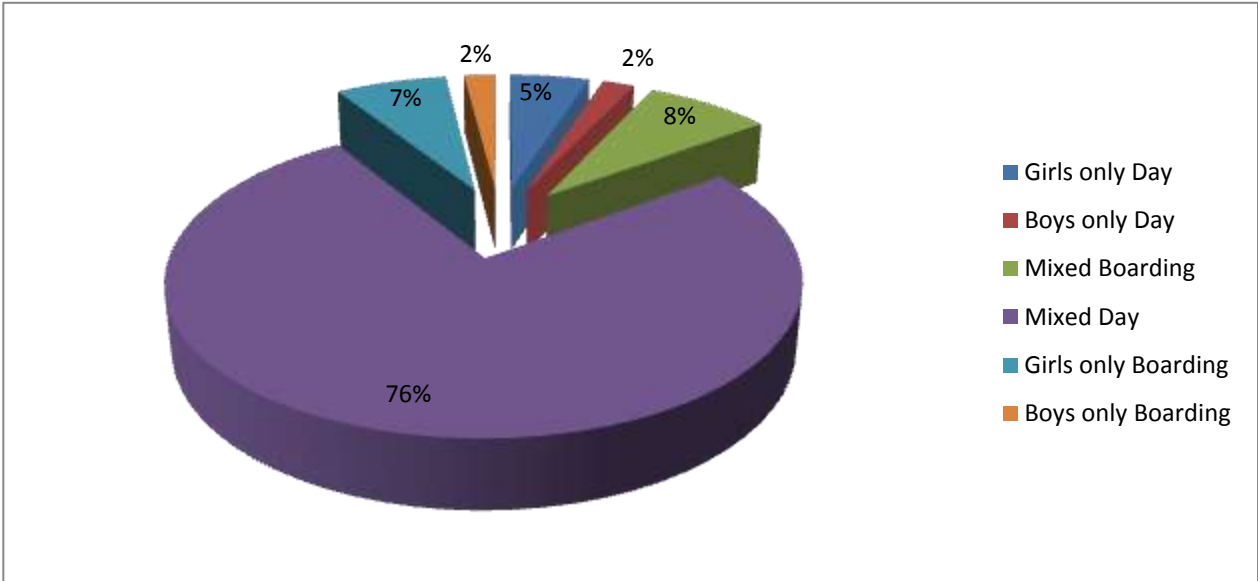


Figure 4.4: Category of schools attended by the respondents

The study findings suggest that most of the respondents were orphans with only one parent alive (Figure 4.5). The analysis indicated that 58 per cent of male respondents had no fathers alive against 42 per cent females. Many of the respondents turned out to be orphans who had lost either both or one of the parents before they could complete their education. Given the high prevalence of HIV among women and men at 25.3% and 21.8% respectively in the County

(Republic of Kenya, 2014c:16), there is a high probability that most of the respondents had lost their parents to HIV and AIDS.

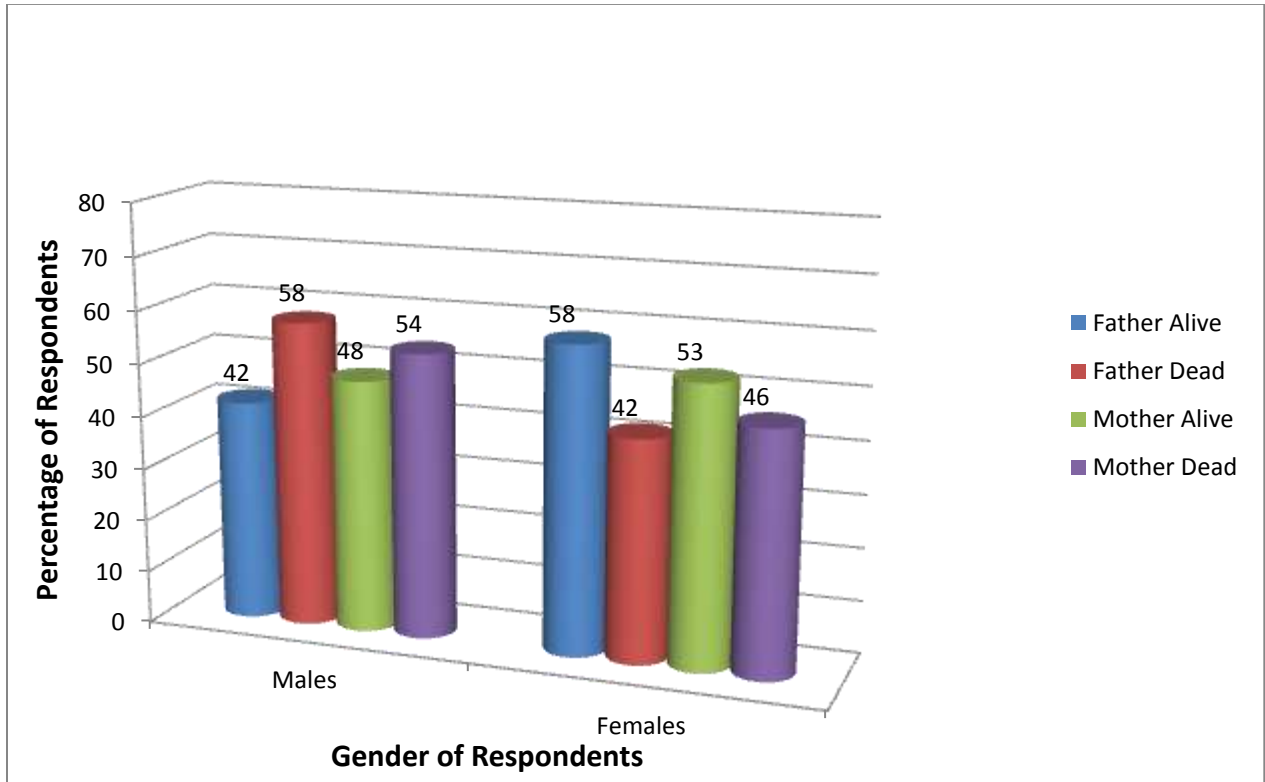


Figure 4.5: Life status of parents of the Respondents

4.3 Gender Stereotypes and Norms

The findings of the study established that as much as gender stereotypes and norms still exist, there was no close link between the variable and dropout rate of boys and girls in Siaya County. Many of the respondents felt that cultural practices were not significant in contributing to their dropping out of school. Figure 4.7 depicts cultural practices with the least number of respondents giving it as a cause for their dropping out of school. However, some female respondents also felt that if their parents and guardians had been well educated, they would

not see them as old enough to get married instead of being in school. One female respondent had this to say about her household's attitude towards education:

My father was illiterate and he seemed not to care. He said I should leave school to get married.

(A 19-year-old respondent in Ugenya sub-County)

Many of the respondents confirmed that their parents do give equal opportunity for education to both boys and girls (Figure 4.6). Just like Ominde (1987:70) asserts that the Luo society, like many African societies is undergoing change, the community in Siaya presents a good example of positive change that is taking place where the people are changing from the discriminatory practices towards the provision of education to the girl child. The study confirmed from the key informants that the community had changed from giving preference to the boy child to providing education equally to both boys and girls. However, some of the female respondents felt that their parents still showed preference for their brothers when it came to accessing education in circumstances where resources were limited. Some amongst them informed the study that they had to drop out of school to enable their brothers to complete their secondary education. This was supported by the key informants who also added that there were still households in Siaya County where parents still preferred educating boys to girls, especially when choices had to be made between which child to educate with the available limited resources.

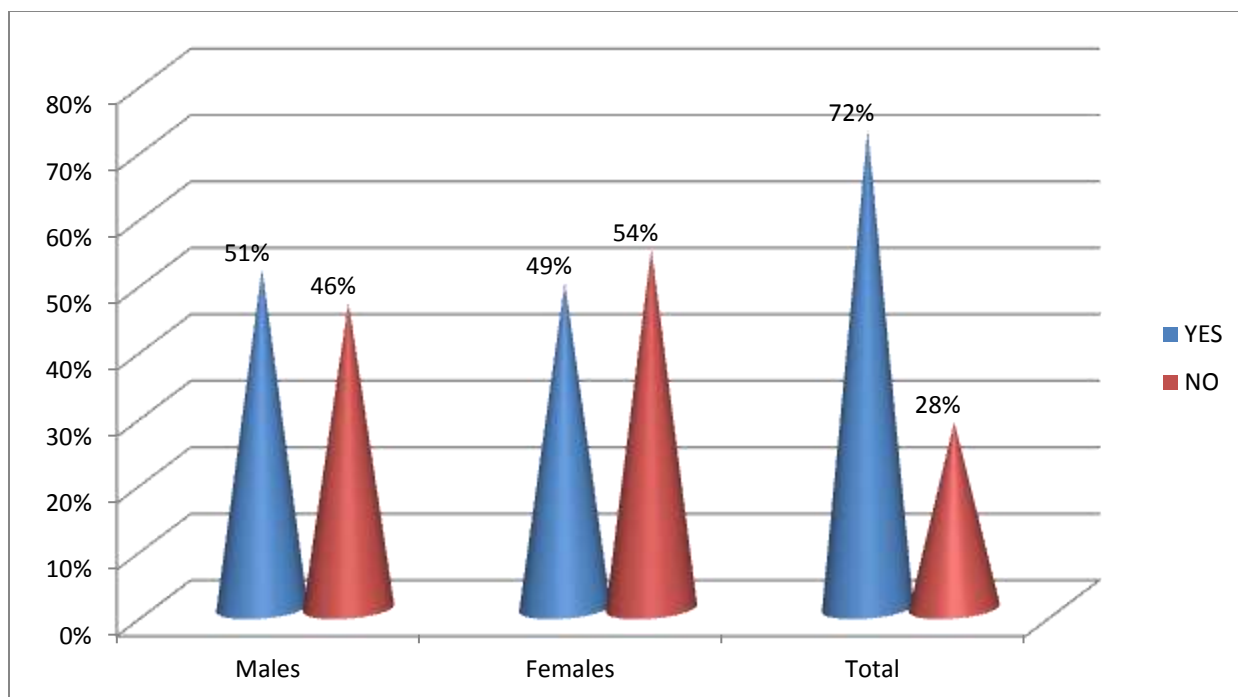


Figure 4.6: Gender dimension in provision of equal opportunity for education

In many cases, girls who get pregnant have problems going back to school since they often lack someone to take care of the baby while they are in school. Also, some of the parents, especially fathers, also used early pregnancy of their daughters to deny them education by refusing to pay their school fees for re-entry after giving birth. Such fathers often claimed that their daughters had thrown away the chance that they had given them to get education. Instead, they continue to educate their male children while constantly justifying their actions to whoever dared to question their action. One of the female respondents had this to say:

I conceived and went back to school after delivery, but nobody would care after my baby; plus I had serious fees problems thereafter (A 17-year-old respondent from early pregnancy).

During the study, a father of one of the female respondents justified his action of refusing to pay for the daughter school fees after giving birth by saying:

Nene amiye kinde mar dhi e skul to ose ketho kende. Omiyo koro one kaka odak (I gave her the opportunity to go to school but she spoiled for herself. Now let her find how to survive). **(The father of a pregnancy dropout in Ugenya sub-County)**

The community in Siaya County seems to be in waiting for a girl to get pregnant at any time without putting in mechanisms for prevention of early pregnancies. To quote one of the community elders:

Nyako kinde mage tin, onyalo kethore saa matin! (A girl's time is very short; she can mess herself up within a very short time). **(A community elder)**

It is also the cultural belief and practice of the Luo community to give a big send off to the deceased, with music and dance. Such funerals have a big impact on the family members who are left behind. In most cases, the deceased's money is used for the funerals and the families are left with nothing. This is a factor that leads to the children of the deceased dropping out of school, especially if the family had been living in an urban area and the father dies. One of the respondents had this to say about the cultural practice of the community and the impact on her education:

My father had enough money for the whole family's needs, even the extended part. When he was alive, 'daddy alikuwa Simba'! When he died, all the money was used during his funeral. The funeral was big! There were many people and they all ate well. After they had all gone, we were left with no money for school fees. **(A respondent from Ugunja sub-County)**

In such cases, the children are forced to change schools and often have to relocate from the urban centres to the village. Such students have problems adjusting to the new life, new school,

new friends and new environment, which results in poor performance and eventually leads to them dropping out of school.

4.4 Poverty

Over fifty per cent of the respondents said that they had been held back at home for a term or more terms for lack of school fees. Male respondents seemed to have stayed home for longer periods after lacking the fees than the females. Figure 4.7 presents a summary of the responses from the respondents with a clear indication that lack of school fees is a significant variable in determining the dropout rate among boys and girls in Siaya County. Out of the one hundred respondents, a majority had attended only one school. However, it was established that 38 per cent of the respondents had attended as many as four to six or more schools.

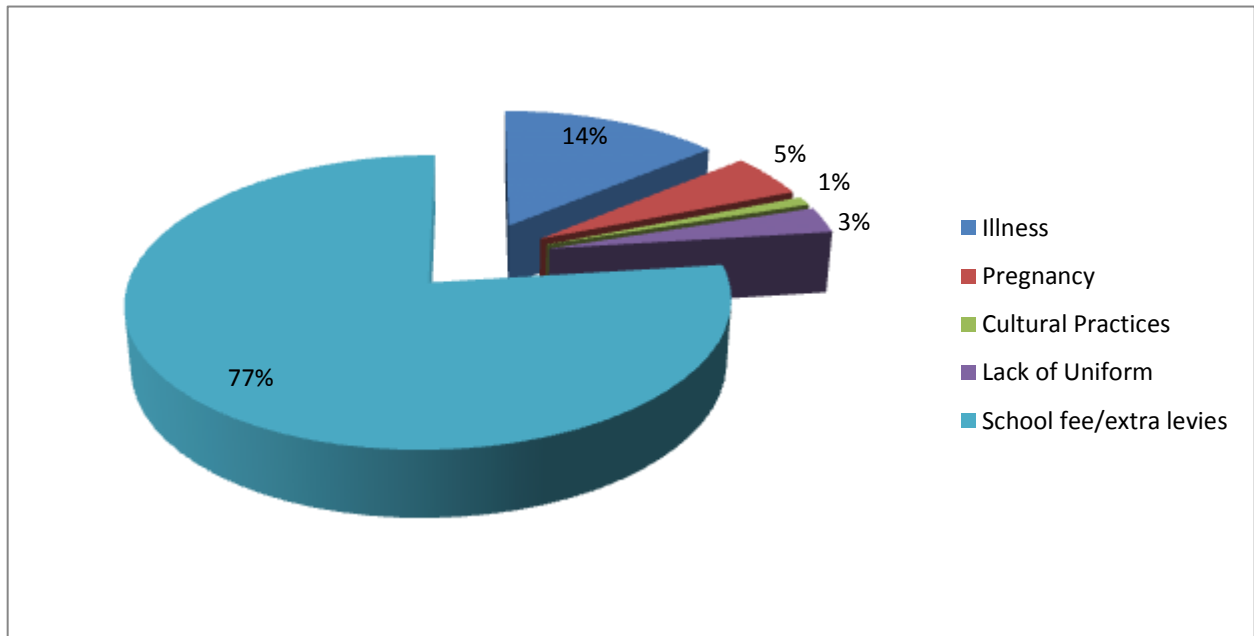


Figure 4.7: Reasons why respondents were kept away from school for a term or more

The reasons for the frequent transfers and movement from one school to another were linked to high school fees balance which could not be paid and so the parents moved the respondents to a different school to avoid any penalties or their child being sent away from school to go and get the fees balance. This meant that the student was able to continue schooling for at least one year before the fees had accumulated enough for him/her to move again to another school. This trend was also mentioned by the County Director of Education who described it as schools having “nomadic students” whose performance can neither be consistent nor guaranteed. The same behaviour was confirmed by a number of Deputy Head teachers as key informants. They blamed the parents for playing hide and seek with their children’s education by transferring them from one school to another in an effort to evade paying the accrued school fees balance.

Most of the respondents had parents whose main source of income was subsistence farming. Such farming is solely for feeding the family but does not leave any surplus for selling to generate income that could be used to pay school fees. The second source of livelihood was in the informal sector, mainly jua kali (SME) which was portrayed as “having a business” (Figure 4.10). These included brick making, mechanic and carpentry. Other respondents had parents and guardians who were working as labourers on construction sites, as farmhands or employed as watchmen or drivers. Only two respondents had parents and guardians who had retired and were living on Government pension. Depending on subsistence farming only and Jua kali business which in most cases does not guarantee consistent adequate income, means that the chances of the respondents staying in school without having fees problems is highly unlikely.

The study established that some of the female respondents were forced to give in to sexual advances by older men in an effort to get money for their fees and upkeep. One such respondent had this to say:

I had to look for money and that is how I got pregnant. I befriended a cook at a nearby school. (An 18-year-old respondent from Ugenya sub-County)

The analysis reveals a close relationship between the socio-economic status of the parents and guardians, and the dropout rate in secondary level education in Siaya County and identifies poverty as a key variable in the school dropout rate in the County. These findings support those by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics which records a high rate of unemployment in the County with most of them being in the youth category (Republic of Kenya, 2013a:26).

The study revealed the inability of parents to pay school fees (Figure 4.9a). A gender difference in the capacity of parents and guardians to pay fees showed that more female respondents indicated that their parents and guardians were able to pay school fees on time. This was more than the responses gathered from the male respondents, many of whom had parents and guardians who were not able to pay fees on time. This could be explained by the fact that most of the female respondents had indicated higher numbers of fathers and mothers still alive, unlike the male respondents. The findings established that most parents and guardians were unable to pay fees on time and on a regular basis. The findings under this variable also had a correlation with the respondents' inability to stay in school continuously throughout the term without being sent home to collect school fees. Many of the respondents informed the study that they were sent home regularly on a monthly basis. Others indicated that at times they

could be sent home thrice or even four times per term to collect school fees (Plate 4.8). Many students were observed on month end walking along the main road during morning lessons after having been sent away from school to go for the balance of fees. In most cases, many of such students were males.



Plate 4.8: Some of the male students who had been sent home to collect school fees at the end of the month from one of the secondary schools

There was a very close similarity between the male and female genders in their responses to the survey question as illustrated in Figure 4.9a and 4.9b below. Due to poverty at the household level which is obviously generalized in the County, both boys and girls start dropping out in Form Two and the trend continues till Form Four. This was evident in the 2010-2013 cohorts of students whose records were analysed by the study. For girls, the long stay at home while waiting for school fees sometimes resulted in early pregnancies.

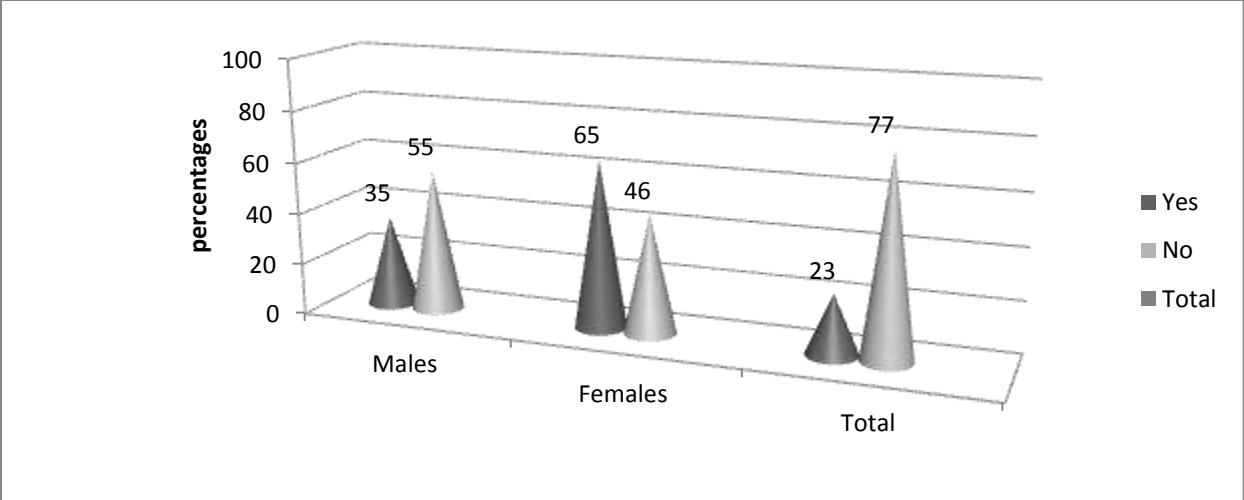


Figure 4.9a: Capacity of parents/guardians to pay school fees

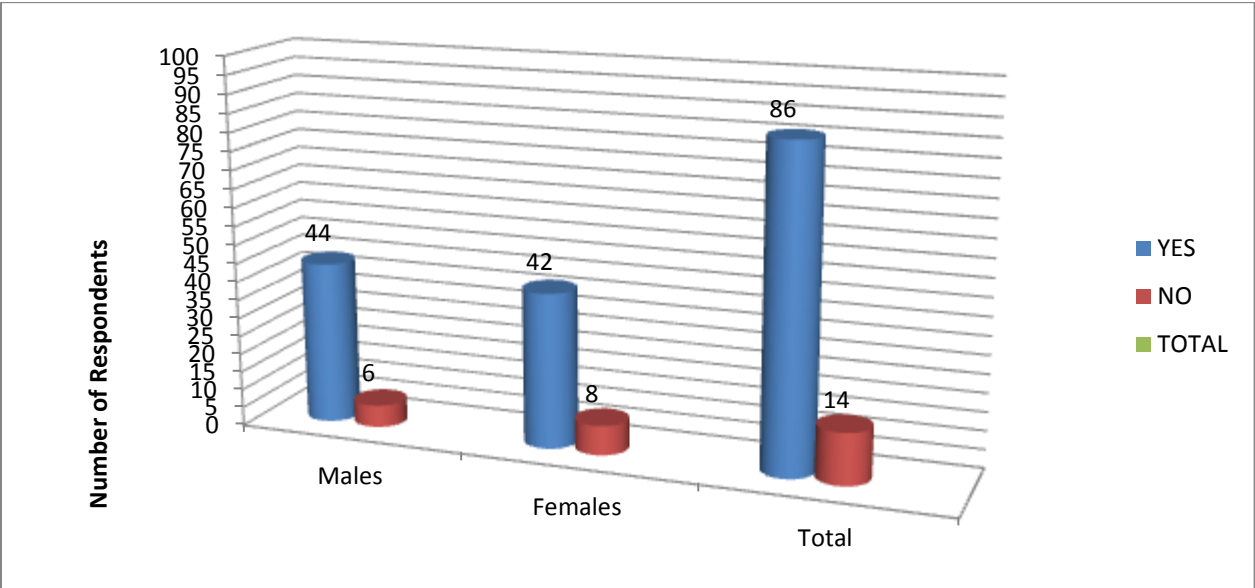


Figure 4.9b: Number of respondents who were sent home to collect fees while in school

Only 9% of the respondents informed the study that their parents were in formal employment with 48% depending on subsistence farming while another 34 per cent were working as unskilled labourers (Figure 4.10). The sources of livelihood were identified as not being sufficient to sustain children in secondary school without frequent dismissal due to balance of fees. In many of the homes visited, it was observed that parents were very poor and mostly

depended on subsistence farming to feed the households. In some cases, mothers were found to be working on other people's shambas to get flour for ugali for the family.

Among the respondents, there was a small group (2%) that indicated individual responsibility for payment of fees and upkeep. This meant involvement in child labour by such students who had to struggle to balance their school time and work to earn money for fees as well as to supplement the household income (Plate 4.11). Often, the parents also exploit their children by taking over and using the money that the child has earned from child labour, claiming that the child has to contribute because they are also eating. The rest had their school fees and upkeep taken care of by parents (if they were alive) or guardians (grandmothers, aunts, sisters, uncles and religious organisations).

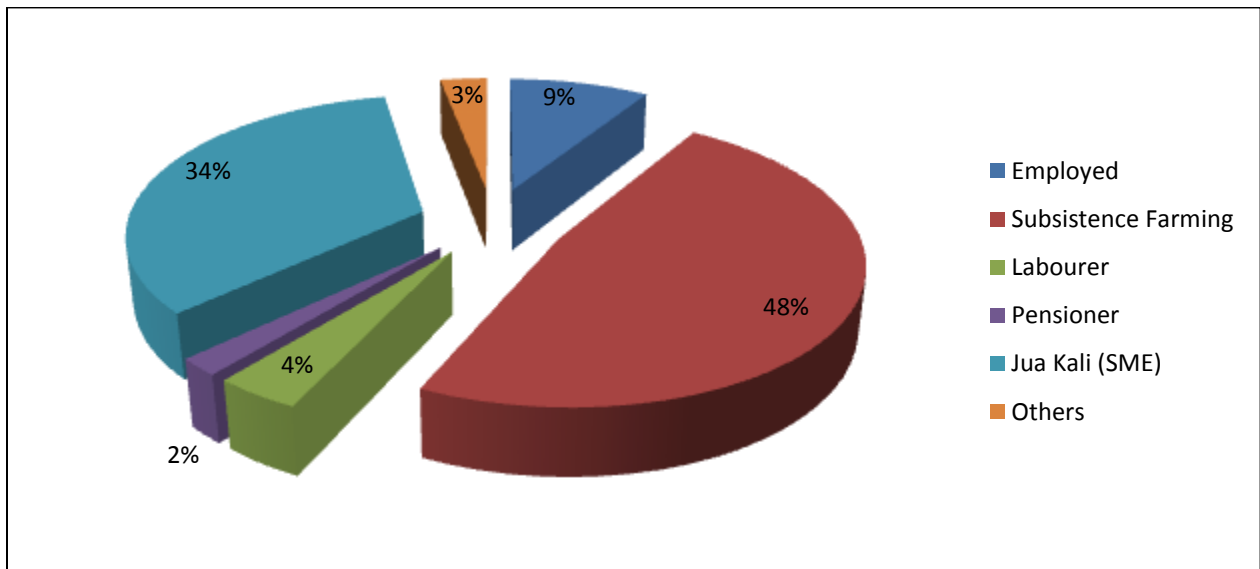


Figure 4.10: Sources of livelihood of Parents and Guardians



Plate 4.11: A 17-year-old school dropout engaged in child labour to earn a living

4.5 The School Environment

It is accepted in the education cycles that a child's achievement at school and how long he or she stays in school will be determined by factors both inside and outside the school environment (Jha and Kelleher, 2006:xiv). The far distance from home to school did not feature as a factor that contributed to the respondents' dropping out of school even though it featured during the interviews that some respondents had to walk very long distances to school. The respondents, however, complained of strict discipline in school which made it impossible for some of them to cope with school life.

In all the sampled schools, the report obtained was that the teachers were inadequate, the text books available for the students were inadequate (often shared among up to five students) and that there were inadequate teaching materials. Few of the schools that had laboratories also had enough teaching materials to be used for experiments. Other factors included distance to

school, poor quality of education, inadequate learning facilities, overcrowded classrooms and teacher absenteeism. Many of the male respondents had problems with teachers' attitudes and felt strongly that the teachers do not respect them and treat them as small children all the time even though they were in Secondary School. In this sense, the teachers did not earn the respect of the students which often resulted in cases of indiscipline. One such respondent had this to say:

Watoto wa high school ni watu wakubwa. Wanafaa kuonwa hivyo (High school students are grown-ups and they should be viewed as such). (A boy who dropped out of school because of indiscipline in Ugenya sub-county)

Discriminatory practices such as verbal abuse from teachers push children out of school, as reported by one of the respondents that his sister dropped out of school because the teachers used to embarrass her. Another respondent had this to say on the school environment:

Schools should avoid very harsh and scary punishments like caning.
(A dropout in Ugunja sub-county who informed the study that the school rules were too strict for him to cope with)

Both boys and girls were found to be sensitive to an embarrassing school environment as highlighted by this statement from one of the male respondents whose home was very close to the school:

My mother brews and sells chang'aa. She would be arrested several times. Plus I felt embarrassed because teachers would mention it in school in front of other students. (A male respondent from Ugenya sub-County)

Indiscipline, rudeness and drug abuse were identified as factors that were interconnected but which have a significant correlation with secondary school dropout rate in Siaya County. This is more evident among boys. However, female students are not spared either as depicted by this statement from one of the female respondents:

Walifanya msako wakaniget na kush (They conducted a search and found me with Kush (kuber).

(A female respondent from Siaya sub-County)

Some of the respondents felt that the teachers needed to be more serious in their work while others decried of being forced by the school to repeat if one did not attain the mean score needed to proceed to the next class.

Hardly any of the schools visited had changing rooms for female students during games. In some cases, the study was informed that the female students had to change in the Head master's office whenever they have to go for games. The schools in Siaya County are typical rural schools with very limited amenities. Many had no libraries and in some schools, lunches were taken under trees (Plate 4.12).



Plate 4.12: “Dining hall” cum-library for students at Simenya Mixed Secondary School in Ugunja sub-County

The study revealed that students who fail to get the pass mark in the end of year examinations are made to repeat. Unfortunately, many students do not like it when they have to repeat a class and often drop out of school. A respondent who had a similar problem had this to say:

Exams are so difficult for many students and they cannot be allowed into the next class. I did not get the pass mark, I left school; I did not want to repeat. (A respondent from Siaya who was forced to repeat class and opted to drop out)

Many of the schools visited had toilets for both males and females. However, in most of the schools, sanitation was not very good since most of them were using pit latrines and did not have running water to be used by the students to wash hands after visiting the toilet. Others had water placed in some Jerri cans to be used by whoever visited the toilets. Most of the schools did not have the correct number of toilets for each gender as per the Ministry’s regulation of 25 girls per toilet and 35 boys for each. This finding is in line with the findings of

the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology during an assessment of the implementation of the 2007 Gender in Education policy which found that, on average, 34 boys were using one toilet in most schools while girls were at 86 for one toilet (Republic of Kenya 2014b:19).

Lack of school fees, high poverty level at home, very strict rules and early pregnancy came out as significant variables that determine dropout rate at secondary school level in Siaya County.

Figure 4.13 presents the reasons which caused the respondents to drop out of school.

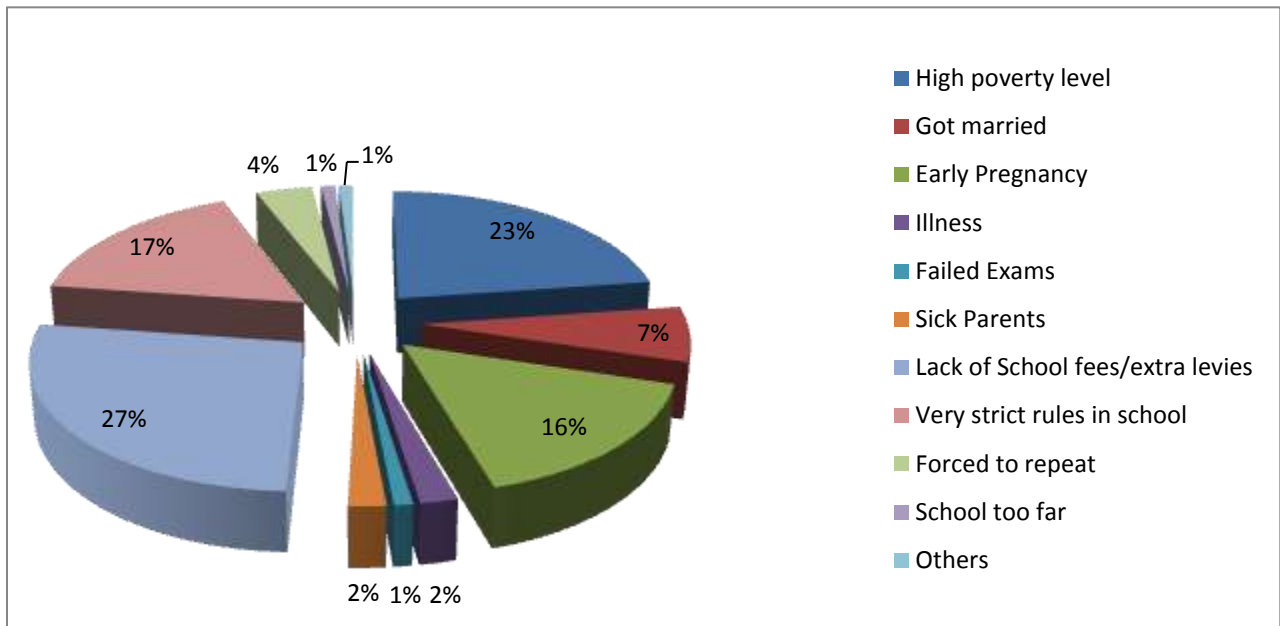


Figure 4.13: Reasons for dropping out of secondary school by the respondents

Siaya County has a high HIV prevalence which explains the existence of illness as a key variable in dropout as depicted by the respondents. The Siaya County Development Profile reports high prevalence of HIV and AIDS among the youth as one of the major challenges facing the young people in Siaya County (Republic of Kenya, 2013:20). The Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey of 2012

can be used to explain this situation where Nyanza Region is depicted as having the highest HIV prevalence countrywide at 15.1% among persons aged 15-64 years. The report presented an increase over the KAIS 2009 findings which had also reported Nyanza Region with the highest HIV prevalence for both rural and urban areas at 13.9% and 18.3%, respectively, with 16.1% prevalence for women and 13.9% for men (Republic of Kenya, 2014a:30). Siaya on the other hand is reported by the Kenya HIV Prevention Revolution Road Map as one of the ten High HIV burden counties in the country with a total prevalence of 23.7% (Republic of Kenya, 2014c:16). The study observed that many schools do not have any mechanism to support students who have either lost either of their parents to HIV and AIDS or are themselves infected with the virus. This finding supports the findings by Nyambedha (2000) in a study on the support systems for orphaned children in one of the sub-counties in Siaya County which established that the District Education Boards still do not have special regulations for orphaned children and non-orphans when the school committees send back their returns without any regard to the student's parental survivorship. This leaves the orphaned children more vulnerable since they have no means of raising the fees balance and are forced to stay away from school for a longer period while looking for work to earn the money. This, indeed, makes the problem of schooling the most serious of all the problems faced by the children who have been orphaned by HIV and AIDS (Nyambedha, 2000:72).

Figure 4.14 below illustrates the information given by the respondents on why students drop out of secondary schools in Siaya County. The respondents cited the same reasons that caused them to drop out of school as the same ones that make other students to drop out of school in

the County. Indiscipline was cited by the County Director of Education as a big problem in Siaya County where residents “do not have any respect for authority”. Unfortunately, the male children seem to be emulating their fathers by extending the lack of respect for authority to the school environment.

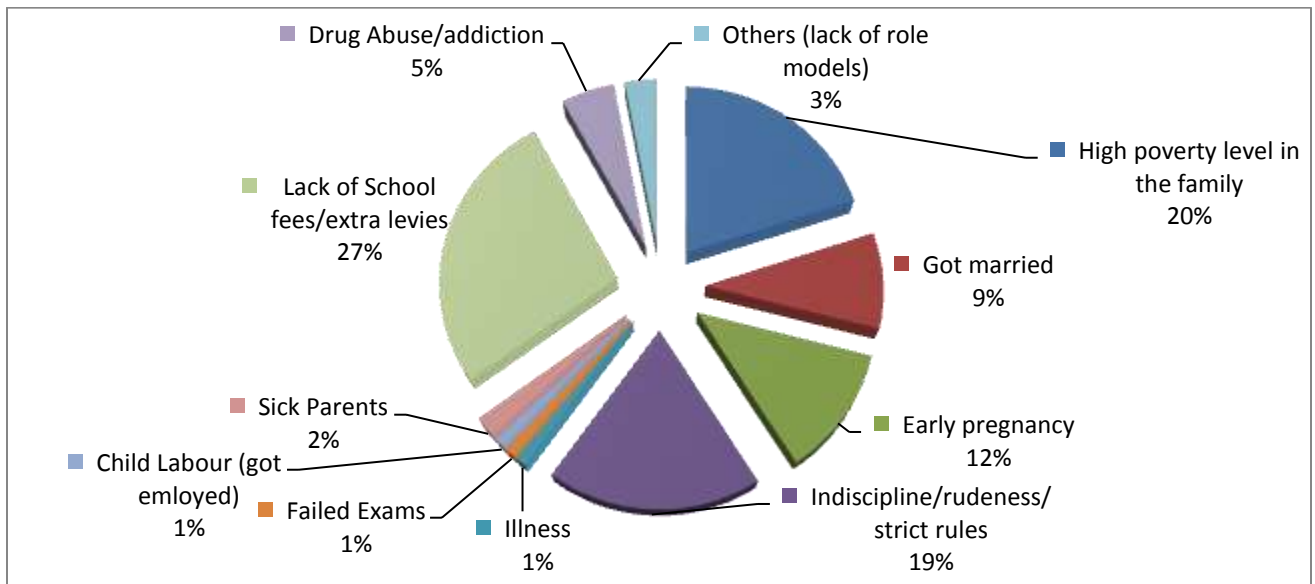


Figure 4.14: Why children drop out of secondary school in Siaya County

The findings also indicate that girls who have become pregnant while still in school have the problem of not having someone to take care of their babies to free them to continue with their education. One respondent reported her mother telling her that she “was not her maid” and was tired of taking care of her baby. The mother asked her to go and tell the father of the child to take care of it as she goes to school. In addition, most parents, especially fathers, consider refusal to pay for the girl’s school fees as a form of punishment for having conceived while in school.

Some of the respondents preferred not to go back to school for fear of being ridiculed. To avoid the embarrassment and ridicule by both teachers and fellow students in their old school, some opted to move to a new school after giving birth. This is also preferred by those parents who are willing to take their daughters back to school after they have had their babies. Thus, the findings suggest that failure in examination and forced class repetition, peer pressure, indiscipline and very strict school rules are key variables within the school environment in Siaya County that determine dropout rate at secondary level education.

4.6 The Home Environment

Contrary to the common belief that girls do not have sufficient time to do their school work, the survey revealed that there was no significant correlation between the availability of enough time for doing school work and dropout rate for females at secondary school level in Siaya County. Fifty-six per cent of all the respondents confirmed that they had enough time at home to do their work. Thirty per cent of these were females. On the other hand, more male respondents (48%) compared to females (40%) never had enough time for their school work since they were involved in child labour whenever they were not in school.

A strong relationship was therefore established between lack of sufficient time for school work for males in Siaya County and eventual dropout on their part. However, lack of sufficient time for school work was found not to be a significant variable contributing to secondary school dropout for females in Siaya County. Instead, the problem seems to be affecting the male

students more than the females. This is due to the high involvement in child labour for survival by the male students. The finding was supported by the information from key informants who told the study that many families in Siaya these days prefer to educate their girls as a result of the good changes they have seen in families where girls are well educated. According to a Chief in Gem sub-County, *“educated girls have managed to change the living standards of their parents and siblings and brought admiration and honour to their homes”*. Such families no longer emphasize on household chores at the expense of their girls’ school work.

Observations, however, showed that female students still have to do the daily chores assigned to them at home such as fetching water and firewood, cooking, helping in the shamba and taking care of siblings as a priority before settling down to do their school work. Because of the socialization of girls within the community, the females have accepted these chores as part of their duties within the households and do not to see them as depriving them of time to do their school work. This could explain the responses from the female respondents that they had sufficient time to do their school work.

Nevertheless, many of the respondents felt that the level of education of their parents and guardians contributed to their dropping out of school. The low level of educational attainment leads to lack of interest in the children’s school work, apathy towards education and persistent high level of poverty. A strong relationship was established by the study between the level of education of parents and school dropout rates for both males and females in Siaya County.

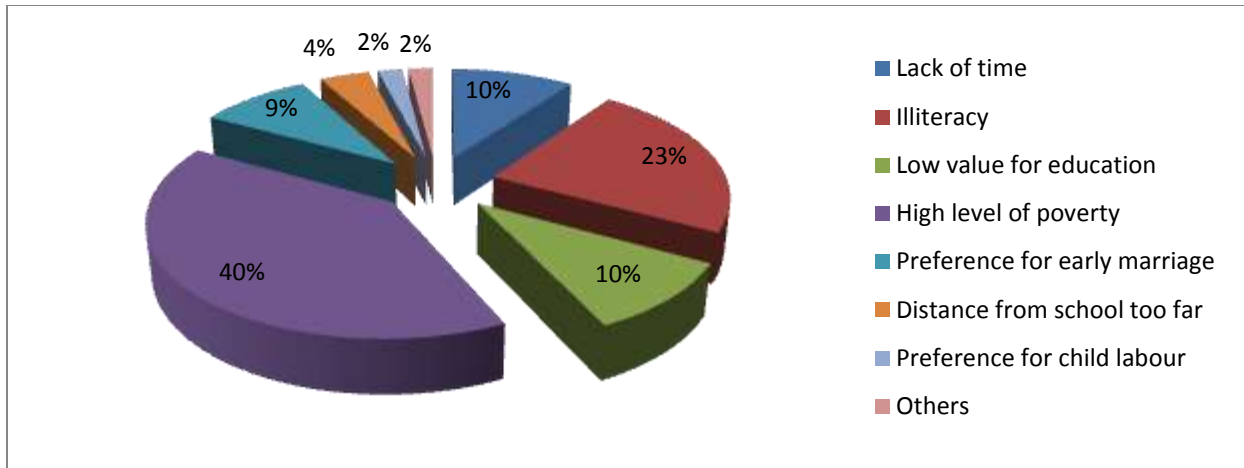


Figure 4.15: Respondents' explanation on why level of education of parents and guardians is linked to their dropping out of school

The study also revealed that a high number of the parents rarely attended school meetings, with 49% of the respondents saying that their parents never attend school events at all while an equally large number indicated that their parents only attended sometimes. According to the respondents it was mainly mothers or grandmothers who attended school events and parents' days. In cases where the grandmother was too old to walk the long distance to school, she often sent a relative (always a woman) to go and represent her. The absence of fathers in the education process of their children in Siaya County and their role as mere observers in the children's upbringing was evident from the discussions with the respondents.

The lack of direct parental involvement in the children's school work and school activities led to poor performance and at times indiscipline from the students. Over 40 per cent of the respondents had parents who never showed any interest in their school work while there were only 10 % whose parents participated very often. This lack of interest was attributed to illiteracy which meant that they could not read and write and therefore were not in a position to

understand the school work or to assist with the school assignments. Such parents never went for school meetings and did not even ask for the report forms to check on the respondents' performance. Some of the respondents said that they never had any motivations from their parents and only went to school because they were expected to go – *“it was the correct thing to do”*.

Many of the respondents claimed that their parents did not show interest in their school work because they were too busy in their jua kali jobs while others were illiterate and did not see the need of going since they could not read or write. A number of the respondents informed the study that they did not think that their parents saw the value of education, even though they had taken them to school. The general feeling of many of the respondents who complained that their parents were not interested in their school work and did not see the value of education is captured in the words of this male respondent:

My parents never checked my school work. I could even hide my report card and nobody bothered to follow up.

Another respondent who was being supported by a guardian had the following experience:

I lived with an illiterate grandmother; my guardian could check my work once in a while when he came back to the village. He lived in Kisumu.

Such an attitude brings about lack of interest by the children themselves in school work and very little motivation for good performance. This is also contributed to by the lack of parental involvement in school activities and events.

One of the respondents owned up to having told her drunkard father not to go for school events for fear of embarrassment and ridicule by teachers and fellow students. The information provided was supported by the chiefs and leaders within the community who felt strongly that there were no role models in the villages to encourage the students to work harder at school and also to challenge the parents to see the value of education. A chief in Wagai division of Gem sub-County was very categorical in his response and blamed the educated people who have relocated to the big cities like Nairobi and hardly ever go back home to assist in motivating the young people and their parents to value education. According to him:

Even when they come back home, they are completely disconnected from the community and do not have time for the uneducated people.

While these are the people who could encourage people to see the value of education, their behaviour is so negative that the community members often lay blame on education for alienating people from their community and therefore they do not see the need of working hard to educate their children only to lose them to education and the big cities. Twenty-five per cent of the respondents blamed high poverty levels in their households for the parents' lack of interest while 22% felt that it was because the parents were illiterate and therefore did not understand the value of education (Figure 4.16). Some of the respondents laid blame on the many children that the parents had which had become a burden to them and thereby forced them to look for ways of feeding the big families. This deprived them of the time to attend to other responsibilities such as school events. According to one of them:

We were many children in my family and the burden was overbearing for my parents. We were eleven children. (A female dropout from Gem sub-county)

Another female respondent had this to say about large families like hers:

Parents should embrace family planning. We are 9 children and it was expensive for my father to educate us all. (A female respondent from Siaya sub-County)

Sixteen per cent of the respondents felt that their parents did not see the value of education, hence their lack of interest in school work and events.

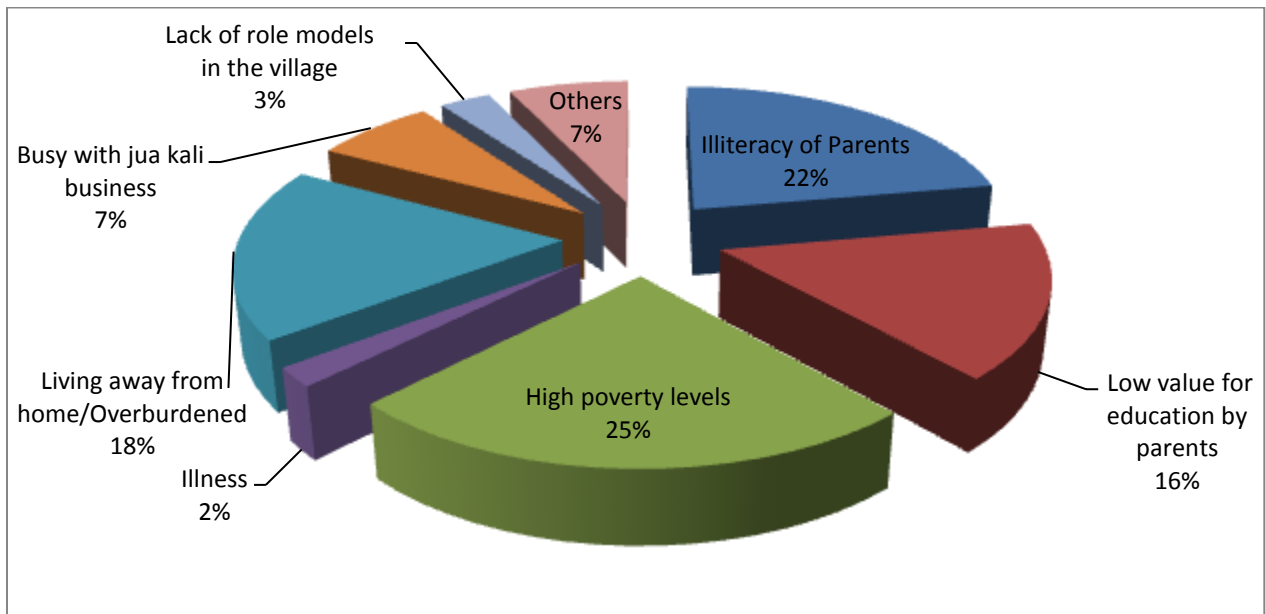


Figure 4.16: Reasons given for lack of interest in respondents' school work and performance by parents and guardians

Some of the respondents pointed out that their parents did not see the value of education since some of the educated people that they knew were either unemployed or living from hand to mouth while, on the other hand, some illiterate people in the villages had acquired a lot of wealth without that education. Such parents and guardians often made the following comments: *"ng'ane bende ok osomo to sani nigi pesa mang'eny"* (so and so also never went to

school but he has a lot of money)! The existence of this attitude in Siaya County was confirmed by chiefs and community leaders who were interviewed as key informants. One of the community leaders had this to say:

Pesa bende tinde oketho piny! Nitiere ji mang'eny makata somono bende nene ok giyudo maber to gin gi pesa mang'eny makata ji kia kama owuokye. Ka jonyuol moko onenogi to ok gi ne ber mar somo. Gineno mana ni nyithindo ketho seche e skul (Nowadays money has messed up the world. There are many wealthy people who never even got good education but they have so much money and nobody even knows where the money is coming from. When some parents see them, they no longer see the importance of education. They only see that children are wasting time being in school).

The study revealed that a majority of the respondents had parents who had only attained primary level education (Figure 4.17). This corresponds to the findings by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and Society for International Development (SID), in their report which indicates that a total of 64% of Siaya County residents have a primary level of education only (KNBS and SID, 2013:12). None of the respondents had a mother with university level education, while only one father had attained that level. The highest level of education attained by the mothers of the respondents was college (diploma) level. A total of 10% mothers and 4% fathers had never been to school and were totally illiterate.

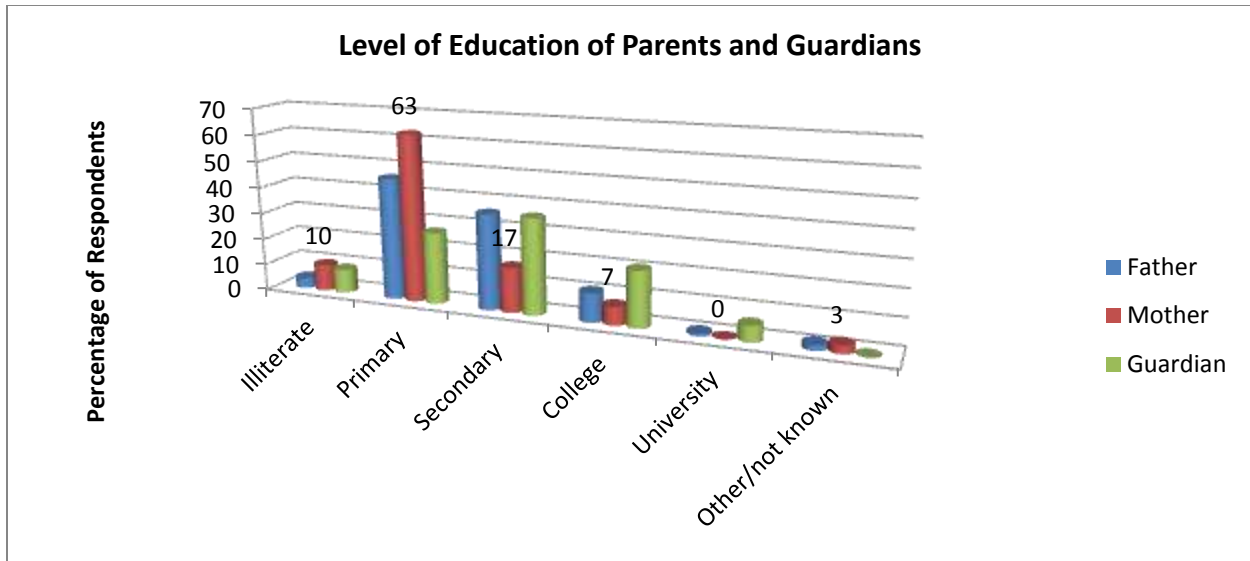


Figure 4.17: Level of Education of Parents and Guardians

A cross-tabulation of the gender dimension in the responses that linked the parents' and guardians' level of education to the respondent dropping out of school indicated a relationship between the education level and the dropping out of the respondents. A majority of the male respondents stated that the education level of their parents definitely contributed to their dropping out of school. However, the analysis revealed an insignificant difference between the responses from the female respondents and the male respondents which was at 48% and 52%, respectively. All the respondents who felt that there was a relationship explained that if their parents and guardians had gone far in education, they would have been more interested in the school work of the respondents and their performance and they would have known the value of education. They also insisted that if their parents had not been illiterate, they would not have been so poor since they could have been in gainful employment.

The study noted that most of the respondents were willing to go back to school if they were given another opportunity. In fact, 85 % of them expressed the desire to go back to school. The few respondents who did not express the wish to go back to school were mainly females who said that they were already married and had families to take care of. Some of the male respondents felt that they were too old to go back to school. Others were already engaged in the much needed employment and had to supplement the family income for their households.

Early pregnancy was identified by the study as a significant cause of dropout for teenage girls in Siaya County. This was evident in the responses from many of the female respondents whose main reason for dropping out of school was pregnancy. Unfortunately, a gender bias is evident in cases of pregnancy where whoever impregnates a girl will continue with his normal life while the girl is not only forced to drop out of school and take care of the child but she also has to face the wrath of an enraged father who uses pregnancy as the reason for stopping paying school fees. One female respondent and victim of unwanted early pregnancy had this to say:

mama to diher ni mondo adog e skul, lakini wuon pesa otamore. Koro obende onge kaka di okony (my mother would like to see me back in school. However, the 'owner of the money' has refused. Now even her she cannot help). **(An early pregnancy dropout in Ugenya sub-County whose father has refused to pay fees for her re-entry)**

For such a girl, the choice she is left with is to get a husband. However, this is not an automatic solution since a girl who has delivered at home is not viewed positively within the community. Often, such girls end up being married to widowers or they become second wives. The gender bias in pregnancy related cases is very clear that this is a girl's problem which she has to take

responsibility for yet the boy who makes her pregnant continues with life as if nothing ever happened in his life. Plate 4.18 below depicts the life of a dropout with her child as her responsibility. One of the female respondents who dropped out due to early pregnancy had this to say about those who impregnate school girls:

Watu wanaopeana ball wanafaa nao pia waumie, hata kama niku castratiwa (those who are responsible for impregnating school girls should be arrested and made to suffer too, even if it means castrating them). (A pregnancy victim with a sickly baby and whose father has refused to take her back to school)



Plate 4.18: A 15-year-old early pregnancy dropout filling the study questionnaire

4.7 Proposed Interventions for curbing secondary school dropout rate in Siaya County

The study sought to get proposals from the respondents themselves on the solutions for the high dropout rate in secondary school level in the County. Table 4.18 highlights several interventions that were proposed and which the respondents felt would be the best way to minimize secondary school dropout rate or eradicate it completely in Siaya. Most of the proposed interventions were directly linked to addressing the issues that had led to the respondents dropping out of school. Some of the proposed solutions such as the reduction of high poverty levels among community members, establishment of income generating projects in schools to support needy students, creating awareness on the harmful effects of drug abuse, total abolition of school fees and high levies by the Government, creating awareness on the value of education within the community through use of role models from within the County were also identified as critical actions that should be taken to minimize dropout rate at secondary school level education.

Table 4.19: Proposals by Respondents on intervention to stop dropout in secondary school Education level in Siaya County

Proposed Actions	Frequency	Percentage
Reduce poverty	110	14.4
Bursaries should be provided to needy cases on time and adequately	88	11.5
Cater for fees and other levies/abolish school fees totally	80	10.5
Use CDF to provide fees/uniforms to needy cases	78	10.2
Start income generating activities/projects in all secondary schools	62	8.1
Stop Early marriages	57	7.4
Regulate and adjust strictness/discipline in schools to make environment more friendly for learning	50	6.5
Allow girls to repeat after pregnancy	45	5.9
Introduce guidance and counselling as subjects in all schools	44	5.8
Stop Child labour	35	4.6
Reduce the illiteracy of the parents/community	25	3.3
Create awareness on the harmful effects of drug abuse/addiction	25	3.3
Others	15	2.0
Abolish dictatorial culture in schools	12	1.6
Change negative attitude of parents towards education	10	1.3
Build more schools	8	1.0
Allow students to repeat the exam when they fail	8	1.0
Create incentives for both the parents and the students	7	0.9
Reduce the illiteracy level of the community	5	0.7
Total	764	100.0

CHAPTER FIVE

VOICES OF DROPOUTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the voices of both female and male student dropouts that were recorded from the four sub-counties in this study. The recorded dropouts narrate their life experiences and reasons that led to their dropping out of school. The ten student dropouts were selected on a ratio of 5:5, and were selected on the basis of the variables that their stories present as well as the uniqueness of those stories. To answer the research questions, the Chapter explores the eight key areas highlighted in the responses and the narratives.

The narratives vividly highlight factors that led the respondents to drop out from school such as extreme poverty and inability to pay school fees and levies, the unsupportive and learner unfriendly home and school environments, early unwanted pregnancies and the cultural practices that make parents choose between which children to educate in cases of limited financial resources. Added to their unique stories that are linked to the questions that the study endeavoured to answer, the selected students are those that were performing very well in school before dropping out and are still very keen to go back to school if they get a sponsor.

Poverty and inability to pay fees as well as child labour for fees generation run across almost all the narratives from the male dropouts. The same problem of poverty and inability to pay fees is also highlighted by the female dropouts. However, a common theme in the narratives of the

female dropouts is unwanted pregnancies, suggesting a lot of ignorance and the inability to resume schooling after delivery due to reasons that are linked to the home and school environments. The female students also depict how the high level of poverty makes girls prey to sexual exploitation and early and unwanted pregnancies that eventually lead them to drop out of school. Lastly, a majority of these students have had an encounter with HIV either through loss of one or both parents, or the parents are sickly. Some of the narratives have been translated from Dholuo to English since the speakers were not very comfortable speaking and narrating their stories in English. Other narratives have been presented just the way they were narrated by the dropout himself/herself in English without any editing.

5.2 Voices of Male dropouts

Case 5.2.1 An orphan whose father does not see the value in educating him

The following narrative highlights school fees as a variable and the main problem that faced the respondent and the variable of poverty as the overriding factor. The respondent is an orphan and narrates the unsecure and non-friendly home environment in which he stays with a stepmother and a father who is not at all interested in the respondent's school work. The story was narrated in English by the dropout. The narrative:

I left school in form 2 in 2012. I am now 18 years old. School fees was the problem. I was staying with my father and stepmother. My father reached form 4 and the mother class eight. But the mother is not there. Fees is the problem affecting us here in Siaya County. Myself I want to go back to school as from anytime. Father is a teacher in primary school and stepmother is a tailor. My sister who comes after me is in class seven. My stepmother has no children. Father

stopped paying school fees because of stepmother. She wants my fees to be paid to her brother's child.

My father stopped paying school fees in second term of Form 2 in 2012. That is when I dropped out of school. The fees was 17,000 shillings per year. He had said that I would go back to school but when we started 2013, he changed his mind and left me to stay at home. My father is 42 years old but my mother died in 2005. My father has left me to do what I feel like. He knows that I am doing odd jobs here and there but he does not care. At the moment I am just making bricks. I get Shillings 7,000 per month when the bricks have cured. Before I get any money, I just depend on my grandparents with whom I am staying. My grandfather is a retired teacher. Personally, in my heart, I would really like to go back to school so that I can complete my secondary education. I would like to appeal to the government to try and see how it can help children who are poor and suffering in getting school fees like me here. The government should talk to the students in school to get a strategy for assisting them.

Case 5.2.2: A total orphan whose grandparents cannot afford to pay the secondary school fees

The narrator is a total orphan who lost his parents within a span of two years. He describes his life with his grandparents and the struggles they have to go through together with his sister whose education has equally been shortened. He opens a window into some of the things that dropouts are forced to do to survive. The narration has been directly translated into English in order not to lose the thought process of the dropout. The narrative:

I am an orphan. My parents died when I was very young; before I started school. I stay with my grandparents. My father died when I was 4 years old and mother died when I was 6 year old. My grandmother struggled to educate me till I finished standard eight. Then I joined Siranga Mixed Secondary School and I had many fees problems in Form one. During my form two first Term, I was sent home for fees, my grandparents talked to the Headmaster and we were allowed back in school for one week. Because there was no money to pay, we were sent home again and this time we could not go back without fees. My grandparents are not employed. We are two children and I was in secondary in the same class with my older sister. My sister dropped out in Form two when she was 18 years old and me I was 16 years old. We have been staying at home for one year. What I am praying for is just to have a chance to go back to school. If I can get sponsorship to go back to school I can be happy. That is my request. Me, I am just staying at home now. Sometimes I dig for people to get something to live on and also to help my grandparents to buy food. My sister has gone to stay with my uncle to help them as a housemaid. I was told that my father went to school till Form 4 but my mother did not go to school. But they died early so they were not able to help us. I wish for sponsorship for my sister and me to go back to school instead of staying at home. The fees was 15,000 shillings per child so we are supposed to pay 30,000 shillings. So our grandparents could not afford to pay.

Case 5.2.3: A dropout forced into child labour to pay his own school fees

The respondent highlights variables of poverty, school fees, child labour and a non-supportive home environment as the main factors that led him to drop out of school. The narration was done in English and has been presented as such. The narrative:

I started school in Primary in 2001 at Yenga Primary School. By then I was having problem in fees whereby only my mother was the one trying to pay. I kept on being sent home. When the Government introduced free primary school in 2003 I was very happy. It was easy for me and I finished up to class 8. I got 367 marks and my aunt took me to Nairobi where she told me that she would take me to Form 1. She put me in Mogras Academy in Form 1. But she could not pay the fees so I had to come back home. My mother tried and took me to Sega Township Secondary where I go to Form 2 for first term only then the fees became a problem. It forced me to leave at that point. I stayed home the whole of that year and I started to look how I can get my own fees. I was trying to make bricks for me to get my own fees and pay myself. That year, 2010, it forced me to be at home for the remaining terms since there was no job at that time that I can get and manage to pay also school fees. In 2011, I have worked and got some little money and I go back to school at Siranga Secondary School in Form 2 again. There I struggled since getting that money was difficult. Since I was the one who was paying that school fees I was struggling to make bricks and at the same time going to school it became difficult and by the end of the year I became number two in class. Then for me to go to Form 3 it was a bit difficult since the year turned without me making some good money that I can pay that year in Form 3 it forced me to leave school at that time and look how I can get my little money and eat and live that way. To me, my interest was to go on with school so I can be somewhere else since my career was to be an aeronautical engineer. And since there, I dropped out from school and started my life. I was making bricks and getting how I can eat. Now to me I would like so much to go back to school and what is difficult to me is how I can raise that school fees and go on with my education. Yes, continue with my education.

My parents are alive but they cannot raise the fees. My father makes bricks sometimes and he is also sickly. He can't make frequently. He sometimes makes it and sometimes he is sick. He cannot raise the money. He has chest pains. I am 21 years old and I am married with a child now. If I go back to school, my wife is there also looking how she can strive on with her life. It is difficult but if she can get how she can go on with life while I am in school, I can go since me I am ready to learn, very ready and I am asking that if I can get some sponsors it can be ok to me since I am bright enough. I would like to have a better life instead of this digging for people. I got married because you know, it became difficult since by the time I left school I was looking how I can strive on with my life, making my own money to get my own food, so I decided to marry so as to have it easy so that my wife can prepare food for me, so and so, and so on. It is not easy raising money to go on with family. My father reached class 8. My mother dropped out, I don't know class 6 there, yes. And I think that one is the problem that makes me find a difficult thing. Since they didn't go to secondary they also can't bother so much since they didn't reach there, they can't bother so much for their children to go to secondary since they did not reach.

I am the first born. I have sisters and brothers but they are there in primary school. They are 5 boys and 3 girls. And you know, in that family, my real father is not part of the family that I am living with. And that is the main problem that I have been having since I am not part of his family. He can't manage to raise fees for me since I am not part of his family. He is my stepfather since my mother married him when I had been born. I do not know anything about my real father – it is only my mother who can tell us that one. She came with me into the marriage. My stepfather prefers to educate his own children. But even those ones, I cannot say that they will be able to complete secondary school because it is free education that has helped

us. It is a very tough life because even in primary school it is my mother who was struggling to pay my fees till 2003 when free education came. Before then, I could be sent home for fees but I would sneak back to school hiding from teachers.

The problem I had right from Primary was my stepfather! He could remove me from school to accompany him to go and work somewhere to get money for feeding the family. Now that was a big problem. If I failed to go he would say that there is no way he can be working and some people just eat without working. Now that would make me miss school for even one week. Now, I realized that he wanted to spoil for me my education so it reached a time when I could wake up even as early as 5:00 am so that when he wakes up he does not find me in the house but when I have already gone to school. But now, there he started saying that I am rude. Now, I would go home and there is no food for me. I tried working and learning till I reached class 7. By that time I was 15 years old. Even paying for me exam fees was a problem. By that time, since I was already big enough, I could make my own money and whatever little I could make working on Saturdays and Sundays I could take to school for fees. I found it easier to learn in peace like that when I was making my own money and paying for my fees. That is how I even managed to pay even the registration fees for the class KCPE in 2008 by myself. After that, even the 367 I got was not what I deserved. I deserved over 400 marks! But the problem that made me get that was because I could go to school and at times and other times I do not go. I go, I miss, I go, I miss! Even in Form I at Mograss, I could stay home for even 3 weeks because of fees and whenever I went back to school, I could still be in position 1 in class. I worked so hard but by 3rd term I had a bulk of fees, even my report form is still held there. I then felt that it was better for me to go back home to the village so my stepfather can try to help.

At home in 2010 we tried and worked hard enough to raise money for me to go back to school. That is how I went to Sega Township Secondary School in Form 2. Even there, I never even did the CATs but I was still No. 5 in class. Now the fees became a problem. I was sent home and stayed there to work with my stepfather to raise money for my education. But when I got the money after working so hard, he used all the money without even me knowing how and on what. I also got very annoyed and I quarrelled with him because I had worked so hard and made over 20,000 shillings but all he could pay for my fees was only 5,000 shillings and yet I was expecting to go back to school? I asked him: "what is this that you are doing to me and yet I am supposed to go back to school"? He also got fiery (angry) with me and did not want to see me saying that I am a very bad child because I had questioned him about the money. I also left him and decided to work alone. Now I started working and going to school for the remaining two terms but I could not raise the money for second term. I tried very hard and the following year, I got some and went to Siranga Mixed Secondary School.

It was very difficult for me to work to raise enough money and at the same time go to school. During school days I could not raise the money so I only worked on Saturdays and Sundays. However, that year, I managed to pay that money. I paid money for the whole of that Form 2 in 2011. I became No. 2 at the end of the year. Then in 2012, when I was to go to Form 3, that December there was no job, so I did not have a job to raise money to pay my school fees for F3 because the money needed was a lot and it was difficult for me to get it. Now it forced me to drop out from school because it was difficult for me to raise fees. I also realized that it would not be possible for me to work and raise enough money for Form 3 and 4 fees so I decided that instead of suffering looking for fees, let me just struggle to get whatever little I can get to

survive. But me I really want to go back to school. My aim is to go to University such that even if I do not make it for that Aeronautical, then I go for medicine since it is not difficult. It is possible, it is possible!

Case 5.2.4: An orphan who has to work as a barber to support his ailing mother and a dropout sister forced by poverty to work as a bar maid

The narrator presents a life story of his struggles to have secondary education through poverty and hardship, orphaned already and left with an ailing parent. He presents an unfriendly school environment for poor performers where some students, especially older ones who are not performing very well, are forced to drop out of school as a result of embarrassing statements made by teachers in front of other students. The narration was done in Dholuo by the dropout and has been translated verbatim into English. The narrative:

I am 22 years old. Even when I was in Primary school I used to have a lot of fees problems. I could be sent home to fetch school fees and could stay home for even two weeks before going back. Now, you see when you are sent away and stay out for long even your performance goes down. I struggled like that for the whole of Form 1 till the end of the year. The following year, I joined Form 2 and in the second week of Form 2, I was sent home again for fees. I have not been able to go back since that time. I wanted to go back but it is the fees that made me stay at home. I was just staying at home so I decided to work as a barber which is what I am doing even now. I am employed by somebody to be a barber in his shop. He pays me 200 shillings per day

depending on how much I make for him. I use this money to buy my clothes and also some to promote my mother. I have tried to look for sponsors but have not been very lucky. Once I got someone who promised to sponsor me but I kept on waiting and later he changed the story saying that the money he was expecting had not come.

When I was in school, my mother was very sick and she was the one who was paying my school fees. I have only one parent – my mother. My father died in 2005 when I was in class 5. My mother has now recovered from her illness but not fully. She has also not recovered the money to take me back to school. She told me that she will try to look for money but if she does not get then I can look for work to do. But me I would like to go back to school. I dropped out of school in 2012. My father reached Form 4 but my mother only managed to reach class 7. My mother sells tomatoes. We are 6 children, 2 girls and 4 boys. I am the second born. My elder sister dropped out of school in class 6 because of poor performance. She used to be embarrassed by some teachers in school in front of other children. She did not like it so she left school and went to work as a barmaid in Bomet. Now she is married and only sells fish. She is unable to help me get the fees. If I can be sent back to school I can continue. I am ready to go back and learn. When I left, the fees was 15,000 shillings per year, but you know sometimes when you have a balance then the amount increases. So my balance was high.

Case 5.2.5: The impact of HIV and AIDS on households in Siaya County as presented in the life of a dropout

The narrator is a total orphan and he describes his life as a total orphan struggling to get education through support of a sponsor who eventually cannot cope with supporting him in school. The narrative exposes the devastating effect of HIV and AIDS on families and especially the lives of young people who cannot continue with their education and are forced to depend on very old grandmothers. He describes the only jobs that his siblings are able to look for because of their lack of a good level of education. The narration was done in Dholuo and has been translated into English. The narrative:

I used to go to Segu Township Secondary School. I am 20 years old. I joined Segu Township in 2011 and in second term I was sent home to go for fees. My father died before I was born and my mother died in 1998 when I was four years old. We are four children and I am the last one. I am also the only one who has reached secondary school in my family. We all wished we could finish our education but fees was the problem. My mother's sister used to pay for me school fees, but she also reached a point where she said that there was no money. I talked to the teacher to help me because I want to go back to school. My grandmother cannot help me anymore because she is very old and poor. She is 92 years old and helpless. I am the one who helps her even when she needs something.

My father was an administration policeman and he reached Form 4. But he only worked for a short time then he died. But he died before putting any of my older siblings in a position where they can assist in supporting someone. All my siblings dropped out in Primary school in class 7

and 8. My mother left school in class 5. My siblings and even my grandmother believed that I would boost them (change their lives) after finishing secondary school. While in school, only my grandmother used to come for parents'/teachers' meetings or any other school meetings. Sometimes she would send a neighbour whenever she was too tired or too sick to take the 2km walk to school. She is very old. The day I dropped out of school, we were sent home on the examination day to go and bring fees. I have never gone back. Now I just help my grandmother since my grandfather is also dead. My mother's sister decided to use the little money she would get as a Catholic Nun to take care of her mother. I just depend on that assistance too. My older brothers are in Nairobi doing some odd jobs. One is learning to be a tailor while the other is learning to be a painter. My only sister dropped out and went to Nairobi to visit a distant relative as well as to look for a job. Later she stopped staying with the relative and we have no idea where she is or what she does.

For me my cry is to be given a chance to go back to school. Life of just staying at home without any source of income is not good at all. The Government should look into things like drugs that young people are using and how to stop them. Other things such as discos and alcohol that continue to destroy young people should also be controlled.

5.3 Voices of Female Dropouts

Case 5.3.1: A girl who is forced to cut her education short for her brother to continue studying

The narrator brings out her life as an orphan who is forced to sacrifice her own education so that her brother can complete his education. This is one of the few cases among the narrators where the study encountered a clear case of choices being made on which child's education is sacrificed for the continuity of the other. The narrative has been translated into English. The narrative:

I dropped out of school in form 2 after my father died in 2006. I was learning at St. Francis Rang'ala Girls. He left my mother with four children. But my mother had fees problems so I was forced to drop out and stay at home since she had two people in secondary school. I was forced to drop out for her to educate my brother who was in Form 4 at the time. But when I was in school, I used to have a lot of problems with school fees. I could be sent home three times in a term but would still just go back to school without money for fees. I was forced to drop out so my elder brother could complete his education. Unfortunately, immediately my brother completed his fourth form, the business that my mother was running went down. I was now forced to just stay at home even after my brother had finished school. My mother tried her best for me to go back to school but she was unable to raise the money for school fees. She even tried to change me to a day school but she could not manage. At least our first born was lucky God had mercy on him and so he completed his secondary education.

I am the third born and the only girl in our family. I would really like to go back to school to complete my education because nowadays, whoever does not complete their education is nothing in the society. Even though my brother completed his education, he is currently just staying. He got 'C' plain but his school leaving certificate is still being held in school because of fees balance. My mother only reached class 6 in her studies while my father completed class 8.

If the Government can provide assistance to students who have fees problems they will have done a very good and important thing. If I went back to school I will study very hard to achieve my goal to study medicine.

Case 5.3.2: A dropout who had to tell her father not to go for school events for fear of ridicule and embarrassment

This narrator highlights the high cost of education in boarding schools for most families in the rural areas. She also highlights a common practice which was identified as a common feature in Siaya County where fathers are not present in the school life of their children through refusal to attend school functions and very little interest in their school work. The narrator describes the embarrassment of a child who is made fun of in school by the teachers and students alike because of her father's drinking habits and is eventually forced to tell the father not to come to school for fear of being ridiculed. She also highlights the role the level of education of the parents plays in determining how long the child can stay in school. The narration was made in Dholuo and translated into English. The narrative:

I was sent away from school in 2013 due to school fees and I am just staying at home. I dropped out of school in Form 2. My father is jobless and my mother is a tailor/seamstress. In third term when I was sent home from school, I found that she was very ill in hospital. She told me that I should just wait for her to recover then we shall try the following year. But when we started this year 2014, I found that she could not afford the fees. While in school, I could be sent home for school fees even thrice. We are four children, two girls and two boys. My elder brother is in 2nd

year at University of Eldoret. He completed his secondary education but has not collected his school leaving certificate because he has fees arrears.

When I was still in school, it is my mother who used to come for school functions and meetings with teachers. My father would never come because he is a drunkard. I am the one who told him not to be coming to school because whenever he would come he was always drunk and it was embarrassing. My father never showed interest in my school work. He would come home totally drunk so he never had time. He gets money from mjengo and then he goes to drink alcohol with it. My father reached class 8. He is just a drunkard without a job. It is my mother who used to pay my school fees. But she would delay in payment such that in one term I could be sent home thrice. My mother is a secondary school graduate. If both my parents were highly educated, I would be in school by now because they would be having somewhere to get school fees from. Now my mother wants to go and teach me how to sew clothes. But me, I would really love to go back to school. I would like to be a journalist. At least government can help by sending money to school to pay fees for girls like me. My plea is to be taken back to school.

Case 5.3.3: A dropout who spoilt her chances for education by getting pregnant

This narrator presents her life during school and after she dropped out. A part from frequent absenteeism as a result of lack of school fees which the parents struggle to pay, she also highlights pregnancy as a key factor in dropout especially for girls and the consequences that go with it. She further highlights the ignorance in reproductive health that was also identified by

many girls in the survey as the main cause for early pregnancies. The division at the family level on her re-entry into school is highlighted in the midst of her hopelessness. The narration was translated from Dholuo. The narrative:

I am 19 years old. When I was in school I used to perform very well, but I used to have fees problems. Whenever I would be sent home to go for school fees, I would miss a lot of lessons. I could stay away from school for even two weeks or even one month when my parents are still looking for fees and by the time I went back, I was not able to catch up with the others in class. This made me lag behind in some subjects and not perform very well in them. But there was somebody who used to confuse me and I became pregnant. I was in Ralak Girls Day School. I would wait till after my parents had fallen asleep and then I would sneak out to go to his place. I knew I could get pregnant if I had sex but I thought that if the periods are still far away from the start date then I cannot get pregnant. I was also very surprised by that pregnancy. I therefore left school in Form 2 second term when I was 18 years old; and I gave birth in December 2013.

I have not gone back to school since that time. I have wished several times that I could go back to school but I am unable to. My parents were very annoyed with me and said that I had spoilt for myself so I should find out how to survive on my own. My father never sees why he should take me back to school. He says that I spoilt my chances by myself so I should see how to survive on my own. My father collects scrap metal around Ugenya, Ugunja and Alego and when he gets them he sells. My mother makes brooms. So now I am just staying at home with the baby But my mother told me that if I get somebody to take me back to school I should just go back so I

complete my education so that I can also become like other people she would take care of the baby. But me I would really want to go back to school.

Case 5.3 4: A brilliant dropout trapped in abject poverty, unwanted early pregnancies, experiencing the wrath of HIV and AIDS, and living in an unfriendly and non-supportive home environment

The narrator presents the impact of HIV and AIDS on families, abject poverty, lack of parental love and the desire to be loved which affects the life of a very brilliant girl and threatens to condemn her life to a vicious cycle of poverty. Poverty, HIV and AIDS, and home environment are all highlighted here as key variables. The story was narrated in English. The narrative:

I was born in 1993 and I was learning at Ulumbi Mixed Secondary School. I left school because of pregnancy. I dropped out for the first time because my mother was not able to pay school fees. This made me to get pregnant. After that, I was taken by Millennium Village Project where I was taken back to form 1 because I had delayed at home. Because of problems at home, quarrelling, again I got pregnant. This made me to stay back at home. But I am planning to go back to school and complete my education. For now I have two boys. Back at home, many people despise me. But I know God will help me and accomplish my vision. In future I would like to be a doctor. That is my vision.

The father of my first child is a businessman in Yala town but for now, he does not take care of the baby. I do everything for myself. Even I buy food and clothes for myself. Even the second one just told me to give anyone the baby who is interested. Him he is not interested. He is in Form

three and he is 30 years old. Actually, he confused me when we were revising together and I got pregnant. He was having a business text book and business is my best subject. I never knew I could get pregnant because I was not having my periods. My mother and I dig for people to get money to take care of ourselves. We go with the babies to the shamba (farm). My father died in 2005 when I was in standard four. My father never valued my education. Actually when we were sent out of school because of fees, he would chase my mother with a panga. We used to stay with my grandparents. We never had even a house here. At that time, my mother was bed-ridden so we used to carry her in a wheelbarrow then we went to our grandparents' home to stay with our grandmother. My grandfather would also chase us to go back to our place. When we came here it was the same thing. My father came here when he was about to die. The house also fell down. I went to work for someone as a maid. My brother also was a maid somewhere and my sister also works as a maid somewhere. I had even not started learning. I started learning in class three. My mother was the one who was paying fees so we dropped out of school. My mother was ill and was the one who used to pay school fees. Me I was forced to go and work. That time I was 9 years. I started learning in class three in 2003 when free education came. But I have never repeated any class.

Case 5.3.5: An orphan shunned by her biological father as well as her dead mother's parents

The last of the female voices is one of the youngest female dropouts at the age of 15 years. She presents a hostile home environment where she is not wanted by anybody after the death of her mother. The story was narrated in Dholuo. The voice:

I am 19 years old. I dropped out of school at the age of 15 years. Fees was a very big problem. Whenever I was sent home, I could stay home for even two weeks before my grandfather could get for me 500 shillings to take to school. Sometimes I could be sent home and at one time it was even the Head teacher who sympathized with me and paid for me 2000 shillings. When third term reached, I was sent home to go and get the remaining balance of 4,000 shillings, but I did not get. When I informed my maternal uncles they refused to pay fees for me saying that I should look for my father. My mother who could pay for me fees was not there. She had died when I was still in standard 4. I was the only child. My father is alive but we were not living with him. I was living with my maternal grandmother and it was my grandmother, mother's sister and sometimes the Headmaster who were paying my school fees in Form 1. But they stopped in Third Term and told me to go ask my father to pay my fees.

When I told my father to pay for me fees, he told me that he could not pay for me fees since my dead mother had not taken me back to his home. I left school in 2011. I just stayed at my maternal grandmother's home and even when they chased me to go to my father's place I just stayed there. That is when I decided to get married to Bernard. But life is tough, because money is little, sometimes no food. At other times the baby is ill and all the money is needed to take

him to hospital. If I could go for some training it could help me. My plea to government is that they assist children like me who are forced to drop out from school because of fees or take them for training of some kind. I am ready to sacrifice for Bernard to go back to school while me I stay with the child. I have no plans for the future except to help Bernard dig people's shambas and boreholes.

The above narrations reveal similarities that cut across the gender divide. All the narrations indicate lack of school fees as the main reason for dropping out of school. Lack of school fees is a variable that depends on the socio-economic situation of the families. Apart from those who dropped out as a result of poverty, most of the narrators were staying with guardians who were also responsible for paying their school fees. The situation described by most of the narratives is similar to that of the respondents, many of whom were orphans and staying with and depending on guardians for fees and upkeep. Figure 5.1 below illustrates the information gathered from the respondents on persons responsible for paying their school fees. The figure is representative of the situation of the narrators.

The narrations highlight poor family backgrounds and lack of employment for the household heads which resulted in persistent struggles to try and offset the accruing school fees. Except for one male narrator who did not know whether his real father was alive or not, the remaining four male narrators were all orphans. Many of the male respondents in the study were also orphaned with the majority of them staying with their poor and helpless grandparents. The females were orphaned as a result of having lost one parent.

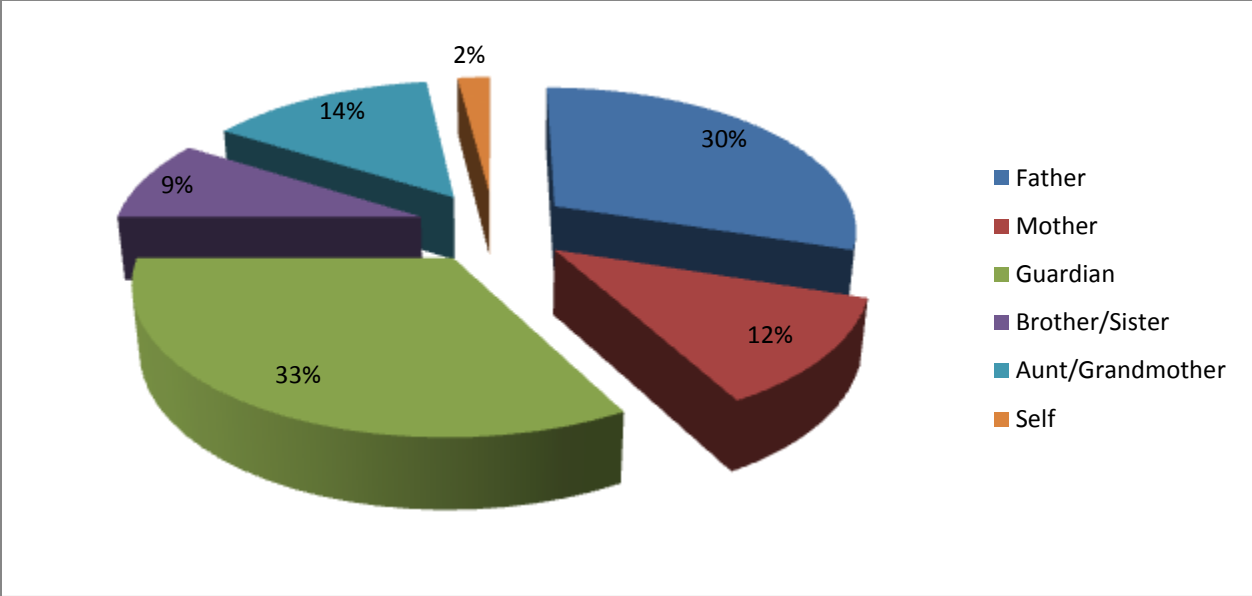


Figure 5.1: Information from Respondents on the person responsible for fees payment and upkeep.

This has also been reflected in the narratives with most of the males being more affected as total orphans than the females. Nevertheless, the commonality in lack of a parent was evident in the majority of the narrations. The narratives expose non-friendly home environments where parents do not get involved in the school work of their children and neither is there any motivation provided by them on the importance of education and the need to work hard for good grades. This was reflected in the stories of both the female and male narrators.

Lastly, the narratives indicate the willingness of all the narrators to go back to school if given an opportunity. The common cry by the narrators for the Government to assist in supporting needy students, especially orphans with school fees, exposes the corruption and lack of transparency that exists in the allocation of the Constituency Bursary Fund (CBF) which is supposed to be assisting needy children like the ones in this study. Many of the respondents in the study stated that they had applied for the CBF support but never even got a response.

Some of the guardians openly said that the CBF was only given to those who were close to the politicians and relatives of those who were working in those offices, and had this to say:

CBF en mana ng'eruok, ka onge ng'ato mong'eyi to ok inyal yudo kata ka nyathini ni kod chandruok marom nade (CBF depends on who knows you; if you do not know anybody there then your child cannot get any assistance however deserving he/she might be). **(A mother and widow in Gem sub-county).**

An elderly grandmother and guardian lamented about the CBF saying:

Jadhier ong'e gi teko, kata yudo pesa mar CBF chuno mana ni nyaka ing'e ngato eka konyi. Jomoko kuomgi bende dwaro mana asoya mondi eka gikony kiye. Koro wan wawere e luet nyasaye to nikech onge kaka wanyalo timo (A poor person has no might; even to get the CBF money you must know someone for you to get assistance. Some of them also want to be bribed before they can assist the poor orphans. We have left our fate in God's hands because there is nothing that we can do). **(An elderly grandmother and guardian in Ugunja sub-county)**

The unfair allocation of the CBF money was exposed by one of the dropouts who said that he knew of a teacher whose son was allocated funds and yet he is not as needy as the dropout himself who was denied. The respondents in the study as well as the narrators did not understand who exactly the CBF was meant to support, hence their appeal to the government to come to their rescue.

The females presented a problem that is unique to them in the form of pregnancy. While girls also suffer from lack of fees and irregular payment which results in them being sent home from time to time to get the balance, they seemed to have higher chances of continuing with their education if they can avoid getting pregnant. Unfortunately, many girls are forced to drop out of school after giving birth because their parents (especially the fathers) are no longer willing to pay for them school fees. Most of the girls interviewed narrated how they wished to go back to school but their fathers had refused to take them back saying that they had spoiled their chances. The girls are then left to fend for themselves and to look after their babies without any form of employment or income. Often, such girls end up getting married to any man who is willing to marry them since this is the only option left for them.

Another factor that was different and only affected girls was being forced to sacrifice their education in order for their brothers to continue learning. This still exposes the cultural practice where the education of the girl child is not seen as important and can therefore be stopped whenever the need arises. This practice is linked to the belief by the Luo community that a boy is more important to the home than the girl who will eventually get married into a different home. One key informant had this to say about how the boy child is viewed in the Luo community:

Wuoyi en chiro kendo en ema oyiko wuon. Omiyo jimang'eny neno ni nyaka rite maber

(A boy is the pillar of the home and he is the one to bury the father. Many people feel that he has to be well taken care of because of that). **(A Chief in Siaya sub-County)**

All the male voices reported that they were involved in child labour since some had to dig for people or be engaged in brick making, boda boda riding, etc., in order to get money for survival and also to support their poor families. The study findings indicate that child labour affects boys more than girls in Siaya County. However, it should be noted that while boys stay in their homes even after dropping out, girls often leave to go and work as house helps in urban areas. This explains the difficulties that were experienced in trying to get female dropouts for interviews.

Child labour appeared to be unique to the male narrators, many of whom had to work to get money for their school fees. This revelation came out during the interviews with many of the male respondents who also said that they had to work to earn money for their school fees since the parents and some of the guardians could not afford to pay the fees. Others also had to work to support their families either because their mothers were ailing from frequent illnesses or because the grandmothers who were taking care of them were too old to work to support them.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study and then draws conclusions from them. The discussion is done using the specific objectives.

6.2 Discussion

The first specific objective of this study was to establish the gender stereotypes and norms that influence the low retention and high dropout rates for both boys and girls at secondary schools in Siaya County. The findings suggest that gender stereotypes and norms provide a window to the gendered aspect of dropout. They expose the stereotypes and norms that influence the educational chances and experiences of both boys and girls within a community. Although the attitude towards the education of girls in Siaya has experienced positive change in recent times, the findings of this study indicate that there are still cases where marriage of girls, for example, still happens at a much younger age. This limits the chances of girls continuing with their education. In this context, the study findings agree with Were et al. (1991:87) that the Luo community continues to be patriarchal despite the many efforts made to encourage gender equality among men and women in the County at large.

Socio-cultural biases and stereotyping of the roles and capabilities still exist and continue to hinder women's full integration into the development process. In Siaya, the community is

culturally patriarchal whereby women and girls are subordinate to men in all aspects of life except for nurturing roles. Major decisions are made by men while the role of women is to take care of the home, reproduce and nurture. Leadership positions in the community are taken up by men which potentially restricts the aspirations of girls. Moreover, in such a patriarchal society, socialization of children is biased towards the boy child who is not subjected to any strict rules while the girl is constantly monitored and disciplined by the mother because it is against the mother that future blame for inefficiency in normal domestic duties are expected to be directed (Ominde, 1987:21).

In African society, a girl is always seen as having immediate value to the family, in terms of the bride wealth. This seems to be changing in Siaya where many households no longer value the education of the boy child alone at the expense of the girl child. This attitude change is as a result of households having seen the changes that exist in homes where girls have been well educated. This has seen many parents push for the education of their daughters as opposed to the earlier days when no value was seen in the education of a girl, but instead marriage was the biggest priority immediately the girl reached puberty.

A large number of respondents informed the study that there was no preference for one child against the other in their families. This was also confirmed by the key informants, many of whom stated that the community in Siaya recognizes the rights of both boys and girls to education and ensures that both of them are enrolled in school. However, the key informants were also in agreement that there are still pockets of households where the long held

traditional belief that a boy child is more important than the girl child still exists. It is therefore still common to hear such phrases like *“Wuoyi en chiro”* (a boy is the pillar of the home), being used to justify discriminatory actions against the girl child. On the other hand, a girl is likened to a mongoose whose specific abode is not known. Such phrases as *“Nyako en ogwang”* (a girl is like a mongoose), are common among the community members. Such beliefs are not only common among the illiterate members of the community but also among some of the educated ones, especially the men, some of whom still take a second wife just because the wife only gives birth to girls.

A gendered practice within the household always affects the opportunity of both boys and girls to access and complete education. In cases of financial hardship (as is the norm in Siaya), both boys and girls are at risk of losing their chances for education. Often, boys are seen as being old enough to have a family or may be forced to leave school to work to assist in supporting the household. On the other hand, girls tend to suffer more at such times of financial scarcity since they are the ones who are forced to sacrifice their education for their brothers. This is still a common practice even in cases where two children have passed the national examinations and need to continue to higher levels. Due to the inability to pay for both, the parents will always prefer that the boy goes on with schooling while the girl is expected to wait till the financial situation changes for the better. Unfortunately, the situation never changes for the better and often goes from bad to worse, and effectively brings the girl's hopes of continuing with education to an abrupt end. The survey encountered girls who had to sacrifice their studies so that their brothers could complete their studies. This came out clearly in the narratives.

The re-entry policy on girls who have given birth is not working effectively, especially for girls living in rural areas and in a patriarchal society like the one in Siaya County. Some of the parents, especially fathers, use this opportunity to deny girls the opportunity to continue with their education, claiming that they have gambled with their opportunity and therefore have to look for ways to survive. In such cases, the brothers continue to be educated while the parents, especially the fathers, justify their discriminatory acts by saying that the daughter had thrown away her chances of being educated by getting pregnant while in school. Such was the case of the female narrator in Case 5.3.3. In such cases, the mother, not being financially independent, is unable to assist the girl even if she would like her to go back to school, but will just follow what the father says.

Such an experience is recorded by Boyle et al. (2002) and Nekatibeb (2002) whose findings indicate that whenever households are forced to make decisions on educational access, trade-offs between children are made and the girl is always the victim. Although not very many cases were identified, the study still found a correlation between cultural practices and gender inequality in Siaya where parents openly displayed preference for boys' education over that of girls.

The socialization of girls and boys in the Luo community is to blame for the imbalance in access to education in Siaya where many girls do not see the importance of education in their lives but instead strive to get people to marry them so they can start the marriage life that they have

been prepared for from an early age. This has continued to subject the girls to impoverished lives where they are completely dependent on their husbands – many of whom are themselves unemployed. This corroborates the findings by Colclough et al. (2000) and Kane (2004) who pointed out that gendered social practices and expectations of a woman sometimes limit females' education. Because of the socialization within the community, a girl who gets pregnant while in school is either withdrawn or forced into marriage or she is left to stay at home to take care of the baby while nobody follows up on the person who made her pregnant. Punishment is meted out on the girl while the boy continues with his life as if nothing has happened. The girl remains the sole bearer of the burden of an early pregnancy.

The social life of the community in Siaya is also linked to some cultural beliefs and practices which render young people (both boys and girls) vulnerable to HIV infections. This is a key contributor to school dropout in the County where the love for music, especially 'Ohangla' music, takes a lot of the residents' time for both the young and old alike. Often, young people are known to spend sleepless nights at funerals where the music is played to keep the bereaved company as well as give a good send-off to the departed relative. It is not strange to see fathers and mothers dancing together with their young daughters and sons at such places. Such events render many girls vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies while vulnerability to HIV infection is also very high. Similar social practices often impact on the performance of the students who find themselves at such venues the whole night and yet they have to be in school the following day. This is a big concern to the County Director of Education who had this to say about the music:

Gimoro ma bende tinde tamo nyithindo somo en Ohangla music. Liete ng'eny to thum nyaka go. Inyalo yudo ka mine gi wege miel karachiel gi nyithindo kar liel to kinyne to nyithindo onego dhi e skul. Kata jonyuol ok ne ni nyithind skul ok onego ru piny kar thum
(Another thing that interferes with students' studies is the Ohangla music. There are many funerals and music has to be played at such places. You find mothers, fathers and their children dancing together at these funerals at night and the following day the students are expected to be in school. Even parents do not see that the students should not spend their time dancing the night away to ohangla music at these funerals).

Lastly, the community's cultural norm of giving a big send off to a dead member of the family has a big impact on the family members who are left behind. In most cases, the deceased's money is used for the funerals and the families are left with nothing. This is a factor that leads to the children of the deceased dropping out of school. Nyambedha explains this more clearly in his research on orphans in Bondo:

"The Luos fear the dead more than the living. The relatives can spend everything available to make the dead rest in peace but leave his or her children to suffer".

(Nyambedha, 2000:59)

Just like the liberal feminists believe that the inequalities in education harm both genders and leads to an unequal contribution to national development, the cultural beliefs and practices in the Luo community provide an environment which denies equal opportunities to both genders, thereby enhancing the inequalities that not only harm the girls but the boys as well. Many of the beliefs and practices highlighted in this study contribute not only to the oppression of the females in the community but also enhance their subordination. In this context, the theory helped in the explanation of the inequalities that exist in education within Siaya County.

The second specific objective of the study was to examine the impact of poverty on the gender dimensions in dropout rates at secondary schools in Siaya County. In this context, this study identified household poverty as the main driving factor for secondary education level dropout rate in the County for both boys and girls. Poverty was, however, closely linked to lack of school fees since one is a result of the other. All the respondents and the narrators in the study acknowledged that their parents were poor and this led to them having problems of paying school fees. This resulted in them being sent home more than once a term to get the fees balance. With the accumulation in fees balance often carried over from one term to the other, the respondents as well as the narrators were eventually forced to drop out of school completely.

The study corroborates the findings of Wanjiru (2007), Achoka (2007) and Mbani (2008) that also identified poverty, among other factors, as key in influencing dropout in secondary education in Kenya. Just like Mbani (2008:44), who highlights several statutory school funds/levies as being unaffordable to parents, thus leading to students being sent away from school, the study found that many of the students had a balance of school fees in secondary schools which accrued as a result of parents' inability to pay the many levies that are demanded by the school administration. These include school bus fund, development fund, watchman (security) fund and many other levies which, when put together, amount to more than KES 10,000. To pay this amount of money is beyond the ability of many of Siaya's households where most parents are unemployed with only subsistence farming or at best jua kali business as a source of livelihood. In such poor households, some of the female students often find

themselves being forced to give in to sexual advances by older men in an effort to get money for their fees and, especially, upkeep.

This situation is presented by Case 5.3.4 in the female voices. Furthermore, the need for families to make ends meet also leads some parents to withdraw their children from school to either help them in the farms or in selling things at the market place. Unfortunately, in the process of assisting their mothers to supplement the family income, some of the girls fall prey to businessmen such as fish traders and end up getting pregnant, and eventually dropping out of school. The findings also support those of Obeng (2002) which highlight the consequences of the parents' inability to pay for the education of their children.

Child labour was found to be rampant among the male respondents and narrators. In some cases, fathers are responsible for engaging their sons into child labour to help them get money for feeding their households. Often, such children are withdrawn from school to go and help the father to work for people to get money for household use. Such was the case of the narrator in case 5.2.3 of the male voices, who eventually had to run away from home in order to safeguard the money he earned from working as a child labourer to be used for paying his school fees. Indeed, in Kenya as in the rest of Africa, poverty at different levels, and especially household poverty, has been identified as one of the major factors that cause students to drop out of school at different levels.

Apart from household poverty, poor economic performance of a country can contribute to several factors which end up making children to drop out of school. While it is true that the Government of Kenya has endeavoured to improve access to education and retention at secondary level education since independence, it is also evident that the problem of wastage through school dropout continues to persist and is becoming increasingly more serious. Siaya County continues to suffer from poverty with a poverty incidence of the population that is estimated at 47.56 per cent against the national level poverty incidence of 43.37 per cent. Higher poverty incidences are recorded in the rural areas at 57.93 per cent in Siaya and 37.91 per cent nationally. There are only three main towns in Siaya County, namely, Siaya, Bondo and Usenge (which lack coordinated urban planning and solid waste management), with the rest being major markets (Republic of Kenya, 2013:18). Thirty-four per cent of the County population is recorded as being food poor, which already presents a challenge for education and the learning ability of children within the County (Republic of Kenya, 2013:36).

Given that Siaya County is predominantly rural with no coordinated urban planning or industries to provide employment, it is not surprising that school completion rates are much lower among the households. This corresponds to the findings of Brown and Park (2000), Bledsoe (2002) and Hunt (2008:7), which show that children from poor households are more likely not to complete the education cycle in comparison to those from better-off households. A summary of the relationship between children from poor households and dropout by Colclough et al. (2000:25) is clearly indicative of the situation that was presented to the present study:

Poor households tend to have lower demand for schooling than richer households. Whatever the benefits of schooling, the costs for them are more difficult to meet than is the case for richer households.

The situation that Colclough et al. depict applies to both boys and girls and therefore does not discriminate on the basis of gender. Poverty does provide an equal environment for all children from poor households who have to struggle against all odds to get education. In such cases, the hard working and most persevering students have the ability to excel in education on an equal ground irrespective of their gender.

There is a very strong relationship between poverty, HIV and AIDS and lack of school fees and this was confirmed by the findings of the study as most of the responses to the question on the reason for dropping out were given as poverty and lack of school fees. In addition, many of the respondents had lost either one or both parents and those whose parents were alive presented an indication of ill health. Sabates et al. (2010) also point out in their study that poverty not only affects the ability of households to pay fees and other costs associated with education, but is also associated with the high cost of schooling for children. Except for those who had dropped out due to indiscipline and girls who had been victims of early pregnancies, the rest of the respondents clearly indicated that if their parents had not been poor, they would have been able to pay their school fees.

Other respondents indicated that because of the poverty in their families, they were forced to look for jobs such as brick making and others in order to either get money for their school fees or to assist their families. The study shows the connectivity between poverty and other variables such as fees which are key determinants of dropout for both boys and girls. Similarly, Porteus et al. (2000:10) describe poverty as the “most common primary and contributory reason for student dropout”. The situation of households in Siaya is such that even those female respondents who dropped out due to pregnancy reported that while in school, they had school fees problems and kept on being sent home every month end of the school term to go and get the balance of the school fees.

The suggested generalization or wide spread nature of poverty in Siaya County provides an equal learning environment for both boys and girls. Looking at the gender dimension in dropout rate and the trend that is presented by data from records in schools in the sampled sub-Counties, girls and boys have been affected in the same way by dropping out of school as a result of the similar environment in which they find themselves, in their efforts to attain secondary level education.

The high level of poverty in Siaya was also confirmed by all the key informants in the study including the County Commissioner and County Director of Education who decried the desperate situation that has made parents develop a “*mobile*” attitude in the education of their children where they move them from one school to another at the end of each year to avoid paying the fees balance all in an effort to ensure that their children are educated. The close connectivity between poverty as a variable and other variables that contribute to dropout

does not distinguish on the basis of gender and therefore both girls and boys are equally affected in secondary schools in Siaya County.

The study is in agreement with Hunter and May's (2003:10) assertion that households often do not want to remove their children from school as this is seen as an investment for the future. This is demonstrated not just by the constant struggle by the parents to look for school fees for their children but also the movement that they make with their children from one school to another not just to evade paying the school fees balance but also to avoid the child being discontinued from learning. The '*mobile attitude*' is a source of concern for both the schools and the County Director of Education who see it as a criminal activity but who at the same time understand the dilemma that the parents in Siaya find themselves in, in their efforts to get education for their children. In this context, the study disagrees with Boyle et al. (2002:45) who assert that the uneducated poorest parents have little or no understanding of the benefits of education. On the contrary, the study findings reveal that poor and uneducated households in Siaya see the education of their children as their only hope of getting out of poverty. This is becoming more and more apparent as the households continue to see the difference the educated children have made in their respective homes, whether males or females (but especially females).

In a situation where households are very poor and unable to provide consistent food for the family and school fees for their children, some of the children are often forced to work as casual labourers in order to earn money for their fees. In most cases, these are very good

performing students who have the passion for education but feel deprived by their parents' inability to pay for it. Case 5.2.3 of the male voices is a classic example of such a situation. Unfortunately, child labour is a prime cause of absenteeism, repetition and increased dropout rates as revealed by Dachi and Garret (2003) whose study in Tanzania found that all the students who were engaged in child labour to earn money for school fees ended up dropping out of school completely. This is supported by the study whereby all those respondents and narrators who had engaged in child labour while in school are recorded to have ended up dropping out of school, especially due to the inability to cope with both school and work at the same time.

Often, children from poor households are attracted by the labour market where cheap labour is needed as a way of earning money and escaping poverty. The young people are also influenced by their peers who have either dropped out of school and are earning money through working in construction sites or are working as labourers in the urban areas. Such peers paint a rosy picture of their lives in the towns when in actual fact they are working as casual labourers and living in inhumane conditions in the slums. In many such cases, when there is no hope for the future for both the parents and the child, decisions to drop out of school are easily influenced and arrived at very fast.

The high level of household poverty in Siaya has contributed to a lot of inequalities in education, thus making the liberal feminist theory of education ideal in addressing the gender issues therein. The distribution of resources at the household level on the basis of which child

to educate during periods of extreme financial difficulties, the withdrawal of children from school to assist in supplementing household income and the engagement of children in child labour for survival, do interfere with children's education and enhance gender inequalities that are central to the focus of liberal feminism. Thus, the theory has been critical in enabling the study to explain gender equality issues in education in Siaya County from a very objective perspective.

The third objective of the study was to evaluate the school and home environments and their influence on gender dimensions in dropout rates at secondary schools in Siaya County. The study suggests that there is a relationship between the school environment and the high dropout rates by students in Siaya County. This was linked to issues of sexual harassment and abuse by teachers which is never addressed as a serious issue but which often leads to dropout by girls who feel frustrated by a non-friendly or non-protective school environment. Some of these acts are committed by non-Teachers Service Commission (TSC) recruited teachers who are only accountable to the Boards of Governors (BOGs) that have recruited them and therefore are not directly bound by the TSC code of conduct. Children in Siaya County have to deal with many issues in an effort to access education and continue schooling. These range from economic disadvantage, poor quality of education being provided (badly equipped schools with poor infrastructure and inadequate teachers to lack of text books, teaching materials and often inadequate libraries or none at all in the school). These findings are in support of the observations by Osinde (2011:30) that the type of school, its location and availability of learning materials together with the quality of teaching provided as well as staffing have a big role to

play in how the student views education and, effectively, his or her retention in school. The study further confirms Osinde's statement that in developing countries, schools in the rural areas lack sufficient text books, enough qualified teachers and other critical learning materials.

In the schools visited, the school management recorded inadequate teachers despite the fact that a number of teachers were on the payroll of the schools' Boards of Governors. In some schools, the number of BOG recruited teachers was almost half that of the Teachers' Service Commission teachers. Most of the BOG recruited teachers are often not properly qualified and are not accountable to the TSC which makes it very difficult for the Principals to control or manage them. Some of these teachers are themselves not disciplined, and especially if they are related to a Board member. This results in poor quality of education being provided to the children. Such teachers are not good role models to students. In fact, according to Jha and Kelleher (2006:49), apart from the nature of the early socialization of boys by parents, their community and the school, the pedagogical skills such as the "drill to kill" teaching and learning methods are perceived as playing a big role in marginalizing boys as well as girls from the schooling process. For boys particularly, a non-inspiring school curriculum with no differential learning for varying abilities as well as other factors that are linked to the home but impacting directly on education such as the inability to pay fees always play a big role in alienating them from the school system (Jha and Kelleher, 2006:54).

Confidence building in students is important for creating a sense of self-worth which not only creates a friendlier learning environment but is also critical for better performance and

achievement at any age (Jha and Kelleher, 2006:57). The study is also in support of the observations by Sabates et al. (2010:5) and Nakpodia (2010:8) who have identified lack of school facilities and unavailability of resources such as text books, lack of teaching materials, qualified teachers as well as teacher absenteeism as key factors within the school environment that influence dropout.

Excessive corporal punishment in schools can lead to school dropout especially by boys who may not be able to endure the punishment meted by the school administration. In this context, the study supports research findings by Boyle et al. (2002) who suggest that beatings and intimidation affect children's motivation to attend school, while the PROBE Team (1999:27) also refers to beatings and humiliation from teachers as leading to gradual discouragement from attending school among students.

Just as Hunt (2008:39) talks of teacher quality, often, the quality of the teaching and learning environment can very easily influence children's experiences of schooling, their motivations and dropout. The present study concludes that the reported inadequacy of teachers in Siaya schools is a key factor in the high dropout rates that are experienced in secondary schools by both boys and girls. Research also indicates that female teachers often have an important impact on schooling quality for female students (Colclough et al., 2000). Most of the schools sampled had very few female teachers compared to male teachers. This was a common practice even in girls' schools. It is therefore not surprising that some of the female respondents complained of lack of enough role models to make them see the value of

education. Moreover, in an area where most of the households have not been educated beyond secondary school level, it is not surprising that there are no adequate role models that can inspire young people in school.

Teacher absenteeism often deprives students of the time to acquire knowledge consistently. Teacher absenteeism, student discipline and teacher responsibility in providing quality education are issues that management has to deal with to ensure accountability to parents. However, the same management has to be held accountable by parents to be able to follow up on the expectations. Unfortunately, the community in Siaya County being predominantly rural and disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment is not able to hold the teachers accountable for poor performance and high school dropout rate and tend to accept whatever the schools provide. A correlation between weaker quality of education, poverty and dropout was therefore established in Siaya County. The study therefore upholds the findings by Molteno et al. (2000:2) that poorer children tend to have increased difficulties in accessing education on a sustained basis with an often weaker quality of education in provision.

The study observed that separate toilets for girls and boys were available in all the mixed schools visited. However, often these facilities were not sufficient for the number of students earmarked for their use. All the schools had pit latrines. The sanitation facilities were rated as *“available but not perfect”* in the words of some of the head teachers. While this cannot be said to directly cause the students to drop out of school, indirectly, this is a factor for dropout since poor sanitation often leads to contraction of diseases which contribute to interruption of

regular school attendance, especially for female students who opt to absentee themselves during their menses. This absence from school as a result of sickness and other reasons impacts on performance and eventually leads to dropout for both boys and girls.

The study also established that the home environment has a role to play in determining whether a child has access to education or not and for how long she or he stays in school. The living conditions of a child are often linked to factors such as family income and educational level of the household members, size as well as age of the household members. The number of children in the household may be a determinant of whether a child stays in school or not.

Boyle et al. (2002:4) also noted in their study that the financial burden is greater in a household with many children. In a rural poor environment like Siaya, it is expected that a family with many children, as is often the case, will not be able to continue supporting the education of their children to successful completion without any financial assistance from the government or well-wishers. In such cases, the position of birth of a child also matters as they may either be more disadvantaged or advantaged depending on their birth positions (first born, middle or last). In most cases, the first born children and the last ones are often lucky while the most unlucky are those born in the middle. The study observed that with the first born child, the financial burden is still not felt as much because not all the children are in school. However, the last born might be lucky to get support from the first born if he or she managed to be educated before finances became a problem. Such is the case of many households in Siaya County as stated by one of the key informants:

Ute mang'eny iyudo ni ka nyathi mokuongo nene odhi e skul maber to okonyo jonyuol puonjo jowetene. Nono to ng'eny nyithindo ok tiek skul nikech dhier (in most households, if the first born child has received good education then he or she helps the parents in educating the siblings. Otherwise most of the children do not complete their education because of poverty).

The study found that the educational level of household members, especially the parents, is very influential in determining whether a child goes to school or not and for how long children access schooling. Siaya County has a very low parental educational attainment rate with a majority of the parents having only primary and secondary school level of education at 64 per cent while 20 per cent have no formal education attainment (KNBS and SID, 2013:12). This is likely to affect children's access to education and their retention therein just like Hunter and May (2003) and Ainsworth et al. (2005) established that higher parental/ household head level of education brings about higher attendance rates and lower dropout rates. This probably explains the high dropout rate in Siaya County.

While there is evidence that the gender and education level of the parent can influence which child is more likely to access and remain in school for a longer period, the study findings disagree with the statement by Ainsworth et al. (2005) that the mother's level of education is the one that has more effect on access. This study suggests that even if a mother has a higher level of education but she is not in any gainful employment or is not economically and financially empowered enough to support the education of her children, she will remain as helpless as a mother who has little education or has not gone to school at all. To quote Al Samarrai and Peasgood (1998:395), *"their education does not afford them increased decision-*

making power or increased economic status". The situation in Siaya where many mothers have reached secondary school level of education but are jobless and cannot do anything but stay with their children who have dropped out of school supports this statement. Moreover, in a patriarchal society like the one in Siaya County where women are socialized to be subordinate to the men, it is not easy to see change in decisions when the husbands have decided on something or an issue. Such a situation is explained even further by the narrations of those who had dropped out of school due to pregnancy that even though their mothers would like them to go back to school, they are unable to assist the girls since they cannot convince their employed husbands to agree to take the girls back to school by paying their school fees.

It is, however, important to point out that the study supports the observation that where a mother is well educated and is economically empowered, the daughter has a better chance of continuing with education because the mother does not have to rely entirely on the father. Such a mother is also in a position to make decisions that will influence her own life as well as the lives of her children.

On the other hand, the study concurs with Ainsworth et al.'s (2005) finding that improvement in the father's education raises the schooling of both sons and daughters, and especially favours sons as seen in cases where many of the female respondents and some female narrators (especially those who had dropped out of school due to pregnancy), have their brothers in school when they are left to fend for themselves after "spoiling their chances of being educated", as claimed by some of the fathers. In a County like Siaya where the community sees

a girl in terms of bride wealth and focuses more on a girl's role as a future wife and mother, the situation of girls is worse, especially given the low level of educational attainment by the women.

Apart from the educational level of the parents, the importance placed on education by the household is also very important in determining whether children gain access to schooling and how long they stay there. This is certainly linked to and depends a lot on the level of education of the rest of the household members. Many of the respondents were of the opinion that their parents and many Siaya residents do not see the value of education due to the inability of their children to get jobs. This assertion was also supported by the key informants who felt that poverty and high levels of illiteracy are the main causes of this low value for education. In a County that does not have any industries to create employment, it is no wonder the value of education cannot be seen since employment has to be sought in urban areas and big towns.

HIV and AIDS have had a lot of impact on many families in Kenya, and especially in Nyanza Region. Almost all the respondents in the study and many of the narrators had lost one or both parents. Where one parent was still alive, there were indications of ill health, as reported by one of the respondents that the parent was sickly and was therefore unable to take up many tasks. This information was supported by two of the narrators who also reported similar situations. The Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey (Republic of Kenya, 2014a:30) reports the highest national HIV prevalence of 16.1 per cent and 13.9 per cent for women and men respectively in Nyanza region while Siaya County itself was reported by Kenya HIV Prevention Revolution Road Map as having an HIV adult prevalence of 23.7 per cent in 2014 with an estimated number of

113,000 adults living with HIV (Republic of Kenya, 2014c:16). More importantly for this study, the government itself has highlighted in its report that the majority of young people in the County are faced with the challenge of high prevalence of HIV (Republic of Kenya, 2013:28-29). The high HIV prevalence in Siaya is indicative of a nexus with the high poverty levels within the households. This situation is exacerbated by the reported high HIV and AIDS prevalence among young people, many of whom are expected to provide the man power for the development of the County.

The implication is frequent absenteeism by students who have to take care of their ailing parents, or they themselves miss school because of ill-health. The result of this is loss of learning hours and eventually poor performance which leads to dropout when the student is told to repeat a class. Also, students who are living with HIV often do not see the value of learning since “they are going to die from AIDS anyway”. With this attitude, and many of the schools not having any mechanism in place to support such students, most of them justify dropping out of school as they see no future for themselves.

This situation explains the identification of illness and sick parents as key variables that contribute to dropout in Siaya. In such cases, the students experience a lot of emotional problems and are unable to concentrate on their studies. It is very easy for such a student to drop out if there is no emotional support in the school. This applies to both boys and girls. However, girls are often more affected due to their nurturing role which makes them be called upon to provide the nursing services to the ailing parents. However, both boys and girls are

seriously affected by the impact of HIV and AIDS since they undergo a lot of trauma at the loss of their parents at a tender age and are forced to become household heads too early in life.

There are instances in the community where households are looted and children left without anything to rely on, an act that only enhances their impoverished state. In some cases, the relatives take up the children but the study also revealed that some of the orphans, especially girls, end up being forced into early marriages while others are just exploited by the same relatives who use them as workers in their homes without giving them the opportunity to further their education. It is a known fact that the death of a mother impacts more on the entire family and renders the children destitute than when they lose their father. This confirms why most male respondents whose mothers were dead had more family problems than the females, and had to engage in child labour for survival.

Finally, the home environment also relates to where the student is living and whether it provides a learning-friendly environment. Many of the respondents confirmed that they had enough time to study at home. However, during further discussions, it was obvious that a majority of them (especially the females) have been socialized to accept their roles in society and therefore did not consider the chores that they had to do at home as hindering them from studying. The silent resignation to cultural dictates was evident in the body language of the respondents especially the females. To them, this is normal and that is how their lives are supposed to be.

Some of the home environments visited presented homes with leaking thatched roofs and mud floors with very poor water and sanitation conditions. Often, the students do not have a separate space for doing their homework and even if there is space, the little paraffin used for lighting cannot last long enough for homework and adequate time for revision. The schools being aware of the prevailing conditions in most of the households in the County and to ensure that students get enough time to study, many of the mixed ones have resorted to categorizing schools into day and boarding where all students are day scholars up to Form 2 but boarding facilities are provided from Form 3. While this gives the students time to read, few parents can afford the boarding fees and so the students eventually drop out. This explains the observed high dropout rate at the end of Form 2 in the school records.

The problem of indiscipline, drug abuse and rudeness is linked to peer pressure through association with peers who have dropped out of school or are involved in alcohol consumption and drug abuse. One of the respondents openly admitted that he dropped out due to peer influence which made him not see the importance of going to school at the time. Many of the school dropouts just hang around idling in the market places and shopping centres and have a lot of influence on students, especially those in day schools. The County Commissioner informed the study that many of the students (especially those in day schools) are influenced by their peers and so called “friends”, many who do not value education and often participated in absconding from classes, drug and alcohol abuse and had discipline problems while in school. This information was supported by one of the chiefs in a sub-county who was also a key informant.

Such students, as the study found out, often exhibit rudeness in school towards teachers and have no respect for authority or school rules. This leads to suspension and eventually expulsion from school if the unacceptable behaviour persists. It has been argued that in the absence of role models, boys tend to seek out negative role models to fill the gaps at home or in school (Jha and Kelleher, 2006:19). With the absence of role models in their families and teachers who are more of disciplinarians than role models with no nurturing skills in their pedagogical approach, the increased cases of indiscipline in secondary schools in Siaya County is not surprising. Moreover, the absence of effective counselling services which often assist students to face the challenges of peer pressure only makes the situation in the schools worse.

In most cases, students who are known to abuse drugs and alcohol tend to perform poorly since they lack concentration in class. With many schools not willing to promote a poor performing student to the next class for fear of weakening the school's performance in the national examinations at the end of the year, the tendency is to force such a student to repeat class. However, such students often cannot cope with the embarrassment that comes with class repetition (not to mention the fact that they become older than their classmates), and they end up dropping out. In most cases, such boys would fail to see the value of education and tend to show how they are better off without being in school. This leads to lack of interest in school, absenteeism and preference to being out of school. In these findings, the study agrees with findings by Mapani and Mushaandja (2013:27) who argue that: *"The result of lagging behind in school work is dropping out of school because he cannot cope with studies"*.

The study also identified rudeness and indiscipline as a factor that contributes to dropout at secondary school level in Siaya County. However, this is more common among boys, some of whom have been socialized to be aggressive as a sign of being “real men” and have no respect for authority. The socialization of boys generally affects their personalities, perceptions and performance in school. The aggressive behaviour and indiscipline among male students in most of the schools in Siaya County has links with the home environment and the general socialization of the male child in the Luo community where boys are let to grow without much control or strict discipline while the attention on good behaviour and discipline is focused on the girl child as a future source of wealth for the family.

While the community upholds assertiveness among males, what should be promoted as assertive behaviour turns into aggression which is blindly glorified by the same community and lack of respect for authority is seen as normal behaviour. In all the sub-Counties, for example, it is very common to hear such phrases like, “Nyaka ibed thuoŋ kaka wuoyi” (you must be aggressive like a boy), when a child has been beaten up by other children. The findings highlight and are in agreement with Ominde’s assertion that:

By the time the girls reach adolescence, there is a growing feeling of companionship which brings them closer to each other in their everyday tasks, and any dominating attitude becomes consequently weaker. But among boys, this attitude persists into adulthood, weakening only with the independence which adult life brings with it. Bullying is less noticeable among girls; boys

of school-going age become very tyrannical with their younger brothers and sisters and their behaviour leads to frequent squabbles. (Ominde, 1987:25).

However, as Jha and Kelleher (2006:58) point out in their research on the underachievement of boys, respect for students irrespective of their age is an important factor that helps to develop respect for the teachers and an appreciation of the efforts that the teachers are making to help the students succeed in their school work. If used in the school environment, this could help in changing the negative socialization that continues to enhance negative masculinity among males in the community.

The girls in Siaya are victims of all that Nekatibeb (2002), Boyle et al. (2002) and Hunter and May (2003) describe as factors that make girls more vulnerable to pregnancy (poor performance at times due to frequent temporary withdrawal from school, institutionally led discriminatory practices coupled with the domestic demands placed on them by virtue of being girls in a patriarchal society). It was clear from the respondents that many of the girls have no clue about reproductive health issues and life skills, and often got pregnant when they thought they were at the safest time of their menstrual cycle. It is no wonder that many of them recommended guidance and counselling services in school to inform girls on how to avoid early pregnancies. In as much as the schools all have guidance and counselling teachers, their role does not seem to be linked to the instilling of assertiveness in the female students and supporting students to cope with personal issues which impact on their studies. Instead, they merely focus on exams and the schools' mean score at the end of the year, leaving students with nobody to run to for proper professional guidance and counselling.

A strong gender bias exists in cases of pregnancy whereby whoever impregnates a girl continues with his normal life while the girl is not only forced to drop out of school and take care of the child but she also has to face the wrath of an enraged father who uses pregnancy as the reason for stopping paying school fees. Such a girl has very limited chances of getting a husband of her choice since she is already a mess in the eyes of the community.

Lack of sufficient information on life skills education is a serious problem in secondary schools not only in Siaya County but in Kenya as a whole. This has led to an increase in the number of cases of early pregnancies by female students. Coupled with the poor family backgrounds that many of these students come from, many of the girls fall prey to any slight show of affection or promise of financial support. Asked whether they were aware that they could become pregnant if they had sex without any protection, all of the female respondents and some of the narrators who had dropped out due to early pregnancy responded that they were aware but that they thought they were safe since their menses were still far from starting - a statement which exposes the magnitude of ignorance on reproductive health issues among female students. Others indicated that they thought they could only become pregnant if they had sexual intercourse more than once.

The study findings suggest that dropout at secondary education level in Siaya County is a variable that depends on many discriminatory factors and gender roles as prescribed by the community but which can also be changed with legislation for possible actions to substantially minimize the number of dropouts and ensure high transition rates. Each and every respondent

in the study as well as the narrators had two or more reasons for dropping out of school. However, it is not necessarily the number of reasons that matters when it comes to dropout but rather how strong these relations are which also varies from case to case and directly impacts on the dropout. Most of the reasons highlighted by the dropouts are connected with some of them being an effect of other reasons or they strengthen already existing ones. Such relations create vicious circles that make it very difficult for the student to get out of the situation, thus increasing the possibility for school dropout.

Figure 6.1 shows the key variables identified in the study that contribute to school dropout. All the eleven variables have varying degrees of effect on dropout. What is identifiable is the fact that all the reasons given interfered with the respondents' education by making them miss school for a given period of time which of course affected their performance and, consequently, led them to drop out of school. The findings support the arguments by Hunt (2008) that dropout consists of several factors and Sabates et al. (2010:9) that dropout has more than one single cause and is a process rather than a result of one single event.

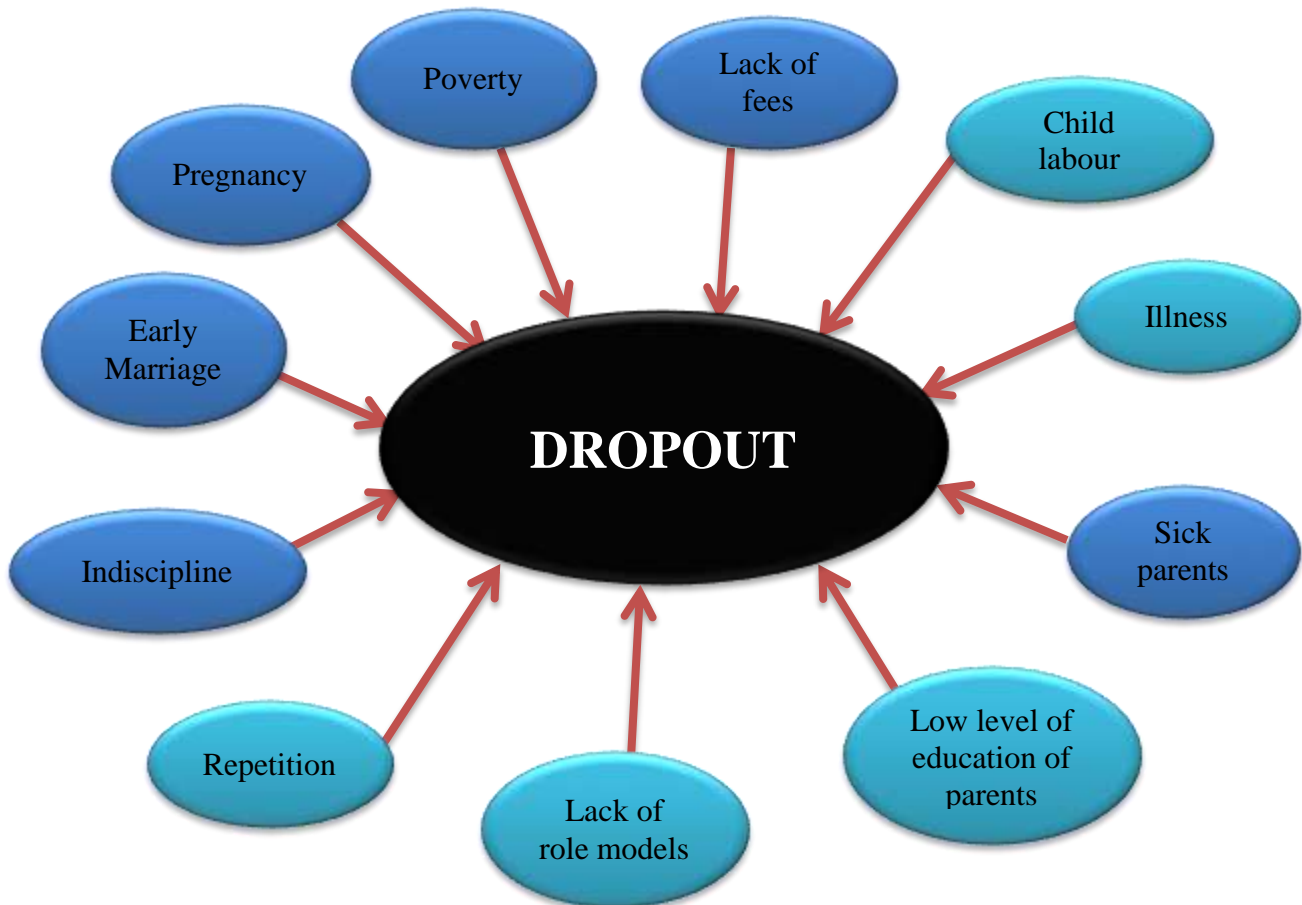


Figure 6.1: Key factors which cause dropout at secondary school level education in Siaya County

The long absence from school by students makes them lose out on the teaching and contributes to their lagging behind in the syllabus. The result of this is progressive poor performance from students even if they have the potential to perform better. Faced by the option to repeat classes, most students choose to drop out rather than face the embarrassment and ridicule that comes with repeating a class. The findings once again support the argument of Hunt (2008:4) that low performance is usually a consequence of several reasons. The study further agrees with Elofsson and Jartsjö (2013:36) that low achievement or poor performance contributes to and accelerates the process of dropping out of school.

Lack of school fees followed by poverty, indiscipline, early pregnancy, marriage and drug addiction, were ranked in that order as the variables that contribute highly to secondary school level dropout rate in Siaya County. The study identified a strong relationship between poverty, school fees and dropout rate among almost all the respondents. The study findings agree with and strongly support research findings by Hunter and May (2003), Dachi and Garrett (2003), Mbani (2007), Achoka (2007) and Gulbaz et al. (2011) on dropout.

The effect of the high secondary school dropout rate in the County has resulted in many young people, especially males who are unemployed, becoming addicted to drugs and cheap illicit brews as well as engaging in criminal activities in the villages. At every shopping centre or market place in this predominantly rural area, it is common to see groups of young men just idling around instead of being in school. Some of the young people have become boda boda motorcycle or bicycle riders to earn a living.

The effect of dropping out on females, on the other hand, is an increase in early marriages with household and family responsibilities at a very young age without any employment or regular source of income. Such young girls are vulnerable to HIV infection. For the young men who idle around the market places and chang'aa dens, vulnerability to HIV infection is not only high but they are prone to deaths from drug addiction and AIDS. Often, they have no respect for authority, are quick to anger and become easy prey for politicians who gain political mileage from their abject poverty, intoxicated minds, idleness and bitterness with society and, consequently, often use them to push their political agenda by causing mayhem during political

campaigns. The politicians in Siaya County have continued to exploit its poor households and uneducated youth over the years to buy votes and win elections with no active demand for development in return. The result is a continuous deterioration of the few available facilities, poor infrastructure and lack of industries to provide employment.

The importance of equal individual rights and liberties for men and women without focus on sexual differences is emphasized by liberal feminism which guided this study. The environment in most schools in Siaya leaves a lot to be desired within the context of this theory. The standards are wanting with inadequate or total lack of learning and teaching materials and teachers who frequently absent themselves from school without accountability for their responsibilities. Often, not much is expected from the female students who are seen by some teachers and even at the household levels as being big enough to get married. This is a violation of their individual right to education without discrimination. The liberty for the female students to go back to school after giving birth is also violated by some fathers who exploit the opportunity to discriminate against their daughters by denying them the opportunity to continue with education while at the same time educating their sons.

Indeed, as the liberal feminists assert, gender inequalities end up harming both men and women in different ways. At the household level, when the boys are educated while the girls are left behind, the eventual expectations from the same household can become a source of stress and a big nightmare as he is expected to not only support the parents to educate the siblings but the uneducated sister also becomes a burden on his limited finances. For the

women, the inequalities end up by confining them to a life of poverty and subordination due to their low educational attainment. From the liberal school of thought, equal opportunities in education can be created in Siaya County through the introduction of legislation at the County Government level and advocacy for attitude change towards the existing inequalities in the school and home environments with a view to enhancing completion of secondary level education by all children irrespective of their gender.

6.3 Conclusion

On the basis of these discussions, the following conclusions can be drawn: One, dropout rates in Siaya County do not only affect one gender within the community. Both boys and girls are equally affected by the prevailing high level of poverty in the county and respective households. This has resulted in the inability of parents to pay for their children's education, especially as they progress to the higher classes of secondary education. Many household heads are not employed and families survive on peasant farming and small jua kali businesses which are often unsustainable. Due to the poor backgrounds, many boys are engaged in child labour to enable them get money for their school fees. Not being able to sustain the stressful situation of studying and doing hard labour to earn money, such children eventually drop out of school.

Two, HIV and AIDS have had a big impact in Siaya County, where most households have lost at least one member to the pandemic. Many students have been orphaned by the disease through loss of either one or both parents. This has contributed a great deal to worsening the poverty

within the households, thus rendering students more susceptible to regular dismissals from school due to lack of school fees. Most of these orphaned students stay with relatives and guardians who are not only poor but also illiterate in most cases, and cannot afford to educate them. Some of the students themselves are infected with HIV and often absentee themselves from school and eventually drop out when the symptoms increase and they are unable to continue attending school regularly. The impact on of the pandemic on the households is evident from the many orphaned respondents and narrators encountered, many of whom are left with ailing parents who are unable to provide for them. Moreover, the high number of pregnancies amongst girls is an indicator of unprotected sex among them which not only increases their vulnerability to HIV infection but also contributes to spreading the virus among young people within the County. Unfortunately, the schools have no mechanisms of supporting such students or even those who are traumatized after the loss of parents and loved ones to AIDS, hence the increased number of dropouts.

Three, early pregnancy is a major cause of dropout at secondary school level among girls in the County. Unfortunately, re-entry into school is a big problem since many fathers exploit the opportunity provided by the unwanted pregnancy to deny their daughters education by refusing to pay school fees. Such girls are left to fend for themselves and are eventually forced into early marriages by accepting to marry anybody who comes along to take them as wives. This only enhances the number of women with low educational attainment in the County and exacerbates the already high level of poverty among households.

Four, indiscipline is a key factor in contributing to secondary school dropout rate in Siaya County. This is more common among boys who are prone to taking the illicit brews such as chang'aa and the commonly known drugs such as weed and 'kuber' which is imported by residents from Uganda and sold to secondary school students. The detached role of the father in the household when it comes to discipline that is described by Ominde in his book "*The Luo Girl from Infancy to Marriage*", has contributed to their lack of interest in the children's school and little or no motivation at all from them for hard work and good performance. This responsibility has been left to mothers and grandmothers, many of whom are illiterate, old or, at most, have only primary level of education. As a result, mothers and grandmothers continue to play a big role in the lives of their children while fathers seem to be satisfied with just providing material support if and when they are able to.

Five, the situation in many secondary schools in Siaya County contributes to dropout for both boys and girls alike. The lack of sufficient text books and other teaching materials as well as the unavailability of enough qualified teachers some of whom are very unprofessional in the way they handle students, not to mention that the strict rules which include caning of students, do not make the situation any better for many of the students who are already struggling to cope with the tough and poor family backgrounds in which they find themselves and where the value of education is often not recognized. This is coupled with forced repetitions and lack of role models to motivate the students on the importance of education for personal development and the negative socialization on gender equality issues in a patriarchal society.

Six, cultural beliefs and practices within the community though not a major cause of secondary school dropout in Siaya, are still experienced in households, especially at times of financial difficulties and early pregnancies. The community in Siaya, however, has moved from blind gender stereotyping when it comes to educating their children to appreciating the importance of educating both boys and girls. However, factors such as the home environment, poverty and early pregnancies are still connected to the cultural beliefs and practices of the local community where the men idle around in the villages playing ajua under trees, tending to the few cattle they own or just drinking the illicit brew to pass time. This leads to negative socialization of the children and negative role models for boys which is eventually reflected in their character through negative behaviour in schools. The consequence is inability to continue with their education. Clay Muganda refers to it as “a culture of expecting hand-outs which just perpetuates poverty, idleness and wretchedness” in his article on Siaya in the Daily Nation of December 31, 2013.

Lastly, the low educational attainment by most of the residents in the County and increased unemployment of young people has led to many parents not seeing the value of education, hence the increased lack of involvement in school events as well as in their children’s school work.

6.4 Recommendations from the study

In view of the findings of the study, it is recommended that in order to prevent boys and girls in Siaya County from dropping out of secondary schools, the following actions should be taken:

- 1) The national government should enforce compulsory education regulations within the framework of the constitution and ensure transparent and fair allocation of bursaries to needy students, especially orphans. A mechanism to identify orphans in the schools should be established by the national government to facilitate provision of the much needed support. At the same time, a special fund should be set aside to target brilliant children whose education may be curtailed by poor family backgrounds. Such financial contributions should be paid directly to the schools;
- 2) Strict rules with stiff penalties should be enforced by the national government against child labour. This will prevent boys from being lured into such activities as fishing, hawking, boda boda riding and brick making which leads them to drop out of school;
- 3) Strict rules with stiff penalties should be enforced by the national government against those who impregnate school girls. This will assist in protecting school girls from those who prey on their innocence, poor backgrounds and need for financial support. In the same context of early pregnancies, many fathers seem not to be willing to take their daughters back to school after giving birth. The County Government should come up

with a mechanism of enhancing the implementation of the Ministry of Education's re-entry policy for girls who have given birth before completion for their education;

- 4) Teaching of life skills education should be enforced by the Ministry of Education in all schools, especially at secondary level education. This will enable the girls to acquire the necessary survival skills needed to avoid situations that render them vulnerable to sexual exploitation and thereby making them victims of early and unwanted pregnancies. In the same context, the Ministry should endeavour to change the school environment from a corrective institution through caning to one that is not only learner-friendly and supportive but also creates a sense of self-worth in students. This will contribute to more retention of students, especially boys in schools;
- 5) The County Government should strive to empower households through sensitization on wealth creation through self-employment to reduce the high levels of household poverty among community members. In the same context, awareness should be created among the community members on the importance of self-reliance through job creation and the need to move away from the culture of hand-outs which has been instituted in their minds by politicians. The empowerment of female members of the households should be emphasized in the strategies of the County Government.
- 6) Literacy and adult education programmes should be considered as an integral part of interventions that are geared towards increasing access and retention of both boys and girls at secondary level education. The County Government should take up the

responsibility of creating awareness among the community members on the availability of an opportunity for dropouts to register for national examinations as private candidates and dropouts of both genders should be encouraged to use that opportunity to further their education. This will help to counter the educational deficit or low level of education facing many Siaya residents and households;

- 7) Lastly, the county government should also sensitize the community on the negative effect of *ohangla* music on children's education and the need to control the age of participation in such events during week days. These events not only encourage very negative socialization of young children and make them vulnerable to unprotected sex but they also lead to unwanted early pregnancies and the spread of HIV.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

- A similar study should be conducted in Counties in regions with similar problems to establish the gender dimension of dropout for possible strategic intervention by the Ministry of Education.
- Research should be conducted on the disbursement of Constituency Bursary Fund to establish whether the funds are given in a transparent and gender responsive manner and to the deserving cases instead of being given to friends of politicians and local administration personnel such as chiefs.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX I

STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL DROPOUTS

My name is Alice Auma OCHANDA and I am a PhD student at the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies of the University of Nairobi. The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information on the causes of dropout among male and female students from secondary level education in Siaya County. **You** have been selected to participate in the study. The information given here will be confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Introduction

This is not an examination or test but an attempt to understand the problems that cause the students to drop out of secondary level education in Siaya County.

SECTION A: Background and Demographic Information

- 1) What is your gender? Male () Female ()
- 2) How old are you now?
13-14 () 15-16 () 17-18 () 19-20 () 21+ ()
- 3) How old were you when you dropped out of school?
13 () 14 () 15 () 16 () 17 () 18+ ()
- 4) Were you ever held back a term or two terms while you were in school? Yes () No ()
- 5) If yes, why?.....
- 6) What type of school were you in? Girls only () Boys only () Mixed Boarding () Mixed Day () Girls only Boarding () Boys only Boarding ()

Now I would like to ask you a few questions about your family.

- 7) Are your parents alive? Yes (Alive) No (not Alive)
 - i) Father () ()
 - ii) Mother () ()
- 8) While in school, who was paying for your fees and upkeep?

Father () Mother () Guardian () Brother/Sister () Other specify ()

SECTION B: Education Background of Parents/Guardian

9) What is the highest level of education your father received?

None () Primary () Secondary () College () University () Other specify ()

10) What is the highest level of education your mother received?

None () Primary () Secondary () College/Tertiary () University () Other specify ()

11) What is the highest level of education your guardian received?

None () Primary () Secondary () College/Tertiary () University () Other specify ()

12) Do you think that the level of education of your parents/guardian contributed to your dropping out of school? Yes () No ()

13) Did your family expect you to graduate from secondary school?

Yes () No () Unknown ()

14) How many of your siblings, if any, dropped out of secondary school?

None () 1-2 () 3-4 () 5 or more () No brother or sister () DK/NA ()

15) How often did you participate in school activities, such as student dances, school sports or music groups?

Very often () Fairly often () Sometimes () Almost never () Never ()

16) How many different secondary schools did you attend?

1 school () 2-3 schools () 4-5 schools () 6+ schools ()

SECTION C: Socio-economic status of Parents/Guardian

17) What do your parents/guardian do to earn a living?

Employed () Business () Farmer () Labourer () Pensioner () Other specify ()

18) While in school, were your parents/guardian able to pay fees on time?

Yes () No () DK ()

19) Were you ever sent home to collect school fees?

Yes () No ()

20) If yes, how often was that?

21) How often did your parents/guardian attend school meetings/Activities

Very often () Fairly often () Sometimes () Almost never () Never ()

SECTION D: Causes of Dropout

22) What were the main reasons that made you drop out of school?.....

23) Do you know of other students who have dropped out of school like you?

Yes () No ()

24).If yes, what reasons made them drop out ?.....

25) Do your parents give equal opportunity to school for boys and girls in the family?

Yes () No ()

26) What would you say are the main factors that contribute to drop out of boys and girls from school in Siaya county?.....

27) Did you have enough time to do your school work at home?

Yes () No ()

28) Did your parents show interest in your school work (i.e., did they check your school work and performance)?

Yes () No ()

29) If not, what do you think was the reason for their lack of interest?.....

30) What do school dropouts do after leaving school?.....

31) If you were given another chance, would you go back to complete your secondary education?

Yes () No ()

32) What do you think should be done to stop dropout in secondary school level in this County?.....

Thank You very much for your co-operation

ANNEX II

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

SECTION A: School Environment

Classroom

- Gender differences in learning in the classroom (opportunities, processes and outcomes).
- Gender inequalities in classroom practices (i.e., materials depicting existing stereotypes, teaching examples, etc.)
- Sitting arrangement in the classroom which may enhance gender inequality
- Size of the class
- Student/teacher ratio
- Availability of daily classroom register
- Regular class attendance
- Equal access to all instructional materials (supplements, classroom computers, maps, study guides, etc.)
- Availability of seats and sitting space for both girls and boys

Security

- Secure school fence
- Guarded/controlled school gate
- Safe dormitories if boarding
- Condition of the classrooms (dilapidated, without windows, mud and uneven floor).

Water and Sanitation

- Number of toilets (how many for boys, how many for girls?)
 - Type of toilets
 - Availability of running water (clean and accessible to all)
- Electric power supply
- Provision of lunch to students in the school
- Social expectations (fetching water, firewood, ploughing, etc.)
- Gender of the Head of school

- Discipline in the school
- Visible information on HIV and AIDS (posters, etc.)

SECTION B: Home Environment

- Who the student stays with?
- Both parents are alive
- What parents do for a living
- The condition of the home (thatched house, leaking roofs, iron sheets, etc.)
- The general attitude in the household towards education
- Distance of the school from the home

ANNEX III

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION A: County Director of Education

Gender: Female () Male ()

2. For how long have you performed your duties as the Director of Education in this County?
3. Does the community recognize the rights of both girls and boys to education?
4. How are the special needs of girls or boys in education addressed?
5. To what extent do girls and boys progress to tertiary level education from the County?
6. Which schools have produced the highest number of students to tertiary level and what would you attribute this success to?
7. What would you say are the barriers and constraints to gender equality in education in this County?
8. What strategies do you think are needed to institute change in attitude and increase in participation and successful completion of education by both girls and boys in the county?

School Dropout:

9. At what stage and in what proportion do girls and boys drop out of the educational system in the County?
10. What is the main cause of school dropout among i) girls and ii) boys?
11. How do you compare the dropout of female and male students from school for the last five years?
12. What are the cultural factors that lead to student dropout from school in this County?
13. What do you think can be done to enhance access, retention and completion of students in secondary level education in Siaya County?

SECTION B: Chiefs, Elders and leaders from the community

14. Does the community recognize the rights of both girls and boys to education?
15. What causes (i) boys (ii) girls to drop out of secondary school in Siaya County?

28. In your opinion, do parents/guardians in your school support their children's education? How often do they consult on the performance?
29. Do most parents pay fees promptly?
30. How does the school treat students whose parents fail to pay fees promptly?
31. Do you have the problem of students absenting themselves from school? If so, what are some of the reasons given for this absenteeism?
32. Apart from school fees, what other monies are students required to pay per year?
33. Have any students ever complained about mistreatment from their teachers? Boys/Girls?
34. If yes, what were the reasons given for mistreatment and approximately how many students have complained? Please write down in the boxes.
35. What would you say are the main causes of school dropout at secondary level education in Siaya County for (i) boys (ii) girls? (cross check with list below)

(Lack of interest in school work, unwanted pregnancies, caring for siblings, married off by parents, no interest in school work, no support from parents, need for employment to help families, less value for school by parents, preference for marriage than school, poverty, poor performance, bullying by other students and cultural beliefs)
36. At what level do most dropouts take place in your school?
37. In your opinion as a teacher and an administrator, what do you think can be done to curb dropout of students from secondary school in Siaya County?
38. In what ways has HIV and AIDS contributed to school dropout in your school?

SECTION E: Women leaders and Persons Knowledgeable on Gender and Education

39. What are the barriers to gender equality in education in Siaya County?
40. How can gender equality in education be achieved in this County?
41. Do you believe that the community's cultural practices are the key drivers of gender inequalities in education in this County?
42. How can we eliminate school dropout for girls and boys in this County?
43. Would you say that the socialization of boys and girls in the Luo community contributes to gender inequalities in education in this County?
44. Which child do you believe is at risk of discrimination on the basis of gender within the Luo Community?