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Educational Challenges Affecting Girls' Academic Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Burao, Somaliland

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ABSTRACT

The study explores Educational Challenges Affecting Girls' Academic Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Burao, Somaliland. It utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles faced by girls in their educational pursuits. The study reveals that socioeconomic factors, cultural traditions, and insufficient school infrastructure significantly hinder girls' education, with financial constraints, early marriage, and gender-biased cultural practices identified as significant barriers. The recommendations of this study, if effectively implemented, have the potential to bring about substantial positive change. These recommendations include the implementation of financial support programs, raising community awareness, improving school infrastructure, and providing career guidance and skills training.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, most societies and cultures have viewed women as primarily responsible for the home and domestic duties. In contrast, men have been viewed as the primary members of the workforce and decision-makers (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). Women were largely excluded from formal education and thus could not compete with men for positions and resources in the pre-industrial era. However, the advent of the Industrial Revolution altered this dynamic, as the skills that men had once held an advantage in became less relevant. Women began to enter the workforce and contribute to society, albeit with fewer educational opportunities than their male counterparts (Yellen, 2020).

Globally, there has been a significant improvement in the enrollment rates of both boys and girls in primary and secondary schools, with rates getting closer to equality. Currently, the enrollment rate for girls is slightly lower than that of boys, with 89% of girls enrolled in primary and secondary schools compared to 90% of boys (McDaniel, 2014). In fact, around two-thirds of all countries have achieved gender parity in primary school enrollment. However, the completion rates for girls in low-income countries remain significantly lower than those of boys; correspondingly, in upper secondary education, there is a significant disparity in completion rates, with only 21% of young women completing their education, compared to 26% of young men, in low-income countries (Sanger & Gleason, 2020).

In countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV), the disparities between boys and girls in terms of education are more pronounced. In such contexts, girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys, and their likelihood of dropping out of secondary

school is 90% higher than that of their male peers in non-FCV settings. The learning crisis is not limited to girls, as both genders are affected (Kattan B & Khan M, 2023). The concept of Learning Poverty (LP) measures the percentage of children who lack basic reading skills by the age of 10. Although girls fare slightly better than boys, both groups' LP rates remain very high. In low- and middle-income countries, the average LP rate for girls is 55%, while for boys it is 59%. In low-income countries, LP averages around 93% for both genders (Sanger & Gleason, 2020).

While more young women are enrolling in tertiary education in many countries, more is needed to lead to improved employment opportunities or better life outcomes for women. Gender disparity in the labour force participation rate is a significant global issue, especially in regions such as South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, where female labour force participation rates are as low as 24% and 20%, respectively. These rates are much lower than those observed in other regions, such as Latin America (53%) and East Asia (59%), although they are still lower than the rates for men (Mensch *et al.*, 1998).

Problem Statement

Education is a fundamental right, but girls in Somaliland face barriers to accessing quality education (Concern Worldwide, 2023). Global evidence shows that though primary school attendance rates are high, girls' skills and literacy remain low (Tracing Global Trends in Education World Bank Gender Data Portal, n.d.). In Burao, Somaliland, girls in public secondary schools continue to grapple with significant challenges hindering their access to and completion of education. The persistence of gender-based disparities in educational opportunities has

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far-reaching implications for the social, economic, and political development of the country. This research aims to find out the educational challenges experienced by girls in Somaliland and their impact on girls' life prospects and the region's development goals.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate the educational challenges that affect girls' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study intended:

1. To assess girls' educational challenges in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland.
2. To identify girls' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland.
3. To examine the relationship between identified educational challenges and the academic achievement of girls in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is a crucial aspect of human development and plays a vital role in shaping a country's future (King E., 2011). Education empowers individuals to achieve important life goals and positively contribute to society. However, many girls in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland, face significant obstacles that prevent them from accessing quality education. This section examines empirical works concerning girls' educational challenges. According to Akinyi and Musani (2015) despite efforts to improve the education system, girls in public secondary schools in Somaliland, still experience obstacles that hinder their academic performance. Increasing girls' participation in education has been identified as one of the most significant developmental challenges facing Sub-Saharan Africa (Ward, 1995). Generally, the enrollment rate of girls remains lower than that of boys, their dropout and absenteeism rates higher, and their achievements and performance poorer, especially in mathematics and sciences (Kimondo, 2013).

The exclusion of women from science is historical. Arnold, (1975) explored the exclusion of women from the earth science curriculum, focusing on the case of Florence Bascom, a pioneering female geologist. The author found that women had historically been excluded from the earth science curriculum and that this exclusion had perpetuated gender inequality in the field. This study emphasizes the importance of addressing historical biases in the educational system to promote gender equity in STEM fields. With secondary education and beyond, girls get a renewed sense of responsibility that enables them to shape their future without leaving it to their fathers or future husbands (Abuya *et al.*, 2016) Despite the realization that educating girls has immense benefits, girls continue to face constraints in various contexts—the school, within their families, in their communities/

neighborhoods, and their societies in general. The constraints, an outcome of how girls have been constructed in the broader culture, influence investment in their education and negate the positive impact of girls on their respective societies.

Muhanguzi, (2019) looked into why the first educated African women did not become the first generation of African women professionals as did the first generation of educated African men. The study found out that the type of education women received, and the limitation in career choices afforded form a large part of the answer, as do the effectual and legal restrictions on employment. There were few choices for women who received a Western education: nursing and related healthcare professions, education, primarily teaching, and marriage. The study findings by Abuya B *et al.* (2012) show that government schools continue to charge levy fees for lunch and school buildings, and in the case of boarding schools, fees/levies are charged for boarding equipment. In addition, parents are supposed to provide items such as school uniforms, sports uniforms, books, and stationery. Thus, to prepare a child to join a day school as a form one costs about eight times the monthly income of an employed parent, 12–17 times of a self-employed parent, and 19–20 times of a peasant parent engaged in casual work. In essence, poor households in Kenya and urban slum neighborhoods continue to face significant challenges in meeting the costs of free secondary education.

The educational challenges affecting girls' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland, can be multifaceted. Chepkoria *et al.* (2012) Identified anemia as a significant health issue that affects a substantial proportion of school-age children, including girls, which can impede academic performance due to its impact on cognitive and physical development. The study suggests that factors such as maternal literacy, dietary habits, and parasitic infections are associated with the prevalence of anemia, which in turn may affect girls' ability to learn effectively. The work of Abuya *et al.* (2014), focused on social-related challenges, highlights the role of social construction and gender norms in Nairobi, Kenya, which can also be relevant to the context of Burao, Somaliland. Negative social constructions and gender roles, deeply rooted in a cultural context and reinforced by socialization, are identified as barriers to girls' educational attainment. Although the geographical focus is not Burao, the underlying issues of gender norms and social constructions may be comparable across different African regions. The educational challenges for girls in Burao, Somaliland, are likely to include health-related issues such as anemia, which are influenced by socio-economic factors, as well as broader societal challenges related to gender norms and social constructions. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes health interventions, educational reforms, and community efforts to change gender norms and enhance educational opportunities for girls (Kuteesa *et al.*, 2024).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is an analytical tool used to understand a phenomenon comprehensively. It is most commonly used to visually explain the key concepts or variables and the relationships that must be studied. The conceptual framework shows the interdependence of

the independent variables(Swaen & George, 2022). The diagrammatic depiction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of this research.

Educational Challenges (IVs)

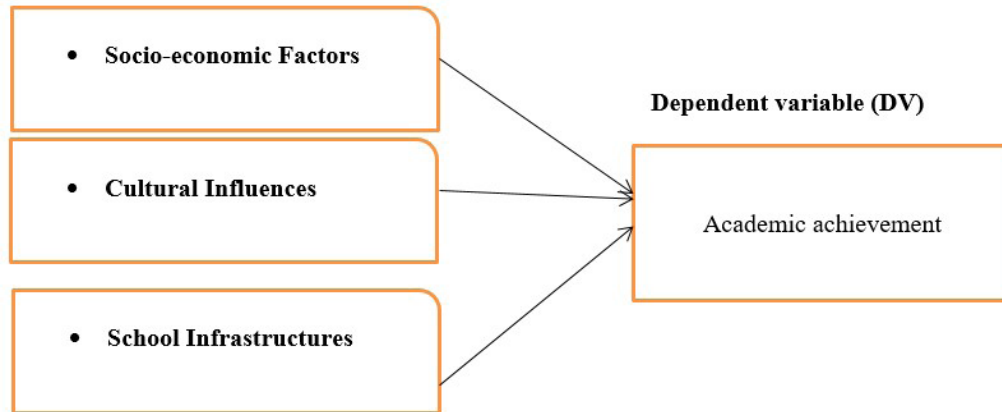


Figure 1: Educational Challenges (IVs)

Source: Author (2024)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Introduction

This study's geographical scope covered public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland, to investigate the educational challenges faced by girls. The research used quantitative and qualitative approaches, including semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and administrators. The sample size included 152 Form Four girls from four different schools. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data on various factors affecting the girls' academic performance and educational experiences. The study employed stratified probability sampling techniques to ensure the representation of different subgroups within the target population.

Research Area and Research Design

This study was conducted in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland. Burao is the capital of the Togdheer region in Somaliland. It is situated at approximately 9.5270° N and longitude 45.5389° E. The city serves as a significant educational and commercial hub in the region, making it a suitable location for this study on the academic challenges faced by girls in public secondary schools.

The research design integrates different study sections to address the research problem effectively. The study used both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The quantitative approach involved structured questionnaires and statistical analysis, while the qualitative approach used semi-structured interviews to explore the nuances of the educational challenges. This design allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the research problem and enhanced the validity and reliability of the study findings through triangulation.

The Study Population

Target Population

The target population refers to all the members of a natural or hypothetical set of people, events, or objects to which a researcher wishes to generalize the research study results (Hossan *et al.*, 2023). The study's target population included girls in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland, government institutions, local organizations, and school principals and teachers.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Only the girls in Form Four were included in this study, while girls in Forms 1, 2, and 3 were excluded. This decision was made to focus on the experiences and challenges faced by students who were nearing the end of their secondary education. By concentrating on Form Four students, the study aimed to gather insights from those with the most extensive experience with the secondary education system and were at a critical point in their academic journey. This approach allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the factors influencing their educational outcomes. It provided a clearer picture of their challenges as they prepared for graduation and potential further education or entry into the workforce.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Sample Size

The sample included 152 Form Four girls from four public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland, along with school principals, teachers, a local organization representative, and government officials. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, ensuring a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This approach ensures fair representation and reliable data for understanding the educational challenges faced by girls in Burao.

Sampling Technique

A sample represents a population. This study used both probability and non-probability sampling. It employed stratified probability sampling, ensuring equal representation from four schools. After stratification, random sampling was used to select individual participants. Purposive non-probability sampling was employed for Key Informant Interviews, including knowledgeable individuals. These techniques provided comprehensive and balanced representation, capturing quantitative and qualitative data to address research objectives effectively as recommended by (Hossan *et al.*, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This section presents the results and findings of the study on educational challenges affecting girls' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland. The study aimed to explore the various challenges that affect girls' educational outcomes, categorized into three main areas: socio-economic factors, cultural norms and practices, and school infrastructure and resource adequacy. These challenges were analyzed to understand their influence on girls' academic performance and participation in secondary education. Girls' academic achievement was characterized by their attendance records, grades, and overall school performance. The findings in this chapter are organized according to the specific objectives of the study:

Socio-Economic Factors

This section examines how financial constraints, family income levels, and the need for girls to contribute to household income affect their access to and participation in education.

Cultural Norms and Practices

This section explores the influence of traditional gender roles, early marriage practices, and community expectations on girls' education and school attendance.

School Infrastructure and Resource Adequacy

This section assesses the adequacy of school facilities, the availability of learning materials, the presence of female teachers, and the overall school environment's support for girls' education.

Response Rate

The study targeted 152 girls in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland. Of these sampled respondents, 129 participated by responding to the questionnaire.

Demographic Information

This section presents the demographic information of the respondents who participated in the study. Understanding the demographic characteristics of the participants is crucial as it provides context to the findings and helps to interpret the results accurately. The

demographic data collected includes age, family income, and parents' education levels. This information is vital in identifying patterns and correlations between the demographic factors and the educational challenges faced by girls in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland. The background information of the respondents was summarized in the following subsections:

Age of the Respondents

The age distribution of respondents in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland, is analyzed to understand its impact on educational experiences and outcomes. Most respondents fall within the age range of 16-18 years, followed by the 19-21 age group. Only a tiny percentage of respondents are above 21, while the youngest group, aged 13-15, constitutes 2%. This distribution suggests that the primary demographic in public secondary schools in Burao consists of older adolescents, indicating that many students might experience delayed entry into secondary education or extended schooling periods due to various socio-economic and cultural factors.

Family Income Level

The family income level significantly impacts girls' access to education and academic achievement. Analyzing the income distribution provides insights into students' economic challenges and how they affect their educational experiences. Family income can affect the ability to afford school fees, uniforms, books, and other necessary educational materials, potentially hindering regular school attendance and academic performance. The majority of the respondents (63%) come from families with a middle-income level, while 22% come from low-income families and 16% from high-income families. These income levels can impact students' ability to afford education-related costs and may influence their academic focus and attendance.

Father's Education Level of the Respondents

The fathers' education level significantly influences their daughters' academic achievement. 41% completed secondary education, 32% have a primary school education, 26% have no formal education, and only 1% attained a university education.

Mother's Education Level of the Respondents

The education level of mothers significantly impacts girls' academic achievement and access to education. 39% of mothers have no formal education, 36% have a primary school education, 24% have a secondary school education, and only 1% have attained a university education. These statistics highlight women's limited access to higher education in the region.

Measurement of Variables

Following the description of background factors, the researcher investigated the elements affecting girls' academic achievement in public secondary schools

in Burao, Somaliland. Educational challenges were conceptualized as socio-economic factors, cultural influences, school infrastructure, and resource adequacy. The effects of these factors on girls' academic achievement were analyzed while academic achievement

was measured by: Girls' class attendance records, their grades, and school teaching effectiveness. Table 1 below shows each study variable and its indicators as used by (Faqih, 2020; Heritage Institute, 2015).

Table 1: Study variables and their indicators

Variable	Indicators	Code	Scale	Analysis
Socioeconomic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family's Financial Situation Cost Barrier School Fees effect Family Priority on Education 	5	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree	Descriptive and Correlation
		4		
		3		
		2		
		1		
Cultural Influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Marriage Practices Gender Roles in Family Community Leaders' Support Cultural Practices as Barriers 	5	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree	Descriptive and Correlation
		4		
		3		
		2		
		1		
School Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure Adequacy Learning Materials Availability Adequacy of Female Teachers Safe and Favorable Environment 	5	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree	Descriptive and Correlation
		4		
		3		
		2		
		1		
Academic Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Attendance Average Academic Performance 	5	Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree	Descriptive and Correlation
		4		
		3		
		2		
		1		

Source: Researcher, 2024

The researcher asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with several statements designed to assess the status of each variable. The responses ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with the options being strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. These responses were scored on an interval scale, with a score of 5 assigned to strongly agree, 4 to agree, 3 to neutral, 2 to disagree, and 1 to disagree strongly. The researcher averaged the scores to determine the overall measure of each variable.

Socio-Economic Factors

The study aimed to assess how socio-economic factors affect girls' access to education in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland. Findings shown on table

2 as attached under appendix, revealed that financial constraints, the need to work to support families, and the cost of school materials are significant barriers to girls' education. Many students face challenges attending school regularly due to their family's financial situation and the need to work. The cost of school materials and related expenses also hinder their education and lead to missed school days. However, a notable proportion of respondents indicated that their families prioritize their education over other expenses, reflecting the recognition of the importance of education. The study suggests moderate agreement that these socio-economic factors substantially impact girls' academic achievement in Burao's public secondary schools.

Table 2: Socioeconomic Factors Study results

Statements	Scale	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
My family's financial situation	SDA	48	37.2	2.295	1.331
affects my ability to attend	D	33	25.6		
school regularly.	NC	24	18.6		
	A	10	7.8		
	SA	14	10.9		
I have to work to support my	SDA	44	34.1	2.496	1.387
family, which interferes with	D	25	19.4		
my school attendance.	NC	27	20.9		

	A	18	14.0		
	SA	15	11.6		
The cost of school materials	SDA	39	30.2	2.643	1.408
(Books, uniforms stationery,	D	23	17.8		
etc.) is a barrier to my	NC	30	23.3		
education.	A	19	14.7		
	SA	18	14.0		
I have to work to support my	SDA	47	36.4	2.442	1.414
family, which interferes with	D	28	21.7		
my school attendance.	NC	19	14.7		
	A	20	15.5		
	SA	15	11.6		
I have missed school due to a	SDA	52	40.3	2.209	1.321
lack of school fees or related	D	36	27.9		
expenses	NC	14	10.9		
	A	16	12.4		
	SA	11	8.5		
My family prioritizes my	SDA	29	22.5	3.271	1.609
education over other expenses.	D	19	14.7		
	NC	16	12.4		
	A	18	14.0		
	SA	47	36.4		
Aggregate Mean				2.559	

Source: Research Data, 2024

Cultural Influences

The study assessed how cultural norms and practices impact girls' education in Burao, Somaliland. The findings shown on table 3 as attached under appendix pointed out that cultural expectations, early marriage practices, and gender roles significantly affect girls' academic success in

public secondary schools. While there is some community support for girls' education, cultural practices still present notable barriers. Overall, there is a moderate agreement that cultural factors significantly influence girls' academic achievement.

Table 3: Cultural Influences Study results

Statements	Scale	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
Cultural expectations for girls	SDA	43	33.3	2.380	1.353
in my community affect my	D	39	30.2		
school attendance.	NC	16	12.4		
	A	17	13.2		
	SA	14	10.9		
Early marriage practices in my	SDA	24	18.6	2.969	1.414
community hinder girls'	D	31	24.0		
education	NC	26	20.2		
	A	21	16.3		
	SA	27	20.9		
Gender roles and expectations	SDA	27	20.9	2.659	1.308
in my family affect my	D	41	31.8		
participation in school	NC	27	20.9		
activities	A	17	13.2		
	SA	17	13.2		
There are cultural practices	SDA	29	22.5	2.698	1.309

that prevent girls from	D	33	25.6		
attending school regularly.	NC	30	23.3		
	A	22	17.1		
	SA	15	11.6		
Community leaders actively	SDA	30	23.3	2.922	1.461
promote girls' education.	D	23	17.8		
	NC	32	24.8		
	A	15	11.6		
	SA	29	22.5		
Traditional gender roles affect	SDA	34	26.4	2.426	1.242
my ability to focus on my	D	43	33.3		
studies.	NC	27	20.9		
	A	13	10.1		
	SA	12	9.3		
Aggregate Mean				2.676	

Source: Research Data, 2024

School Infrastructure and Resources Adequacy

The study aimed to assess if school infrastructure and resources support girls' education in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland. Respondents rated components such as infrastructure adequacy, availability of learning materials, safety of the environment, presence of female teachers, sanitation facilities, and support programs. The results shown on table 4 as attached under appendix, revealed a balanced perspective on infrastructure adequacy and significant disparities in

access to learning materials. The environment's safety and favorability for girls received positive ratings, but there was a perceived shortage of female teachers. Sanitation facilities were moderately rated, with some deficiencies highlighted. Additionally, support programs for girls' education needed to be considered adequate. Overall, the aggregate mean scores indicate a moderate level of agreement that the current infrastructure and resources adequately support girls' education.

Table 4: School Infrastructure and Resources Adequacy Study Results

Statements	Scale	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
The school's infrastructure	SDA	23	17.8	3.085	1.398
(classrooms, facilities) is	D	24	18.6		
adequate to support my	NC	28	21.7		
learning.	A	27	20.9		
	SA	27	20.9		
There is enough learning	SDA	26	20.2	3.155	1.492
materials (textbooks, lab	D	21	16.3		
equipment, computers, etc.) in	NC	24	18.6		
my school.	A	23	17.8		
	SA	35	27.1		
The school provides a safe and	SDA	18	14.0	3.364	1.363

Academic Performance

The study aimed to investigate the impact of socio-economic factors on girls' access to education in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland. Table 5 as attached under appendix shows results of the factors that were found to be drivers of academic performance, which included family income, the cost of school materials, and the need for girls to work to support their families. 62.8% of respondents agreed that their family's financial situation affects their ability to attend school regularly, and 34.1% strongly agreed that they have to

work to support their families, which affects their school attendance. 44.9% of respondents agreed that the cost of school materials hinders their education, and 48.1% reported missing school due to financial difficulties. On the positive side, 50.4% of respondents agreed that their family prioritizes their education over other expenses. The study found a moderate level of agreement across all socio-economic factors, with an aggregate mean score of 2.559, indicating that these factors significantly affect girls' academic achievement.

Table 5: Academic Performance Study Results

Statements	Scale	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
I often miss school due to	SDA	48	37.2	2.295	1.283
challenges related to	D	29	22.5		
socioeconomic factors, cultural	NC	28	21.7		
norms, or inadequate	A	14	10.9		
infrastructure.					
	SA	10	7.8		
My academic performance is	SDA	7	5.4	3.566	1.172
above average compared to my	D	15	11.6		
peers.	NC	41	31.8		
	A	30	23.3		
	SA	36	27.9		
The challenges I face affect my	SDA	34	26.4	2.814	1.494
ability to perform well in	D	28	21.7		
school.	NC	22	17.1		
	A	18	14.0		
	SA	27	20.9		

Source: Research Data, 2024

Correlations

The correlations between academic performance and the independent variables (socio-economic factors, cultural influence, and school infrastructure/resource adequacy) were analyzed to understand the relationships among

these variables. The correlation analysis reveals several significant relationships between the dependent variable (academic performance) and the independent variables (socioeconomic factors, cultural influence, and school infrastructure/resource adequacy).

Table 6: Pearson Correlation results

Correlations					
		Academic Performance	Socio-economic Factors	Cultural Influence	School Infrastructure and Resource
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.449**	.389**	.336**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	129	129	129	129
Socio-economic Factors	Pearson Correlation	.449**	1	.527**	.156
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.077
	N	129	129	129	129
Cultural Influence	Pearson Correlation	.389**	.527**	1	.358**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	129	129	129	129
School Infrastructure and Resource	Pearson Correlation	.336**	.156	.358**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.077	.000	
	N	129	129	129	129

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Author (2024)

Academic Performance and Socio-economic Factors

Table 6 Pearson correlation coefficient results between academic performance and socio-economic factors is .449, with a significance level of .000. This indicates a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that better

socio-economic conditions are associated with higher academic performance. Students from families with better socio-economic status tend to perform better academically, likely due to fewer financial barriers and more support for educational resources.

Academic Performance and Cultural Influence

The Pearson correlation coefficient between academic performance and cultural influence is .389, with a significance level of .000 as shown in Table 6 above. This indicates a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that more supportive cultural norms and practices positively impact academic performance. Girls who face fewer cultural barriers and receive more encouragement from their community will likely perform better in school.

Academic Performance and School Infrastructure/Resource Adequacy

Table 6 Pearson correlation coefficient results between academic performance and school infrastructure/resource adequacy is .336, with a significance level of .000. This indicates a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that better school infrastructure and adequate resources are associated with higher academic performance. Schools with better facilities and more resources provide a more conducive learning environment, improving students' educational outcomes. Overall, the findings highlight the significant impact of socio-economic factors, cultural influences, and school infrastructure on girls' academic performance in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland.

Qualitative Analysis

The responses from key informants highlight several recurring themes and challenges girls face in continuing their education in Burao, Somaliland. These can be categorized into three main areas based on the study's objectives:

Socio-Economic Factors

Financial Barriers

A common challenge is families' inability to afford school fees, books, uniforms, and other educational materials. This economic strain often leads to irregular school attendance and dropouts.

Economic Roles

Many girls must work to support their families, which interferes with their school attendance and academic performance.

According to one of the respondents, a social work supervisor from the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs, and Family, "They do not have time to study because they are busy with household chores, and their families do not encourage or prioritize their education." This statement highlights the significant impact of domestic responsibilities on girls' education.

Many girls are burdened with household tasks, which limits their study time and reflects a lack of familial support for their education.

Another interviewee who works as a social worker from a local Organization, also emphasized, "Financial difficulties lead to school dropout." This underscores

the economic barriers that prevent girls from accessing education. Families often struggle to afford school fees and materials, forcing girls to leave school to contribute financially to their households.

Cultural Norms and Practices

Early Marriage

Early marriage is a significant cultural barrier, with many girls marrying before completing their education. This practice is prevalent in both urban and rural areas.

Gender Roles

Traditional gender roles assign girls household responsibilities, leaving them with little or no time for their studies. There is also a cultural preference for educating Boys over girls.

The genders focal point person from the Ministry of Education in Togdheer, stated, "Early marriage is common, and it leads to girls dropping out of school." Early marriage remains a prevalent cultural practice that interrupts girls' education, as they are often expected to prioritize their roles as wives over their schooling.

A second interviewee, noted, "Teachers mock or humiliate girls in class, causing them to lose interest in school." This reflects a detrimental school environment where negative teacher behavior discourages girls from attending school and engaging in their studies.

School Infrastructure and Resource Adequacy

Lack of Girl-Friendly Facilities

Schools often need more dedicated spaces for girls, such as separate toilets and private study areas. This lack of facilities affects their comfort and ability to attend school regularly.

Teacher Behavior

Negative teacher behavior, such as mocking or humiliating girls in the class, discourages them from continuing their education.

Safety Concerns

The long distances to schools and unsafe routes are significant barriers, especially in rural areas.

A public-school principal, Omer (not a real name), pointed out, "There are no dedicated spaces for girls, such as separate toilets and private study areas." The lack of girl-friendly facilities in schools affects their comfort and attendance. Separate and safe facilities are essential for creating a conducive learning environment for girls.

Another interviewee, mentioned, "The long distances to schools and unsafe routes are significant barriers, especially in rural areas." Safety concerns related to the physical accessibility of schools pose a substantial challenge, particularly in remote areas where girls have to travel long distances on unsafe routes to attend school.

Solutions to Improve Girls' Education in Burao, Somaliland

The solutions provided by the respondents highlight several critical areas for improving girls' education in Burao, Somaliland. These solutions align with the findings from the study's objectives and offer practical steps to address the challenges faced by girls in continuing their education.

Socio-Economic Solutions

Financial Support

Scholarships and Financial Aid

Providing scholarships and educational grants can alleviate families' financial burden and encourage girls to stay in school.

Sanitary Kits and School Fees

Providing sanitary kits and financial assistance for school fees can help girls manage their menstrual health and reduce financial barriers to education.

Skills Training and Employment Opportunities

Skills Training Programs

Offering special skills training while girls are still in school can prepare them for future careers and provide them with practical knowledge that can be helpful even if they do not continue to higher education.

Job Opportunities

Creating job opportunities for educated youth can motivate girls to stay in school and complete their education.

Cultural Solutions

Awareness and Counseling

Educational Orientations and Awareness Campaigns

Conducting orientations and awareness campaigns about the benefits of education, the dangers of early marriage, and other cultural practices can help change community attitudes and encourage families to support girls' education.

Counseling Services

Ensuring access to counseling services can help girls manage stress and behavioral changes and support those facing personal challenges.

Gender Equality and Role Models

Female Teachers

Increasing the number of female teachers in schools can provide girls with role models and someone to discuss their issues with, which can encourage them to stay in school and aspire to higher educational achievements.

Equal Treatment by Parents

Encouraging parents to treat their sons and daughters equally in education can ensure that girls receive the same opportunities as boys.

Infrastructure and Resource Solutions

School Facilities

Dedicated Sanitation Facilities

Ensuring each school has dedicated sanitation facilities for girls can improve their comfort and attendance, especially during menstruation.

Safe Transportation

Safe transportation to and from school can help girls attend school regularly, especially in remote or unsafe areas.

Educational Support

Tutoring Services

Offering tutoring services can help girls who are struggling academically to catch up and excel in their studies.

Professional Development for Teachers

Providing professional development training Teachers can improve the quality of education and ensure that teachers are equipped to support girls' education effectively.

Socio-Economic Factors

This section explores the impact of financial constraints, family income, and the need for girls to contribute to household income on education access. Cultural Norms and Practices: This section examines traditional gender roles, early marriage practices, and community expectations on girls' education and school attendance. School Infrastructure and Resource Adequacy: This section assesses school facilities, learning materials, the presence of female teachers, and the overall school environment supporting girls' education.

Summary of the Findings

The study included 152 girls, with 129 participating, resulting in an 84.9% response rate. Most respondents were aged 16-18 (53%) and came from middle-income families (63%). The study revealed that socioeconomic factors significantly affect girls' academic performance. Financial constraints and cultural influences were significant barriers to school attendance and academic success. Issues with school infrastructure and resource adequacy were also noted, impacting girls' education.

CONCLUSION

The study on the educational challenges affecting girls' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland, provides valuable insights into the multifaceted barriers these students face. The high response rate and comprehensive demographic data enhance the reliability and depth of the findings, highlighting significant correlations between socioeconomic factors, cultural influences, school infrastructure, and academic performance. The findings reveal that socio-economic factors, such as financial constraints and the need for girls to contribute to household income, significantly hinder regular school attendance and academic success. Cultural norms and practices, including traditional gender roles

and early marriage, further exacerbate these challenges, creating a complex web of barriers that girls must navigate to pursue their education. The adequacy of school infrastructure and resources also plays a crucial role in academic performance. While many schools provide a generally safe and supportive environment, learning materials, female teachers, and sanitation facilities still need to be improved. The positive correlations between supportive cultural practices, adequate resources, and academic success underscore the importance of a holistic approach to educational interventions. The study concludes that improving girls' academic achievement in Burao requires addressing these interlinked socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural challenges.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations address the educational challenges affecting girls' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Burao, Somaliland. These recommendations align with the study's three key research objectives.

Addressing Socio-economic Factors. Implement Financial Support Programs

Due to the significant impact of socio-economic factors on girls' academic performance, it is crucial to establish and expand scholarship programs and financial aid specifically targeted at girls from low-income families. These programs should cover school fees, uniforms, textbooks, and other necessary materials. Additionally, introducing conditional cash transfer programs that provide families with financial incentives conditional on their daughters' regular school attendance and academic performance can alleviate the financial burden and encourage sustained educational participation.

Promoting Cultural Change. Enhance Community Engagement and Gender Equality Awareness

The findings highlight the influence of cultural norms and practices on girls' education. To address these issues, comprehensive community workshops and campaigns that raise awareness about the importance of girls' education and promote gender equality are recommended. Engaging community leaders and influencers to advocate for cultural changes that support girls' education is essential. Furthermore, efforts should be made to work with local authorities and community leaders to enforce laws against early marriage and promote the benefits of delayed marriage for girls' education and overall well-being.

Improving School Infrastructure and Resources. Invest in School Facilities and Learning Materials

School infrastructure and resource adequacy are crucial in supporting girls' academic achievement. Investments are recommended to build and maintain adequate classrooms, libraries, science laboratories, and sanitation facilities, particularly for girls. Ensuring that all schools are well-equipped with necessary learning materials such as textbooks, lab equipment, and computers is essential.

Additionally, recruiting and training more female teachers can provide role models and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for girls.

Further Research. Investigate the Long-term Impact of Educational Interventions

While this study provides valuable insights into the current challenges affecting girls' education, further research is needed to investigate the long-term impact of educational interventions. Future studies should evaluate the effectiveness of implemented programs and policies over time, exploring how these interventions influence girls' academic performance, retention rates, and overall well-being. Longitudinal studies that track the progress of girls from primary through secondary education and beyond can provide a comprehensive understanding of the sustained impact of these efforts.

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