

Girls' Education and Literacy in Marginalized Areas and its Impact on Sustainable Economic Development: The Interlink Between Gender Equality and Women's Socio-Economic Empowerment: Turkana South Sub-County, Kenya



Hellen A. Mwangovya¹, Anne Achieng Aseey², Marygoretty Akinyi³, Margaret Ngunjiri⁴

¹PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, Social Work, and African Women, University of Nairobi, P.O. Box 30197-00100, Nairobi, Kenya.

²Department of Educational and Distance Studies, University of Nairobi, Email: P.O. Box 30197-00100.

³Department Sociology, Social Work and African Women, University of Nairobi, P. O. Box 30197-00100, Nairobi, Kenya.

⁴Department of Sociology, Social Work and African Women, University of University of Nairobi,

ABSTRACT: Education is the pillar of any development, (UNESCO, 2010) and is also anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4: Quality Education). In Kenya, targeted interventions have been by the government in the education sector to bridge gender disparities but they are but they are still observed and evident at all levels (Leal Filho *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, Turkana County lags behind and was ranked second last in adult literacy (KNBS, 2019). Specifically, the study sought to establish the socio-cultural, economic and infrastructural determinants of enrolment, transition and retention among boys and girls. The study was guided by Sara Longwe's 1995 analytical framework on women's economic empowerment model. It was further guided Friedman's 1992 dis empowerment theory. The study established that the overall primary school enrolment rate for the study area was 0.9343 (mean enrolment of 213.1 for boys and 199.1 for girls). The study also established that there were large fluctuations in the number of girls enrolled in schools. The difference in enrolment rates between boys and girls were statistically significant. The number of pupils in each primary school was about 200 hundred and less than 200 for secondary schools hence the conclusion that 100 per cent transition is not possible. Girls had lower enrolment rates as compared to the boys. Girls from regions practicing farming/pastoralism registered higher enrolment rates as compared to those from trade/pastoralism regions hence the conclusion that economic factors contribute to educational outcomes in the study area. The findings also indicate that the school feeding programs have been a motivation for attendance benefitting both parents and pupils. The study makes recommendations for future research, policies and programs.

KEYWORDS: Literacy, Access, Control, Development, Empowerment, Gender, Marginalization, Participation.

BACKGROUND

Education is a prerequisite for sustainable economic development. Indeed, one cannot convincingly talk about women's economic empowerment and sustainable development without attention shifting to the education levels of those who stand for the said development. Education is the pillar of any development (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2010) and is also anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4: Quality Education). It is on this premise that we anchor the paper. Specifically, it focuses on the education of children in general and that of girls in particular in the context of marginalized communities. From a socioeconomic point of view, sustainable development focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the abilities of future generations (Fallah Shayan *et al.*, 2022). Gender gaps in education and employment significantly reduce economic growth. The literacy rate is a key indicator of the level of development in a given geographical region. For people to develop, they must understand policies, know their rights, safeguard the environment, understand and make informed decisions on reproductive health issues, and become active players instead of spectators. From a Gender perspective, development has to be holistic and inclusive, whereby both boys and girls are accorded equal opportunities, resources, and an enabling environment (Gender Policy in Education; GoK, 2015).

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On the other hand, participation is an end in itself – poverty eradication, improved health care, food security, clean water for all households, and education for children, among others. Lundstron, K.J. and Smith, D.K., 2000 in their book, communicating for development, A Practical Guide, 2000 emphasize that participation happens when members of the community themselves become part of the process of change. According to Aragonés-González et al. (2020), the key aspect is empowerment through the learning process - as people continuously engage and participate in whatever kind of project, local skills are developed that become a reservoir for tapping in. Through the bottom-up approach, the participatory aspect unlocks the capacities and potential of communities to initiate and manage their own development agenda. By invoking participatory approaches, the efforts of the local people are combined with those of external agencies to achieve the set goals, resulting in sustainable development. Therefore, People's participation becomes a means to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In return, the people can take charge and control the resources, enhance their skills and welfare, and improve livelihoods through income generation, among other benefits (Mulwa, 2004). The United Nations Human Development, 1992 emphasized that people's participation is crucial to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction (Dieye, 2023).

Education is meant to empower one, whether man or woman, boy or girl. It cuts across many aspects of social development and goes beyond economics to crucial aspects such as access to information and politics regarding democratic space and decision-making. Political patronage and manipulation can only be achieved with education (Dieye, 2023). In Kenya, it is a requirement that one attain a certain level of education to become a member of parliament. According to the Government of Kenya [GoK] (2015), the more educated one is, the higher the chances of meaningful participation and recognition in the political arena. At the national policy level, for instance, achieving the two-thirds gender rule is still an illusion. Political empowerment is a cornerstone of women's emancipation, and its importance cannot be overemphasized, especially in a marginalized county like Turkana (Turkana County, 2018).

Mulwa (2004) argues that marginalization is a major challenge to sustainable socioeconomic development. Marginalization denies communities the opportunity for equitable sharing and distribution of resources. In a study carried out at the University of Nairobi, a number of counties, including Marsabit, Turkana, Wajir, Mandera, Garissa, Tana River, Samburu, Narok, West Pokot, Isiolo, Lamu, Kajiado, Kitui, Kilifi, Kwale, Laikipia, Baringo, Taita Taveta and Elgeyo Marakwet were found to be marginalized (Mitullah *et al.*, 2017). Just using one County as a case study, for example, Turkana County has lagged in social and economic development for many decades to the disadvantage of its populace (Turkana County, 2018). Besides the marginalization, there are other key factors that make negative contribution towards achievement of development goals including education – these are gender inequality, poverty, the nomadic lifestyle of the pastoralist communities among others.

This paper draws from a study carried out in Turkana South Sub-County on Gender Disparities in Educational outcomes among Pastoralist Communities in Kenya. Turkana County is among the counties in Kenya leading in gender imbalance in enrolment retention and Transition (KFSSG, 2017). About 62% of pupils enrolling for KCPE are boys, with a transition parity of 1.8% as of 2015, far below the national rate (KNBS, 2019) 45% of girls do not transition to secondary. Besides, the dire need for child labour, as demonstrated by the number of girls who drop out of school to engage in household chores, remains a hindrance to their development and achievement of gender parity in education) (Kenya Food Security Steering Group [KFSSG] 2017; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2022). The gender division of roles, Longwe's 1995 analytical framework speaks to this and decries the negative impact it pauses on the female gender. Therefore, this paper draws on girls' experiences regarding access to education in a marginalized community that lags behind in development.

METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

The study took place in Turkana South Sub-County in Turkana County in Rift Valley in July 2019. *Turkana* people are found in Turkana County, which is located in the northwestern part of the country. Administratively, Turkana County is in Rift Valley and borders three countries. These are Uganda to the west, Sudan to the northwest, and Ethiopia to the northeast. It also borders counties such as West Pokot to the southwest, Samburu to the southeast and Marsabit to the east. The County covers an approximate area of 77,000 square kilometers with an estimated projected population of 1,083 653 people (KNBS, 2019). It is divided into seven Sub-Counties: Loima, Kibish, Turkana East, Turkana West, Turkana Central, Turkana South and Turkana North. The four main livelihood zones in the County are; pastoral all species, agro-pastoral, fishing and formal employment (KFSSG, 2017).

The literacy levels in the county are still low and are estimated to be 46 per cent. There are 282 ECD centres, 315 primary schools and 32 secondary schools in the county. There are also two polytechnics namely Kakuma Women Home Crafts and Lodwar Youth Polytechnic. The County has two colleges: Kenya Medical Training College and ECD Teachers Training College. Three universities had their campus in the county at the time of the study; Mt. Kenya University, Masinde Muliro University and University of Nairobi. The Ministry of Higher Education, through the Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP) is constructing a Technical Training Institute in Lodwar, (Government-Turkana-County, 2019).

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In terms of gainful employment, wage earners make up approximately six per cent of the entire population. These are employed in sectors ranging from education, government, domestic to humanitarian organizations. A major section of these are non-residents (CIDP, 2017). The county suffers high unemployment levels of approximately 70 per cent as compared to a national rate of 42 per cent. The CIDP 2017 highlights that unemployment stems from structural factors linked to a mismatch between the skills of the workforce and the requirements of the new job opportunities. Regional unemployment as a result of marginalization has contributed greatly to unemployment levels in the county.

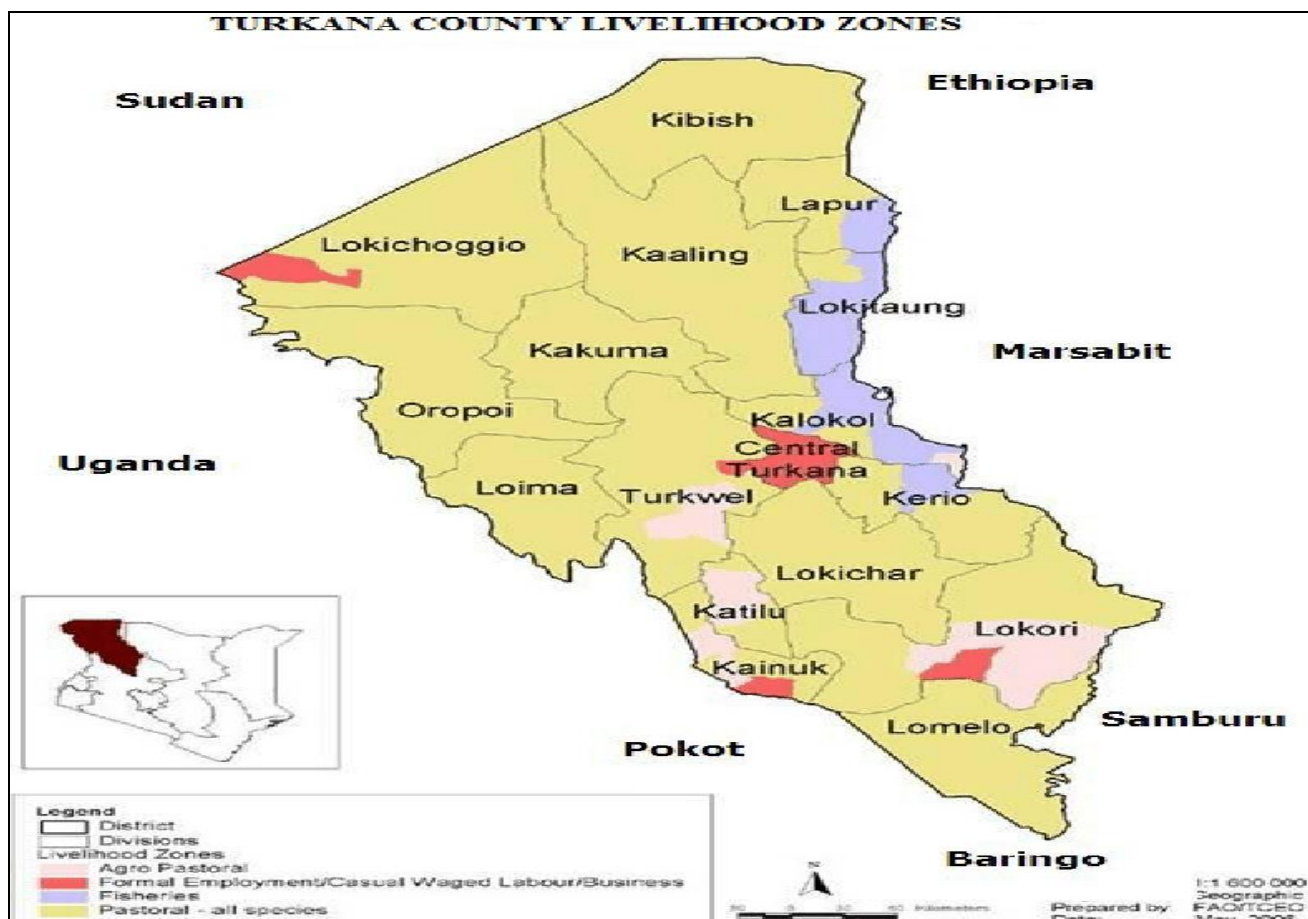


Figure 1: Map showing Turkana South Sub-County

METHODS

Sampling and ethical clearance

Stratified Random and purposive sampling was used. There are three zones in Turkana South Sub County (Katilu, Lokichar and Kainuk). The sample frame was thus stratified into the three Zones, and gender stratification on an equal basis was applied. This enabled the inclusion of community members from the three zones and ensured the availability of gender-disaggregated data. 60% of the schools in Turkana South were included in the sampling frame, which was considered sufficient (Mugenda, 2013), alluding to the fact that any sample above 30% of the population is good enough.

Data collection and analysis

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey and utilized mixed methods of data collection and analysis, both qualitative and quantitative. Extensive exploration of the phenomenon was anticipated in their natural habitat and school, the teachers in their respective schools and the parents and youth out of school in the community. Questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews, Document Checks Lists and Observation Guides were used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaires comprised a list of possible alternatives from which the responders were expected to select the answer that best describe their opinion and open-ended (Kalton, 2017). For KII, we used an interview guide to obtain information on pertinent issues - economic and social factors influencing enrolment, retention and Transition of school pupils with the county education officials, head teachers and others. The FGD guides were used to direct discussions with the youth in and out of school. Using the observation guide, data was collected on infrastructure, proximity to school, issues around insecurity, work culture, and other coping mechanisms.

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The target population comprised all education stakeholders, including teachers (Headteachers and departmental heads), parents (Parents and Teachers representatives), community leaders (Religious leaders and local administrative leaders), school management authorities (all County Education Officers), Non-governmental Organizations representatives and pupils. The study also targeted out-of-school boys and girls. The unit of analysis was the individuals in the above categories. While the study focused on primary schools, secondary schools were included purposely to provide data on Transition that was important in the analysis and informing the generalizations (conclusions and recommendations).

Data analysis involved four stages: editing, coding, classification, and tabulation. All data were edited before being subjected to a rigorous analysis process. The researcher engaged a statistician with qualitative and quantitative data analysis skills. Qualitative data were transcribed, coded and analyzed thematically. All data sets were coded accordingly for easy analysis. All audio-recorded work was transcribed and translated into English, and terms mentioned in English were directly picked and used. The quantitative data on socioeconomic and demographic characteristics collected from KIIs interviews were coded and analyzed. For analysis of the qualitative data, the computer software MAXQDA was used.

Ethical approval and permit for the study were obtained from NACOSTI permit number: NACOSTI/19/26048/31797 of 15th July 2019. The introduction letter was obtained from the University of Nairobi, Centre for African Women Studies. Further approvals were sought from the county government education office in Lokichar. At the county level, approval was sought and granted by the Deputy County Commissioner in Lokichar where further guidelines and rules of engagement were discussed including security briefs for the research team. At the community level, the research team engaged the different actors and shared detailed information about the study, highlighting its objectives, the possible engagement as study participants, any anticipated risks and benefits, confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation.

Theoretical framework

The study was guided by Sarah Longwe's 1995 theoretical framework. Sarah Longwe propagates five levels of women's empowerment encompass Welfare, Access, Conscientization, awareness-raising, Participation, and Control. Using the women's empowerment framework Longwe (1997) demonstrates how women and girls can be disempowered through policy by being denied or having limited access to strategic and practical needs. This could deny the government the much-needed social capital for economic growth and sustainable development. In practical terms, the framework demonstrates that for gender equality to be a reality, men and women, boys and girls should have equal access to opportunities including but not limited to education and only then will they be able to take part in development activities for sustainable development.

She proposes a gender analysis framework where she posits that differential gender roles in a society influence access to resources (social capital). The tool is diagnostic and prescriptive, and in the roles chart, women's activities are divided into four main categories: productive, reproductive, community and decision-making. In her definition, gender refers to what is said to be women's or men's work as prescribed by society. This definition mirrors Bandura and Walters's (1963) social learning concept, which stems from the structural divisions existing in roles between men and women, which is then learnt across generations and thus generalizations, otherwise termed stereotyping. It further relied on the feminist theory and more specifically liberal feminism and relied on the doctrine that encourages development of freedoms, particularly in the political and economic spheres to analyze and understand the power dynamics in the Turkana community with regard to decision-making. The key elements include individual freedom, democracy, equal opportunities, and equal rights. The proponents argue that all people are created equal and that the biological differences between men and women cannot be reason enough to create inequality. The study further incorporated social feminism that aided in understanding and analyzing inherent differences between boys and girls with regard to access to education. The theory states inter-alia that women's oppression is caused by their economic dependence. Gender Gaps are thus as a result of gender discrimination and are simply the measurable differences between girls and boys, men and women. From a gender lenses, I hasten to highlight that the gaps are not accidental but enhanced by the social systems perpetuated by patriarchy. The male dominance that ensures different treatment to girls and women cutting them off from opportunities, facilities and even resource.

The researcher further relied on Friedman's social disempowerment theory that puts emphasis on eight bases of social empowerment. The study focused on the first four bases which are financial capacity of the house in terms of sufficient monetary income that is necessary to acquire goods and services including paying school fees, strong formal or informal social networks for social empowerment – they form a basis of social engagement in reciprocal actions that benefit both actions - surplus time that is the amount of time at ones disposal to engage and participate in leisure activities and the forth one being social organizations that household members belong to including religious organizations and clubs. The quantitative and qualitative data analysis and interpretation was also guided by the liberal feminism theory that argues that all people are created equal and that the biological differences between men and women cannot be reason enough to create inequality. It also argues that within the human social structures, there must be rational thinking if social development has to take place.

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Key Factors that influence and determine access to education

Gender discrimination

This entails giving differential treatment to men and women, boys and girls that leads to a gender gap. Giving equal opportunities to women and men, boys and girls, is at the core of gender mainstreaming. *Equality* implies that men and women should not be the same but that their opportunities and life chances are equal. In order to achieve gender equality, a report by UNESCO indicates that there is a need for a transformation process in gender power relations through awareness creation of women's subordinate positions and building their capacity to challenge the status quo (Peppin Vaughan, 2016). This can only be achieved through well-formulated policy interventions focusing on social empowerment through education. Inequality in education may arise due to a lack of limited or no access to facilities, resources and opportunities hence gender inequality and marginalization (Ombati & Mokua, 2012).

Gender equity aims to reduce the gaps, i.e., measurable differences in access to resources, opportunities, and services between men and women, especially on the socioeconomic indicators. The human development index for Turkana does not reflect positive achievement in gender mainstreaming. The variables under review are life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate and combined enrolment ratio, primary, secondary and tertiary and GDP per capita. The analysis shows a significant variation between the County's Human Development Index and the Gender Development Index. Therefore, the County is still not free from gender inequalities (Turkana County, 2019). One of the key objects of sustainable development is social equality in accessing social resources – education is one of the most fundamental social resources, and gender equity in access cannot be over-emphasized.

Marginalization

The discussion on socio-economic empowerment and marginalization *vis-a-vis* gender parity in educational outcomes cannot be complete without highlighting, appreciating discussing the aspect of marginalization. A considerable population in Kenya are marginalized based on the existing inequalities as a result of economic, socio-cultural and infrastructural factors. A marginalized community comprises of groups of people defined geographically or culturally who are considered or treated as members of the periphery. It is a common perception that such treatments would result into denial of involvement in main socio-cultural and economic activities. They can also be described as the socially excluded group. Marginalization denies a group opportunity to share resources and participate to realize their full potential. Marginalization results from perceived differences in socio-economic status of an individual or groups of people (Jussila, Leimgruber, & Majoral, 2019). There are official documents in Kenya like sessional papers, which talk about marginalization.

Nomadic lifestyle

This is part of the pastoralist's culture and way of life. In a study conducted by Carr-Hill in 2005 entitled *The Education for Nomadic Peoples of East Africa*, covering Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, the major gap highlighted was that there are no policies targeting nomadic groups (UNESCO, 2010). On gender parity in educational outcomes, the study highlights that nomadic groups pose a challenge to the achievement of targets for education for all (EFA) both nationally and internationally. The most affected in this case are girls who are victims of negative sociocultural practices such as early marriage and archaic rites of passage such as FGM and beading, among others. In essence, the literacy rates of the nomadic population range from 0.2% to 2%, and their participation in both formal and non-formal education is very low. ADEA, 2001, observes that their lifestyle makes it extremely hard to participate in schooling (ADEA, 2001). This paper, therefore, seeks to highlight to what extent this has affected the children in Turkana County with regard to access to education and, more so, gender dynamics with a focus on enrolment, retention, and Transition. Naturally, it goes without saying that a sedentary lifestyle coupled with a conducive, organized environment is necessary for meaningful learning to take place.

Poverty

This is a human condition characteristic of chronic deprivation of resources. It deprives people of capabilities, choices, security, and power (UNESCO, 2010). Some of the key indicators are a myriad of economic deprivations that include poor health, water, and sanitation services; no electricity; inadequate roads and other physical and social infrastructure, highly ineffective public and community service departments; uneducated population; and limited access to regional, national, and global markets and opportunities (GoK, 2015; Ruto, S. et al., 2009; Serna et al., 2011). Turkana County itself has a poverty index of 94 percent, with a contribution of 1.3 per cent to the national poverty index. Some of the major challenges that hinder development include, but are not limited to, land tenure system, persistent drought, water insufficiency, insecurity, lack of infrastructure and illiteracy (KFSSG, 2017).

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Table 1: Human development index for Turkana

Indicators	Weight (County)	Weight (National)
Human development index	0.3331	0.561
Youth development index	0.4943	0.5817
Gender development index	0.4943	0.4924
Human poverty index	0.613	0.291

Source: Kenya Human Development Report, 2009

Pastoral and nomadic groups are mostly illiterate and parents are not in a position to support the formal education of their children while in transit leading to dropouts. Ironically, this is to the advantage of the parents as they are assigned roles that include looking after the animals and providing security in some cases. The girls take on reproductive roles and perform other domestic chores at the expense of their schooling (Birch et al., 2010). School attendance is equally impacted by food scarcity at home, and children are sometimes forced to contribute to basic family resources instead of attending school. Northeastern reports the lowest primary and secondary school enrolment (9.8% and 4.8%, respectively), associated with a cycle of poverty, remoteness, insecurity, and the nomadic lifestyle (Okilwa, 2015).

Feminism is anchored in the structural school of thought that assumes that men get more material benefits that society has to offer. It may only be conclusive to talk about poverty by mentioning the feminization of poverty. Most people who live on less than \$1 a day are women (Peppin Vaughan, 2016). Putting this into perspective, we have a situation where poverty is said to wear a woman's face. In a real sense, the majority of people experiencing poverty are women – 50% of the population, meaning that the population is poor, disempowered and in franchising. For sustainable development, according to UN Women (2014), women should not be seen in terms of reproductive but rather their productive roles. This calls for the need to involve more women in formulating policies to enhance their visibility. Restructuring the cultural institutions that have rendered women subordinate would be inevitable. Despite women's involvement in the informal sector, the majority of them continue to live in absolute poverty with a meager income. This is mainly attributed to lack of skills and access to resources.

Cross-cutting issues

It is important to note that Women in Turkana County are usually relegated to the periphery in many areas. They have lower political, social and economic status. In addition, the domestic and social burden mainly falls on the woman. The women are expected to undertake all the domestic chores like fetching water, firewood and looking after the children (Turkana County, 2018). This, in effect, undermines and lowers women's participation in social development activities such as education and training. School attendance is equally impacted by food scarcity at home, and children are sometimes forced to contribute to basic family resources instead of attending school. Northeastern reports the lowest primary and secondary school enrolment (9.8% and 4.8%, respectively), which is associated with a cycle of poverty, remoteness, insecurity, and a nomadic lifestyle (Okilwa, 2015).

Wage earners make up approximately six per cent of the entire population. They are employed in sectors ranging from education, government, and domestic to humanitarian organizations. Regional unemployment due to marginalization has contributed greatly to unemployment levels in the County. Infrastructure is a basic requirement in development in general. The main aspects of infrastructure in this regard are access roads to schools, proximity to social amenities - the environment, i.e., safety, availability of sanitary facilities and commodities, to mention a few. According to Mutia (2018), the lack of formal secondary schools in close proximity to girls' homes in developing countries is attributable to the poor participation of girls hence educational disparities. For pastoral and nomadic population, parents who are mostly illiterate are also not in a position to support the formal education of their children while in transit leading to dropouts. This is to the advantage of the parents as they are assigned roles, including looking after the animals and providing security in some cases. The girls take on reproductive roles and perform other domestic chores at the expense of their schooling (Birch et al., 2010).

In Kenya, despite the implementation of various policies to improve school enrolments, such as school feeding programs and the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE), among others, Turkana County, just like other arid and semi-arid counties in Kenya, has continued to lag in education, more so for girl children (KNBS, 2019). While education is a prerequisite to sustainable development, Turkana County was ranked second last County in adult literacy levels (KNBS, 2019). It is also estimated that about 62% of pupils enrolling for KCPE are boys. UNICEF (2017) estimated that nearly 45% of girls enrolled in primary schools do not transition to secondary schools. Turkana County is leading in gender imbalance in enrolment, retention and Transition. This comes against the backdrop that a number of policies and mitigation strategies have been put in place by the government and other stakeholders. These include school feeding programs, the affirmative and the introduction of mobile schooling among pastoral communities, to mention but a few (KFSSG, 2017).

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The right to education is enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya (GoK, 2010), the Bill of Rights Article 43 (1) f, which states inter-alia that every person has a right to education (GoK, 2015). In the same chapter, Article 26 (3) states that "women and men have a right to equal treatment, including equal opportunities in the political, economic, cultural and social sphere". The Constitution is supreme, and rights are neither negotiable nor indivisible. Any act of discrimination, therefore, whether by omission or otherwise, is unlawful. The gender policy in education further emphasizes that education is necessary for the socioeconomic empowerment of boys and girls. It is one of the basic human rights, and access to quality education is a pillar of social development and overall contribution to economic development (GoK, 2016). From a Gender perspective, development has to be holistic and inclusive, whereby boys and girls, men and women, are accorded equal opportunities, resources and an enabling environment. This paper will therefore highlight some of the existing gaps with regard to access to education by all, with a focus on Turkana South Sub-County.

RESULTS/FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

On enrolment, it was established that the overall enrolment rate for the study area was 0.9343 (mean enrolment of 213.1 for boys and 199.1 for girls). The study also established large fluctuations in the number of girls enrolled in schools. Higher disparities in enrolment were registered in grade 8. The difference in enrolment rates between boys and girls was statistically significant. The overall enrolment rate in the secondary schools was 0.7747 (mean population of girls = 149.9, boys= 193.5). Fluctuations in enrolment were recorded among the boys. More girls than boys were enrolled, and enrolment rates were reduced from Form 1 through Form 4. The findings may lead to an understanding that the average number of pupils in each primary school was about 200 hundred and less than 200 for secondary schools.

The above findings lead to an understanding that there was a low enrolment number for students and pupils in the study area, and those enrolments were biased against girls. According to Benavot (2016), there is a generally poor enrolment rate among the pastoralist communities in Kenya. The findings show poor enrolment rates in the study area and that girls are mostly affected. From an economic point of view, it was also evident that schools in the farming/economic zones had a higher rate of enrolment, retention and Transition, as illustrated in the table below: -

Table 2: Enrolment by Economic Regions

		Enrolment	
		Farming/Pastoralism	Trade/Pastoralism
Grade 1	Boys	48	39.04
	Girls	47.75	37.55
Grade 2	Boys	45.6	35.07
	Girls	46.89	33.22
Grade 3	Boys	39.86	26.35
	Girls	41.02	25.3
Grade 4	Boys	30.37	20.76
	Girls	29.7	21.81
Grade 5	Boys	26.54	18.76
	Girls	25.11	18.7
Grade 6	Boys	25.77	14.5
	Girls	23.04	15.61
Grade 7	Boys	25.74	12.85
	Girls	21.84	13.98
Grade 8	Boys	11.46	8.925
	Girls	7.351	6.981

On Transition, the study established that there were fewer secondary schools as compared to primary schools in the study area. Twelve (12) secondary and 117 primary schools – a clear indication of inadequate infrastructure to meet the demands and support 100% transition from primary to secondary other factors held constant. The transition rate at the study site was 0.081624, implying that less than 10% of pupils enrolled in primary schools' transit to secondary schools. Boys had higher transition rates as compared to girls. According to Ombati and Mokua (2012), such factors contributing to poor transition rates could also take a gender dimension. These include social and economic predispositions that may impact boys and girls differently. From the

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analysis, the ratio of primary to secondary schools and, therefore, 100% transition is not feasible. The available secondary schools in the County cannot accommodate all pupils who qualify to join form one.

Evidently, the average retention rate for primary schools among girls was 0.800409, and that for boys was 0.826374. The study's findings may lead to an understanding that there were generally low retention rates (about 80%) of registered pupils who transitioned to their next levels of education in primary schools and that lower transition rates were registered among the girls. Transition rates for boys, however, were low in grades 2, 3 and 4. Lower retention rates among pastoralists have been explained by Benavot (2016) and Woldesenbet (2014) as influenced by certain socioeconomic factors. A lack of role models and a general shortage of females was established. In one of the schools, only one female teacher was available, and she was overwhelmed by having to double in as a counselor and matron at the same time. The effect is naturally an imbalance in the socioeconomic development in the study area and an adverse impact on literacy and sustainable development.

Sociocultural factors as determinants in educational outcomes

The study established that cultural practices such as marrying off girls at a young age and beading influenced educational outcomes in favour of boys. Further, early pregnancies were mentioned among the respondents as one of the major issues affecting girl enrolment. In an interview with a female head teacher, it emerged that a number of girls were married and still enrolled in school, which was quite encouraging. However, such girls faced many challenges in their school life. In one of the Key Informant interviews with a female head teacher, it emerged that married girls were enrolled in school but faced several challenges. One of the head teachers stated that:

We have some of the girls who are married and still come to school. It is the government's policy that girls are allowed back to school even when they have children. The difference with us here is that some of the girls are married and leave their homes to come to school. We embrace them just like another girl in school. Some of them do well in school. However, they face some challenges even with their husband, who sometimes may need to realize the importance of school. They may refuse permission to come to school. Also, such students have to simultaneously play the role of a mother and a student, which is demanding for them. (KII, Head teachers

It also emerged from the Key informant interviews with the head teachers that the practice of beading girls still existed in the community. Most girls in the region are booked for marriage by older male adults. As such, they get married at younger ages and thus, poor enrolment, retention and Transition for the girls. One of the informants indicated that:

Our community still practices early marriages. These young girls are booked for marriage. Some of them are in school, while most are out of school. When a girl is booked for marriage, the husband-to-be puts beads on her neck. Such are, in most cases, the elderly. Moreover, the practice is respected because it signifies reciprocity in relationships. The person who beads her is someone respected by the girl's family, and in exchange, he pays some dowry to the girl's family. It is thus the role of the parents to ensure that the girl is available for marriage (KII, Head Teacher).

The study revealed that the most common cultural factor determining enrolment, retention and Transition for the girls was early marriages and pregnancies, as highlighted above. Results from the structured interviews with the pupils and students regarding cultural factors influencing enrolment, retention and Transition indicated that 4% dropped out due to disinterest, the other 29%, pregnancy and 67%, early marriages. Below is an excerpt from a life history interview with a female student in one of the schools in the study is:

I wanted to go to school and make my future bright. When I was in form 2, I met a boy who really loved me. So, I used to visit him sometimes. My parents were very harsh. They would not tolerate us seeing people of the opposite sex. Also, most of my fellow students had boyfriends, and some were married but still in school. So, when I visited him, I became pregnant and had to stay out of school for some time. So, I decided to get married to him. I asked him to allow me to return to school after I had delivered, and he was unhappy. So, I thought about what to do next because it was like my dreams were shattered...I talked to my parents and brothers, who said they could support me in school. Though he did not want me to go to school like I know some of the girls in the village who were married and their husbands could not allow them in school. They drop out of school. As for me, I came to this school and asked Madam to enroll me. She was impressed with my determination and was happy that I had made a different decision from most of the girls...she used to encourage me that getting married was not the end of my dreams in life. So, I came back to school. While at school, I have been advising girls not to get married early because it may lead to the end of their school life (Judy is a form four student in one of the girls' schools in the study area) (Life history: Female Student).

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The findings from the interview with Judy were triangulated and were similar to the youth's views outside of school. During the FGD, it emerged that most of them did not go to school as their education was considered insignificant. The girls seemed bitter, some wondering if they would get a second chance. One of the youths stated: -

When we were young, the environment did not favour us. Most of the young girls were told to take care of themselves. Take up household roles and prepare to be married. It was as if we did not have to go to school. All we needed to know was how to take care of the household chores and be good mothers and wives to our husbands once we married (FGD, out-of-school youths).

From the FGDs, it also emerged that most parents did not see the role of education in the pastoralist lifestyle. Participants indicated that even when the children grow up, they wondered how possible it is to concentrate in school when their homes lie in danger of attack from the bandits. In the same breath, insecurity remains a major threat to meaningful development in Turkana. It is one of the reasons why the County is struggling to compete favourably with other regions. Access to water, food, health care and other infrastructure, such as schools, is challenging. One of the participants posed the following:

Most pastoralists here are poor.... especially the raita (Common people living in rural). The source of livelihood is pastoralism. And as you know, there are several things which come with pastoralism. At one time, there were attacks...sometimes extreme draught..., but people must continue living. So young people are taught to be more responsible to ensure the resilience of the people. They are raised to be herders and warriors to protect their families. They inherit their parents' livestock. As such, their livelihood revolves around pastoralism and not education (FGD, Out of School Youth).

Economic factors as determinants in educational outcomes

The study established higher enrolment and retention among students and pupils from regions practicing farming/pastoralism than those from trading/ pastoralism regions. There were fewer declines in enrolment from grade 2 in the farming/pastoralist region. Girls in regions practising farming/ pastoralism registered higher enrolment rates than those from trade/pastoralism regions. However, the difference in girl enrolment in the regions was not statistically significant. Similarly, the study established that more boys were enrolled in regions practising farming/pastoralism. The difference in the case of boys was statistically significant. Besides, the poor enrolment and retention rates observed in grades 3, 4 and 5 were not prominent in the case of the farming/ pastoralist economy.

The explanation for poor enrolment, Transition and retention in the trading/pastoralist economic regions was that children from regions with major urban areas/settings were more likely to be attracted to the economic activities of the urban centres. The findings here could also be understood from the perspective that farming regions have a more settled lifestyle and a steady food supply from irrigation implied concentration in school. Benavot (2016) has advanced a similar argument, who argued that most pastoralists do not lead a sedentary lifestyle due to their economic activities. As such, they continue to record low enrolment rates. Advancement of educational scholarships and cash transfers is hoped to improve pastoralists' access and school enrolment. During the key informant interviews with the school head teachers, it emerged that available economic support for students in the region was inadequate. Some parents faced major economic challenges in enrolling their children and catering to their upkeep, hence poor enrolment, retention and Transition. One of the head teachers stated that:

Most of the parents in this area are living in abject poverty. They cannot afford simple requirements for their children. Such may include school uniforms and other personal effects for their children. Such children find it difficult to stay in school. (KII, Head teacher)

The study's findings indicate that the lack of funds affected the girls more than the boys. This implies that educational priorities are advanced for boys instead of girls. According to Fan et al. (2017), parents are normally altruistic about the gender of their children; investment in education may take a gendered perspective. Further, a review conducted by Karim & Shahidul (2015) highlighted instances where parents' preference for sons in the hope that they would care for them in future led them to invest more in them in education. Studies also indicate instances where preference for investment in education is put upon the girl child.

On the other hand, it emerged that schools provided a haven for school children since there at school; they were assured of food and other personal effects. In a case narrative with an ECDE teacher on enrolment, retention and Transition, a case of Nancy emerged that pupils are taken to school to benefit from the feeding programme. Below is an excerpt of a case narrative with an ECDE teacher with Nancy, a pre-unit pupil:

Nancy is always sent to school by her mother every morning. She cries about it (Researcher observed Nancy crying while being sent to school). Nancy has to come to school every school day to benefit from the feeding program. She normally comes to school with her metallic cup where her meals are served (A photo of Nancy holding her metallic cup

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is presented in Plate 1). The mother leaves every morning to go to the farms down the river, where she participates in manual duties in the irrigation scheme for pay. Due to poverty in the region, the mother cannot afford food for her. So, she comes to school, and I give her a book where she practices scribbling, and she plays with other children as they wait for food. Sometimes when there is no food at school, Nancy and other pupils like her miss school (Case **Narrative with ECDE teacher**). Photo of Nancy walking to school (Refer to appendix ix: Plate 1).

Infrastructural factors as determinants in educational outcomes

The study established that schools in the study area had poor infrastructure, as highlighted in the background of the study. This was more so in the case of primary schools and a few secondary schools. The classrooms are inadequate, and boarding facilities lack adequate dormitories, beds, mattresses and, in some cases, lighting. Most pupils were taught under trees, and primary schools were the most affected. The ECDE schools did not have adequate furniture for the pupils. This finding leads to an understanding that the schools in the study area are lacking in infrastructure. This concurs with the findings of a study conducted by Aragonés-González *et al.* (2020), which concludes that some of the factors associated with gender disparities in education include attitudes and practices, poverty, child labour, lack of gender-sensitive infrastructures and environment, among others.

The nomadic lifestyle for the pastoralist communities remains a challenge to the stakeholders, including the local administration. During the Key Informant Interview with the Quality Assurance Officer, it emerged that most primary schools need proper infrastructure because most of the community members practice pastoralism, where they move from one place to another, making it difficult for the government to construct permanent structures. The quality assurance officer indicated that:

We ensure that our schools have basic structures where education can be offered. However, the greatest challenge is that these people move from one place to another. So, you may strive to build a school in one area only to realize that the people have moved to another. This affects school enrollment because who would want to enroll their children in a school without structures? (KII, Quality Assurance Officer).

The researcher observed that most of the ECDE centres did not have structures, and where classrooms were available, there was no furniture or other facilities. The ECDE stated upon enquiry that there were few ECDE centres in the study area and that many pupils attend ECDE centres because of the school feeding programme without adequate planning from the authorities. One of the teachers indicated that:

There are several incentives at the ECDE centres. For example, most of the ECDE centres are provided with free books, writing materials, bags and uniforms for free by some non-governmental organizations. We understand that some NGOs also reach out to the parents to assess how best they could be supported to enhance access to education. With much effort put into child enrolment in ECDE centres, we experience a large number of enrolments as most pupils are enrolled in our centres. (KII, ECDE Teacher)

The study established that sanitary facilities are inadequate. Such a challenge undermines educational outcomes, as per the study by the World Bank (2013). This was also true for schools with no separate toilets for boys and girls. At one of the schools, the researchers witnessed a long queue outside the washrooms during break time as girls waited anxiously for their turn in a bid to get back to class on time. They also established that boarding arrangements were equally unsafe for girls due to the lack of electricity and the general insecurity in the region, as some schools were not fenced. According to Mutia (2018), girls may benefit from boarding arrangements near their schools, but again, such arrangements still expose them to vulnerabilities, including theft and various forms of abuse.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to establish gender disparities in educational outcomes among pastoralist communities in Kenya, as observed in the enrolment, transition and retention of boys and girls in schools. Turkana South sub-county was used as the case study, while the socio-cultural, economic and infrastructural factors were used to review the possible influence on the said enrolment, transition and retention. The overall aim of the study was broken into three specific objectives: how socio-cultural factors determine enrolment, transition and retention, how economic factors affect access, transition and retention and how infrastructural factors contribute to the levels of access, transition and retention in Turkana South Sub-County.

On economic factors, the study established higher enrolment and retention among students and pupils from regions practicing farming/pastoralism than those from trading/ pastoralism regions. There were fewer declines in enrolment from grade 2 in the farming/pastoralist region. Girls in regions practicing farming / pastoralism registered higher enrolment rates than those from trade/pastoralism regions. However, the difference in girl enrolment in the regions was not statistically significant. Similarly, the study established that more boys were enrolled in regions practicing farming/pastoralism. The difference in the case of boys was

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statistically significant. Besides, the poor enrolment and retention rates observed in grades 3, 4 and 5 were not prominent in the case of the farming/ pastoralist economy.

The study established that cultural practices such as marrying off girls and beading at young ages and the cultural belief that it is inappropriate for girls to be educated influenced enrolment, transition and retention in the study area. For the boys, initiation requirements, traditional role delineation and a common view that education adds little value to the pastoralist lifestyle influenced enrolment, retention and transition. Boys underwent circumcision while still in primary schools while girls are beaded for marriage at early ages. The boys assumed duties such as taking care of animals and the homestead with the parents at stages when they should be in school while girls who are married at an early age assume adulthood duties and are thus not able to attend school. As a pastoralist, with clearly demarcated roles assigned, the benefits of education in such lifestyles were less appreciated. Further, early pregnancies were mentioned among the respondents as one of the major issues affecting girl enrolment.

On infrastructure and environment, the study established that even though the conditions affect both boys and girls, the girls are more at risk of dropping out of school due to insecurity, lack of adequate boarding facilities such as dormitories and the long distance to school leading to fatigue among others. The infrastructure in most schools under study is not gender-responsive and does not strive to address the strategic needs of boys and girls. Most schools do not have extra curriculum activities such as physical education and games for girls. This may lead to skewed development for the girl child.

From the findings, I concluded that the enrolment, retention and transition rates are highly dependent on a number of factors. That 100% transition could be an achievable without availability of adequate infrastructure in terms of schools and related requirements to absorb the number of pupils transitioning from primary to secondary. While a lot has been achieved in terms of policies such as education for all, school feeding programs and affirmative actions, a lot needs to be done in marginalized communities such as Turkana. It is evident based on the findings of this study and the available data that more schools and especially secondary schools have to be constructed and equipped to achieve 100% transition.

Gender disparities in educational outcomes are skewed towards the girl child and women in general. From the findings, it evident that there is a great desire for parents to keep their children in school, and they value education. This is however, undermined by conflicting priorities, mostly around the division of labour and the need to secure family resources, especially animals. Economic factors such as the lack of school fees are evident. A thorough review of existing policies in education and other sectors of the economic is crucial in mitigating the challenges and addressing the gaps. This will enhance gender equality and enable women to realize their full potential. On infrastructure, there is need to ensure the participation of the stakeholders from the community level in order to fast-track on infrastructure development as a means and an end to sustainable development.

From the study findings, it was also evident that boys drop out of school especially in upper primary to take on socio-economic activities such as "boda boda" at the expense of their education. Some of the boys have to balance between school and parental responsibilities of being fathers at an early age. The parents in an FGD highlighted the negative influence of media and the presence of many outlets showing videos during the day whose content was questionable. They alluded to the fact that this contributed to moral decay and hoped that the authorities would act. Some of the pupils especially boys sneak out of school to indulge in such extra curriculum activities.

That there is a great desire for parents to keep their children in school and that parents value education for their children and that given a chance they would do everything to have their children go to school is true. The departure from this is informed by conflicting priorities mostly around the division of labor and the need to secure the family resources especially animals. That the children are kept out of school sometimes in rotation to ensure that someone is looking after the animals. This came out strongly during the FGDs with the youth out of school, the parents, the teachers and Ministry of Education official (Quality Assurance Officer) at Lokichar Education Office.

Based on the above findings, the study makes recommendations for future research, policies and programs. The findings of the study on the apparent larger population of girls in areas practicing farming and the subsequent higher enrolment, retention and transition rates thereof, calls for further investigations. Future studies could compare the school enrolment by gender in communities practicing both pastoralism and farming. While arguments could be advanced in light of the settled lifestyle among the farming group, specific drivers of such demographic dynamics still need to be investigated.

On women's democratic space, it is fitting to say that the political landscape in Turkana South Sub-County has not been conducive to women's empowerment. While it may not be possible to suggest remedies in this paper given its complexity and sensitivity, continued empowerment of women and improved participation in development activities as a strategy for addressing the gaps is recommended. This can be achieved through advocacy and lobbying. From the study findings, it is clear that poverty or lack of funds affects girls more than boys.

In conclusion, Sifuna, 2005 highlights key issues and insights in the education sector that have contributed to a major paradigm shift. For a region that had not impressed the value of education after all, mainly due to their cultural orientation, geographical location and environmental aspects; it may be difficult to fathom such communities embracing education fully or prioritizing it for

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that matter. Be it as it may, the importance of education as a key pillar in socio-economic development cannot be over emphasized. Gender equality and parity in educational outcomes remains a key ingredient in the actualization of sustainable development goals. Development is not development without people's participation. The importance of women's involvement and participation in their development agenda and the gender agenda cannot be overemphasized.

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