An Investigation into the Social-Economic Determinants of Girls' Drop-out from Secondary School

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Abstract

Cases of secondary school girls dropping out of school have been in the limelight in the recent past. This is despite increased efforts by the government to promote enrolment and transition from primary education to secondary education. This has necessitated an investigation to determine the possible causes of this dropout. The objectives of the study were to examine the reasons for the girls' dropout from day secondary schools in Murang'a East Sub-County and to examine the influence of household income, family structure and parents' and siblings' highest educational attainment on the girls' dropout. Using convenience and snowball sampling techniques, this paper presents results from a sample of 58 female participants who have dropped out from day schools in Murang'a East Sub-county during the last 5 years. The study used mixed-method design and data were collected with a questionnaire with both open and closed ended questions. Qualitative data from the completed participants' responses on the open-ended questions were analyzed using content analysis. The most frequently mentioned reasons for dropping out of school included lack of school fees, negative peer pressure, drug abuse, poverty and pregnancy. These were mentioned among the key factors leading to school dropout. Over half the participants sampled mentioned that they had siblings who had dropped out of school. In addition, the average age at the time of dropping out of school was 17 years. Majority of the dropouts, 45% of the participants had dropped out in Form 2. According to the study findings, intervention to reduce girls' dropout in day secondary schools in Murang'a East Sub-County may need to focus on Form 2, since the majority of girls drop out from day secondary schools at this stage.

Introduction

Education is a process that maps experiences as well as identifies a range of dependable paths to the best levels of knowledge in situations that would otherwise be unachievable. Therefore, education has been considered vital in the modernization and industrialization of a nation through imparting knowledge to citizens. Absence of learning would ultimately mean limited development in the economic, social and political spectrum (Koech *et al*., 2016). As such, governments worldwide have committed to the provision of education to all young people, especially those in primary and secondary levels. Education is meant for all girls and education is transformative to the society. There is no tool for improving livelihood that is more effective than education and especially the education of girls. When girls get the necessary education, the society is guaranteed of raised economic productivity, prevention and awareness of diseases, reduced infant mortality rates and general improved standards of living (Ondere 2012).

A mother's education level exerts more influence on the education of the entire family than of any other member of the family. The United Nations set seventeen global goals, popularly known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 to be achieved by 2030 and placed education as SDG number four (SDG 4). SDG 4 regards education as a fundamental human right that is crucial in the realization of sustainable development goals (UNESCO, 2019). The SDG advocates for the provision of basic training which comprises of both primary and secondary levels, as a way of ensuring inclusivity, equity and quality life among global citizens in the future.

Despite these efforts, the goal to education for all is still under threat from the high dropout levels, especially for individuals in secondary schools. Data from Education for All (EFA) indicates that close to 57 million children were out of school in 2011 (Global Monitoring Report, 2012). These means that the goal of achieving full primary education is still a pipedream among various nations globally. Worse still is the number of children not attending school. According to UNESCO, this number had reached 262 million globally. The core reason for this was cited as increased conflicts globally, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, rendering scores of children homeless (UNESCO, 2019). Additionally, another core contributor to displacement leading to a high number of dropouts was climate change that caused drought, floods and other menaces.

The objectives of the study were to examine reasons for the dropout from day secondary schools in Murang'a East Sub-County and to examine the influence of household income, family structure and parents' and siblings' highest educational attainment on the girls' dropout.

Literature Review

The theories applied in this research will include structural strain theory and poor family socialization theory.

Structural Strain Theory

Battin Pearson first suggested the theory in the year 2000. The theory focuses on social demographic factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, culture and socioeconomic status of the community. These factors, combined, will influence the dropout rate of the surrounding schools (Danovska, 2018). For example, a culture that resents the benefits of formal education or practices early marriages will encourage high school students to drop out of school before completion of form four. In central Kenya, for example, it is assumed that small businesses and cheaply paying jobs attract youngsters who require money and hence would drop out of school to make money (Agnew, 2012). Again, a culture that condones alcohol, drug and substance abuse will have most of the learners drop out of school as they engage in such vices. This leads to general deviance. The theory explains a connection between the social demographic factors and their direct influence on the character of a student. Grainier identifies different family lifestyles and values that are instilled in them as critical in determining whether they will remain in school or not (Danovska, 2018). Some children are exposed to criminal behaviour or uncaring families, hence developing a not so caring attitude which consequently makes them a challenge at school. This could lead to early dropout from school as they try to avoid being bothered. As such, the general defiant theory is based on personal factors of the students who would develop an attitude that deters them from participating fully in school activities (Danovska, 2018). The result, in this case, is that they drop out of school. Therefore, this study will aim at determining the existences and impact of these factors on the school dropout rate in Murang'a East Sub-County.

Poor Family Socialization Theory

The theory pays attention to family expectations of the learner and family behaviors and practices. It recognizes the significant role played by the family in the life of a student. According to Poor Family Socialization Theory, family support and bonding are vital in impacting on the general character of a person as well as psychological distress. Family is considered a foundation for the achievement of academic children and their future engagements (Gudmunson & Danes, 2011). When the student feels unappreciated or uncared for in the family ranks, they will seek comfort elsewhere, and they may opt to avoid any situation they feel denies them the opportunity to realize that consolation. Therefore, dropping out of school will be top priority for them. Inconvenient families for learners could be as a result of financial challenges, domestic violence, or lack of showing concern towards each other at all (Danovska, 2018). The way a student is socialized affects one's performance as is explained by the academic mediation theory. The theory appreciates that students who show high performance in school feel motivated and are more willing to carry on with their studies up to the end (Danovska, 2018). This is unlike their counterparts, which could be poor performers. The theory was applied in the study so as to address the relationship between performance and household income. This leads students to feel demoralized due to failure and opt-out of school, believing they are non-performers. On the school environment, shaming at school for failure leads to students opting-out of school for the phobia of being laughed at by their colleagues and sometimes teachers.

The kind of a family the student comes from will determine the levels of socialization depending on their social location. This links the poor family socialization theory to the institutional theory which explains the influence of school infrastructure and family assets to school dropouts. According to Rumberger, structural characteristics of a school like availability of resources, size, teacher's qualification and commitment matter. Lack of sufficient resources, poor teacher-student relationship and the size of the school has a huge bearing on the rate of school dropout among students (Cai & Mehari, 2015). These factors highly influence the decision to drop out of school. In the case of this study, the theory will be used to determine the social-economic characteristics in Murang'a East Sub-County day secondary schools leading to a high rate of school dropout cases. The theory was significant in the study as it explained the role of the family size and structure, education level of both parents and siblings in day secondary school dropout rate.

Existing Literature on Girls' Dropout

Globally, girls' dropout rate is a challenge. Previous research has tried to establish the cause of retarded development, unfulfilled dreams and wasted potential caused by girls' dropout. Researchers agree that it is cumbersome to ascertain the reason for this persistent problem. World over, education promotes cohesion not only across the gender divide but also across the ethnic and tribal formations. For any country to compete in the global market, education of her citizenry is paramount (Nyaranga, 2012). The UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017) estimates that about 130 million girls aged between 6 and 17 are still not in school. This is even after the positive effects of educating young girls has been felt in the past two decades. Another study by NAYS (2016) established that there are twice as many girls not attending schools as there are boys, twice as many illiterate women as there are illiterate men. Research shows the positive results of more women and girls having better and sustained access to education. Studies show that education raises women's standard of living in economic, social and health terms.

The dropout rates differ based on gender and the region. For example, in developed countries, the dropout rate is lower than in developing economies, which in turn is lower than in less developed economies. Different cultures across the globe seem to value the role of men in developing a country than that of women. As such, they have placed more attention to boy-child education than the girl-child (World Bank, 2015). This has contributed significantly to high dropout rates for girls than it is for the boys. It is therefore important to place more efforts on investigating girls' dropout rates to help cover this difference.

A 2012 Report by UNESCO predicted that in Africa, there were higher chances that about 42% of children in school were likely to leave before the completion of their secondary schooling. This is an indicator of how challenging the topic of school dropout is across the globe and the continent, considering that the African continent continues to lag behind in several areas due to lack of enough human resources and skills to perform specific duties (UNESCO, 2019). The fears by UNESCO have been confirmed by a World Bank (WB) Report of 2015, which indicated that close to 89 million youngsters aged between 12 and 24 years were out of school. The WB report identifies several characteristics of out-of-school children in Africa (World Bank, 2015).

These features include low educational quality and absence of enough formal schools, child labour, exclusion of rural youth from educational institutions and programs, early marriages and cultural practices, as well as lack of interest to progress to secondary school after completing the primary level.

In Kenya, the problem of girls' dropout is still prevalent in secondary schools. Governmental official data showed that out of all the pupils who joined the primary school in 2009 and were expected to complete that level by 2018, only 68% reached class eight. This means a third or 33% of the pupils dropped out of school along the way (Kinuthia, 2019). The same data shows 3 out of 10 pupils enrolling in school are unlikely to complete up to class eight. In the case of secondary schools, it is estimated about 9.5% of students enrolled in Form 1 did not complete to form 4 in 2013. The findings noted that early marriages, health, as well as socio-economic factors, were leading causes of school dropout (Mudemb, 2013). Other factors noted to have contributed to school dropout, especially in urban settings and boarding secondary school was drug abuse and moral decadence.

The 2015 National Adolescent Youth Survey (NAYS) noted that in Murang'a County, there were close to 3,776 and 9,525 primary and secondary school children respectively who did not attend school (National Council for Population and Development, 2017). Even though the same report noted the high transition of primary to secondary occasioned by the government effort to implement 100 % transition, the figures of school non-attending children are worrying considering the likelihood they would rise. The report identified poor health, alcohol and substance abuse, jigger infestation, teenage pregnancy, reasonable employment opportunity requiring unskilled individuals, and re-emergence of gangs as critical contributors to high school dropout increase (National Council for Population and Development, 2017).

A report by the UN in 2012 established that out of the 28.5 million children not receiving a complete primary school education, 95% live in obsolete poverty and others below the poverty line. Among the 28.5 million, 55% are females and only 40% are males. This quantifies the weight of disgrace that lack of education impacts to females. A study published by the Word Bank in 2014 with reference to data from 139 countries established that the cross-economy average rate of returning to school was about 9.6% a year. It recorded that the rates are higher for girls than for boys.

Educating girls presently will definitely help the future generations. On the basis of the UNESCO data of 2018, if girls from developing nation's complete secondary school at 100% completion rate, the rates of child deaths would reduce by 17%, this translates to a one million lives salvage each year. In addition, maternal mortalities, which the United Nations, suggests that are highly preventable, would decrease by 67%. Education offers life skills related to reproductive health and opens up spaces for discussing the issues related to reproductive systems (Lugonzo, et al., 2016). Educating girls impacts generations. They are indisputably the future mothers. An educated mother will obviously set education as a priority to her generation. This propagates positive effect to development and societal growth in general (Ondere, 2105).

Kenya had a free primary education (FPE) in the 1970s but later introduced a cost-share system which eventually caused children to drop out of school until Free Primary Education (FPE) was revived in 2002. The enrolment was significantly improved, but the persistent dropout has watered down the gains. According to Mbani (2008), poverty also caused many children to drop out of school. Debt has taken root among the low-income groups and has resulted in a lack of requisite skills, initial capital, and sufficient infrastructure. Poor people are mostly preoccupied with subsistence needs and therefore, do not see the necessity of education for their children (Thiruane, 2017). The emergence of HIV and Aids has negatively impacted training and general, social, economic development. This has resulted in low enrolment and drop out of schools by the pupils especially girls. Poverty contributes to the highest cause of drop out from school (Michubu, 2012).

As a way to reduce the rate of school dropout in America, where girls left school because they were bored, the child-friendly school invitation (CFSI) strategy was started to encourage retention as well as other policies to strengthen and motivate students to remain in school. Caning was also stopped as a matter of policy. In Kenya, efforts to bridge the gap between the urban and the rural, regions, tribes and economic classes have been made through legislation by enacting a bill to this effect (Children act, 2002). Other policies like the feeding programs assist the children in poverty-stricken areas to remain in school. The government and policymakers need to ensure that every child accesses education, transits to the next level and remains in school until completion. Some of the initiatives that can provide for this are bursaries, through engaging the non-government organizations in challenged areas.

Researchers (Mundeb 2013, Shavisa *et al*., 2016, Lungonzo *et al.,* 2017 & Oprong, 2016) concur that education is indispensable in the eradication of poverty, disease and ignorance. The millennium development goals and subsequently, the sustainable development goals (MDGs and SGDs) consider education pivotal to development. Dropping out of school negates these benefits of education and must be curbed by all means. In a study done in Kasarani District of Nairobi to investigate the challenges faced by students in mixed day schools, it was established that the distance to school influenced dropping out if school. What happens between home and school? There is a relationship between the distance from school and the behaviour of the students. The longer the distance, the more adverse the effect to the learner (Ondere, 2012).

A large amount of research has been done on girls' education and its correlation to global development. Among the groups that have been largely included in the campaign for girls' education is the World Bank which embarked in setting several goals to attain a full recognition of girls' educational benefits. These strategies include scholarships for vulnerable girls, extensive training of female teachers for free, encouraging gender-sensitive encounters in classes and the school environment in general, and campaigning against gender violence and early marriages (World Bank 2014). In 2018, the UN General Assembly advanced on an agreement reviving and campaigning on the ban of early marriage, thus addressing the existing inequalities against genders. The prevalent economic strains due to the poor state of educated females is mostly felt in poor African states such as Kenya (Ondere, 2015). The study finds out that provision of obsolete free day secondary schools would decrease the chance of girls drop out in Kasarani District by 18%.

Realizing the benefits of girls' education goes a long way to promoting inclusive and successful studies for all students in school (Lugonzo, et al., 2017). Increasing the level of girls' education is crucial to developing the lives of girls and people all over the world. A study by Janet Ondere Seka in 2012 established that quality female education is correlated with lower rates of poverty and improved health. It goes ahead to suggest that there is no other known effective tool that can be used to raise the community's living standards as can be realized by educating women in the society.

Materials and Methods

Research design

The study used mixed methods in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed. A questionnaire with both open and closed ended questions was used to collect data from 58 girls who had dropped out from a day secondary school in Murang'a East in the last five years. Open ended questions that asked participants to list reasons for dropping out from school and to describe any activities that they were involved in to raise income were included.

Measurement variables included: Influence of household income on girls' dropout rates which was measured using a four items Likert scale with 4 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. Sample statements include: "Girls from families which struggle with lack of money to pay school fees for their children are likely to drop out of secondary school". Influence of family demands / family structure on girl dropouts was measured using Likert scale questions with five items scale, 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. Sample question includes: "Girls from households where parent/s are rarely at home are likely to drop out of school". Influence of parents' / siblings' level education on girls' dropouts was measured using 6 Likert scale statements with 4 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. Sample questions: "Girls from households where the mother has NO formal education are likely to drop out of school". Additional data collected included: age during the time of dropping out, class at the time of dropping out, whether participants had siblings who had dropped out from school, Highest education attainment of the most educated sibling; family structure at time of dropping out, highest level of educational attainment of the mother at the time of dropping out, highest level of educational attainment of the father at the time of dropping out, occupation of the father at the time of dropping, occupation of the mother at the time of dropping out.

Brief description of study setting

The research worked with the students who had dropped out within the community, teachers in the schools as well as parents of the dropouts. The target population was the students, teachers and parents of Murang'a East Sub-County. The sub-county has a total of 35 secondary schools, 10 boarding and 25 day schools.

The private secondary schools are 6 and all are boarding schools. The total population of students in the day secondary schools is 5517. The number of boys is 2667 and the number of girls is 2850 (SCDE office, Murang'a). Using convenience and snowballing sampling techniques, a sample of 58 girls who had dropped out of school was selected for this study. The convenience sampling technique was preferred as it allowed a research to engage those girls who dropped out and are within the researcher's knowledge while the snowballing technique was preferred as those selected for sampling were requested to recommend suitable respondents for the same survey.

Data analysis

Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed using content analysis. Descriptive statistics involved use of frequency distribution tables for participants' responses, and cross tabulations were used to analyze and summarize quantitative data.

Results and Discussions

Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

Table 1 summarises the descriptive statistics of the sample. The age of the participants ranged from 14 to 19 years with average of 16.58years. The difference between the oldest and youngest girls that drop out of secondary school was 5 years. This showed that most of the dropouts from Murang'a East Sub-County fall within the secondary school age bracket. The highest proportion (45%) participants dropped out at Form 2. The second highest proportion (29%) had dropped out at Form 3, while those who had dropped out at Form 4 were 17%. The lowest percent (9%) had dropped out at Form 1. It is not clear whether these data are representative of the country's dropout rates from day secondary school. Intervention to reduce girls' dropout should give priority to Form 2, since majority of girls drop out from day secondary schools at this level.

Over half of the participants (57%) had a sibling who had dropped out of school. Previous research has attributed dropout partly to the level of education of the sibling (Wagachira, 2015). As one participant remarked during the study…

" *kama sio brathangu mimi ningemaliza shule imagine alinichocha masomo haina faida na ati yeye alikatalia form one na saa izi ako na pesa mingi kuliko our neighbour mwenye alisoma andi campus*" (were it not for my brother's influence, I would have completed my

studies. He proposed to me that education has no value now that he is richer than our neighbour who is a graduate).

If this view is representative of the situation in Murang'a and other parts of Kenya, then this is tragic for them in terms of achieving sustainable development goals and eradicating poverty. Majority of the participants (45%) mentioned that the highest educational level of the sibling was secondary school education, with 40% mentioning that the highest education attainment of the sibling was primary education. The lowest proportion of participants (17%) mentioned that the highest education attainment for their sibling at the time of dropping out was post-secondary school education.

Although, several researches have attributed dropping out with single parent family structure, findings of these researches revealed majority of the participants (45%) had some students from families with both parents. The second highest (30%) of the participants had come from single parent families, and 22% of the participants had been orphaned at the time of dropping out. The psychology of girls is adversely affected by family structure, and their concentration in school reduces. Reduced concentration means poor performance and poor performance then leads to low motivation towards schooling and the students might eventually drop out of secondary school. Stability of the family is a great motivation for the girls.

Majority of the participants (44%) mentioned that the highest educational level of their mother at the time of dropping out was primary school education, 11% mentioned that the highest education attainment of the mother was secondary school, 2% mentioned post-secondary, and only 1 percent of the participants mentioned that the highest education attainment of the mother was a university degree. Majority of the participants (29%) mentioned that the highest educational level of their father at the time of dropping out was primary school education, 24% mentioned that the highest education attainment of the father was secondary school, 3% mentioned post-secondary, and only 2 percent of the participants mentioned that the highest education attainment of the father was a university degree. The less education the parents have means that they have limited access to more lucrative jobs and other income generating activities. And hence they have low household incomes that barely meet their family needs including their children's education.

Their children therefore struggle with issues of school fees and other educational needs such as decent housing and provision of lighting for the students' study at home. The students are also required to assist their parents in meeting the daily home requirements and hence have little time for study at home. This eventually results in low morale for study for the students and they may eventually drop out of school.

This can be attributed to lack of sufficient skills by their mothers given their low incomes. This can also be explained by the area's cultural belief that women are child bearers as opposed to providers and are hence not encouraged to look for formal employment. The kind of occupation that the parents have largely determines the level of personal income. The existence of low-level income occupations by the parents suggest that the parents have little or nothing to invest in their children's education. This then means that the students lack enough resources to support their schooling and may end up dropping out of school as opposed to suffering in the education system. It also suggests that the students were probably involved in other income generating activities to boost their parents' provision for basic needs which would then have encouraged them to drop out of school to supplement these needs.

Participants were asked what the occupation of the father was during the time of dropping out. Majority of the participants (25%) mentioned that the occupation of the father at the time of dropping out was farming, 11% mentioned that the highest education attainment of the father was secondary school, 22% mentioned casual work, 6% mentioned that their fathers had formal employment, while 2% mentioned self-employment. Majority of the participants (30%) mentioned that the occupation of the mother at the time of dropping out was farming, while 23% mentioned that their mother was a casual worker, 2% mentioned that their mother was involved in formal employment and 3% mentioned that their mother was involved in self-employment. The cost of education has continued to rise over the years in Kenya. Though the government has heavily subsidized education for day scholars, parents who rely largely on peasant farming and causal work may have challenges sustaining their children in secondary schools.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Students Sampled (N = 58)

Variable		% (Mean)	Highest - minimum
Average age at the time of dropping out		16.4	19 – 14, range, 5
Class at the time of dropping out of School	Form 1	9%	
	Form 2	45%	
	Form 3	29%	
	Form 4	17%	
Have sibling/s who dropped out of School	Yes	57%	
Highest education attainment of the most educated sibling	Primary	40%	
	Secondary	45%	
	Post-secondary	15%	
Family structure at time of dropping out	Single parent	30%	
	Both parents	48%	
	Orphan	22%	
Highest level of educational attainment – Mother	Primary	44	
	Secondary	11	
	Post-secondary	2	
	University	1	
Highest level of educational attainment – Father	Primary	29	
	Secondary	24	
	Post-secondary	3	
	University	2	
Occupation of the father at the time of Dropout	Farmer	25	
	Casual worker	22	
	Formal employment	6	
	Self-employment	2	
Occupation of the mother at the time of dropout	Farmer	30	
	Casual worker	23	
	Formal employment	2	
	Self-employment	3	

Source: Author's survey data (2020)

Reasons that lead to girls' dropout in Murang'a East Sub-County

The respondents were asked about the reasons that led to their dropping out of school. Table 2 summarizes results of qualitative responses on the key themes that emerged from the analysis.

School-related factors

Among the school related factors that were mentioned to have caused the girls to drop out of school are as follows:

Distance from school

This was mentioned four times by the respondents as a factor contributing to girls' dropout from school. The distance that a student covers to and from school has a bearing on the possibility of a student dropping out of school.

These findings corroborate with the research by Ondera (2015) on the causes of girls' dropout in selected secondary schools in Kasarani District. The distance from school was also identified as having a bearing on girls dropout.

Teacher harassment

Teacher harassment was mentioned by participants five times as a reason why girls drop out of school. The teacher is a vital input to the students' education cycle. It is the teachers' knowledge that is imparted to the student throughout the learning process. The teachers' attitude and behaviour has a potential to cause students to dropout if it is negative. It is important to note that the government of Kenya has enacted laws that restrict corporal punishment in school. However, the student quoted other forms of punishment in form of psychological punishment, that is used to harass students in school by teachers. One participant remarked:

….*"I left school in search of peace of mind. This is because the deputy principal used to harass me everyday at parade. I was constantly used as an example of failure and I had to leave school to find peace.*"

Did not like the school/ not appreciating going to school

Another reason mentioned by participants seemed related to *attitude* one had towards school. This was mentioned four times by participants. The school environment should be geared towards enabling students run through the education system smoothly. The study established that most of the respondents disliked the prevailing school environment to some extent. This suggests that in Murang'a East Sub-County, the school environment has some challenges. One participant remarked…

"*Nii ndaregire cuukuru tondu ni ndaremirwo guthomera Kirathi kihana kiugu kia Ng'ombe"* (I dropped out of school, as I could not cope up with learning in a classroom that resembled a cow shed). It is therefore important for the concerned authorities to focus on enabling the learning process by ensuring that they improve the school environment in terms of improving the school conditions. According to institutional theory, the nature of the school has a significant influence on the rate of school dropout especially when coupled with other factors.

Absenteeism

Absenteeism was mentioned three times as a factor contributing to girls drop out of school in Murang'a East Sub-County. The Kenya high school curriculum requires the students to meet a certain threshold of class attendance.

Where a student does not meet this threshold, there is a possibility that the student might be required to repeat the same level. Absenteeism also accounts for the high possibility of low performance among the students and as the poor socialization theory suggests, the low performing students are more likely to drop out of school when compared to the elite students. Mudemb (2013) postulated that in Ugenya district, absenteeism is a leading cause of students dropping out of school.

School conditions / school violence

School conditions were mentioned three times as having contributed towards some students' dropout. One participant remarked:

" Mimi niliachana na shule juu kila saa tulikuwa nyumbani juu ya strikes. Alafu kuna siku nilivunjwa mguu tukistrike ikabidi nitulie nyumbani kwa miezi tatu na singe catch up na wengine" (I left schooling due to involvement in constant strikes in our school that consumed our schooling time. Then there was a day I broke my limb during a strike, and it was so severe that I had to stay at home for three months and I couldn't catch up with the rest, eventually I dropped out of school). Violence in school has a great impact on the learning cycle. It is so prevalent that the schools that are prone to violence and upheavals are among the poor performers (MOE, 2107).

Domestic chores & child-care (Sibling)

Domestic chores and child-care was mentioned three times to be a factor leading to girls' drop out. Involvement of students in domestic chores is seen to many as a harmless activity. However, such chores take up the students' precious time to study.

Personal / Peer Pressure

This was mentioned three times as a factor contributing to students dropping out from school. When investigating on how social pressure influences students' choices, Koech (2017) established that the type of friends differ according to students' ethnicity, gender, social class and academic background. Consequently, most students are likely to have peers who are careless about school learning and are less likely to associate with peers who value schooling. This might result from the apparent social distance created by those who are perceived to be educated. The students may drop out of secondary school due to pressure of rejection by peers making them feel lonely and not accepted in the group (Koech, 2017). Among the peer pressure related reasons that were mentioned to have led to girls dropping out of secondary school in Murang'a East Sub-County are as follows:

Bad Relationships – Boyfriends

This was mentioned three times by respondents to be a factor that contributed to girls dropping out of school. These premature relationships cause girls to leave school due to early pregnancies and early marriages. Koech (2017) established that early marriages and pregnancies were the leading causes of girls' dropout from Kipkelion Sub-County.

Negative peer influence

This was probably the highest, most frequently mentioned reason by participants why girls drop out of school, a total of 18 mentions. This negative influence creates an attitude that some subjects are anti-girls. It is this negative peer influence that makes most students indulge in unbecoming behaviour that hampers their educational goals.

Drug abuse

This was mentioned 11 times. Drug and substance abuse negatively influence students' learning cycle. In effect, their performance in school deteriorates and eventually results in them dropping out. Among the various interesting confessions we got from our investigation with the respondents is from a girl who was quoted *"nii ndathukiirio githomo giakwa ni dawa"*. (My hope in education was destroyed by drugs.)

Pregnancy

This was mentioned 11 times as a reason why girls drop out of school. Most of the participants explained that the period between carrying the pregnancy and nursing the newborn was so long that it was impossible for them to get back to school.

Discouragement / poor self-esteem

This was mentioned three times as being another challenge contributing to the challenge of girls dropping out of school. One participant remarked….
"mimi niliacha chuo juu nilidhani mimi ni mjinga juu sikuwa narada masomo" (I left school as I thought that I was stupid and could not comprehend the secondary school learning). It is therefore important for the concerned stakeholders to embark on campaigns to boost the students' morale through counseling and motivational talks to secondary school students.

Not appreciating going to school

The respondents mentioned 'not appreciating going to school' two times as to have contributed to their dropout. These are the respondents who were of the opinion that going to school had little benefit. One of these respondents quoted that she thought indulging in other income generating activities was more important than going to school. When a student is over involved in other domestic and economic activities, chances of dropout are high (Thiruane, 2016).

Income related factors

Education has a cost. This cost is met by all those concerned with the student's education. Therefore, the level of income has a bearing on the maintenance of students in school. Mudemb (2013) established a positive correlation between family income and secondary school completion. He argued that wealthy families are able to send their children to private schools and afford extra learning to cater for other learning needs.

This ability boosts the students' appetite for education and hence they do not drop out of school in large numbers as compared to students from poor backgrounds. Among the income related factors that were mentioned to have a bearing on girls' dropout rate from secondary school in Murang'a East Sub-County are as follows:

Lack of school fees

Lack of school fees was mentioned by 27 respondents to have contributed to their dropping out of secondary school. Wagachira (2017) established that lack of school fees was the leading economic factor that causes students to drop out of secondary school.

Lack of school fees forces the student to be sent home from school. If the parent cannot afford the fees needed, then the students will be forced to stay at home or join his parents in search of this fees. This then interrupts the student's learning cycle and eventually causes him or her to dropout. One participant remarked:

"Nii ndagire bithi ngiingiira mabuti guku macani-ini nginya riu ndiri ndoona mweke ongi njoke thukuru na ndari mugi ta kanyui" (I lacked school fees, as a result I indulged in casual labour at tea plantations. Up to now I have never seen an opportunity to get back to school and I was performing well in school).

According to a study conducted by UNICEF & UNESCO in 2019, 8 out of 10 students drop out due to lack of school fees. This is even after the government offering free primary education and subsidized secondary education.

Lack of uniform

School uniform is a necessity for learning in secondary school. Two of the respondents said that they had left school due to lack of school uniform. The nature of school uniform determines the esteem of the student and especially in the case of girls. A family that cannot afford good uniform will cause their daughter to feel uncomfortable in school.

Lack of sanitary towels

Two of the respondents said that they had left school due to lack of sanitary towels. The lack of sanitary towels means that the girl had to absent herself out school for considerable dates in a month. The number could have been more, but sexual issues are sensitive and rarely do girls open up. Lack of these towels interrupt girls learning cycle considerably and the student is eventually forced to drop out of school.

Poverty

Poverty is the precursor to all social economic challenges. In this study, eight out of the respondents said they had left school due to prevailing poverty levels. Poverty denies a student the basic necessities for education such as studying materials and other pertinent items required for their education (Mudemb, 2013). This means that the students' studies are greatly interrupted by these deficiencies and the result is always low performance and dropouts.

Various past studies have been conducted to show the relationship between poverty and dropouts and the conclusion is that to a large extent, poverty results in dropouts. This was mentioned 4 times as a reason for dropping out of school.

Child labour

This was mentioned two times as a reason for dropping out of school. Children from households where parents struggle to raise incomes have to seek alternative means to fend for themselves. This is prevalent in orphaned homes in which older siblings have to undertake parenting responsibilities to bring up their younger siblings. In the 2015 report on child labour, the ILO analyzes the role of child labour in keeping children away from school, as well as the lack of accessible, affordable and good quality schooling as a factor for children to enter the workforce.

Other factors

Other factors that were mentioned to have contributed to the respondents dropping out of school are as follows:

Insecurity (Land disputes, lack of housing, insecurity)

This was mentioned three times as a reason for dropping out of school. Insecurity puts the life of children at risk (Wagachira, 2015). Several participants mentioned that in some instances, participants had challenges accessing schools during the times when security operations were trying to get rid of gangs.

Family violence / conflicts

This was mentioned two times as a reason for dropping out of school. The friendliness of the home environment can have an impact on children's school attendance. Students from homes prone to family conflicts have disturbed minds that hamper their learning process. These interruptions result in poor performance that eventually causes dropouts. From among the respondents, two mentioned family conflict and violence as the cause of drop-out. One of the respondents mentioned that she left school due to constant disturbances from her drunk and violent parents. She said that she could not tolerate their conflicts and had to flee to live with her grandparents who could not afford her education.

Table 2: Reasons mentioned by study participants as contributing to girl dropouts from day-secondary schools

Themes	No. of mentions	%
School-related factors		
Distance from school	4	3.23
Teacher harassment	5	4.03
Did not like the school	4	3.23
Absenteeism, not appreciating going to school	3	2.42
School conditions, school violence	3	2.42
		2.42
Domestic chores & child-care (Sibling)	3	3.23
Personal / Peer pressure	3	2.42
Bad relationships / boyfriends	3	2.42
Negative peer influence	18	14.52
Drug abuse	11	8.87
Pregnancy	11	8.87
Discouragement, poor self-esteem	3	2.42
Not appreciating going to school	2	1.61
Income related		
Lack of school fees	27	21.77
Lack of uniform	2	1.61
Lack of sanitary towels	2	1.61
Poor parents	8	6.45
Poverty	4	3.22
Child labor	2	1.61
Others		
Insecurity (land disputes, lack of housing, insecurity)	3	2.42
Family violence / conflicts	3	2.42
		100%

Analysis of child-labour activities girls were involved in before they dropped out of secondary school

Participants were asked what activities they were involved in (if any) before dropping out of school, to raise personal income. Table 3 presents a summary of results.

Table 3: Analyses of activities girls were involved in before they dropped out of secondary school

Activity	Frequency of mention
Collecting firewood for sale	46
Fetching water for sale	45
Coffee picking	41
Doing shopping errands for people	39
Tea picking	31
Selling in the market	30
Cooking food for sale	30
Selling scrap metal	10

Cleaning clothes was mentioned 47 times. This involved cleaning people's clothes for income. Selling at the market was mentioned 30 times. Girls were involved in selling at the market while still in school. We established that those that were involved in these activities were either hired by individuals or helped their parents during weekends and holidays. From one of the informants, we established that most of the second-hand clothes retailers (*mitumbas*) hire youths to set booths for selling their products in different parts of larger markets or along the town streets. They are then remunerated with a commission based on the sales. The commission ranges from Ksh. 100 to Ksh. 200 per piece sold. This proves that the venture is productive and hence attractive. Most of those girls involved in this activity had to skip school to fully participate in this venture during the market days. After a while, the student losses the appetite for education and ends up dropping out of school to continue participating in the business.

Selling scrap metal for income was mentioned 10 times. Girls from the informal settlements in Murang'a East Sub-County such as Mjini had to move around the county council dumpsites and individual homes' garbage pits extracting the metal scraps.

They later sold these scraps to a group of ventures in Murang'a town who then looked for favourable markets in the Industrial Area in Nairobi. These students were exposed to money early and could imagine how much they could make if they were fully involved in these operations. Most of them noted that they could opt for the scrap metal business rather than complete their school assignments. This then translated to low performances and unwelcoming rebuke from teachers that eventually led to dropout. Others said that the activities were very involving and consumed up most of their energies hence they could not concentrate on learning any longer and had to dropout.

Coffee picking for income was mentioned 41 times. Girls reported that they were involved in coffee picking activities while they were still in school. Murang'a East Sub-County is endowed with small scale coffee growers. It is therefore acceptable for most parents to train their children on coffee growing operations. This is in order to preserve their dignity and way of life. It is also viewed as a way of impacting responsible behaviour to the young generation. As such at puberty, the children can confidently participate in picking coffee. This qualifies them to be labourers on any coffee plantations. In Murang'a County and areas surrounding it such as Kiambu, coffee is widely harvested in November and December, around this period, the students are at home for their long holidays. It is therefore a common practice to find students working at the coffee plantations while they are still in school. Coffee picking is seen as a relatively harmless activity, but it is done under very precarious conditions. This involves picking coffee for over 12 hours a day and under very harsh weather conditions. In turn they are vulnerable to related diseases and health upheavals that greatly affect their studies. Another effect on education is that the students change their education perspective as they interact with other careless individuals in the plantations which may lead them to dropping out of school due to poor socialization and peer pressure.

Tea picking for income was mentioned 31 times. Participants mentioned that they were involved in tea picking activities while they were still in school. This could have resulted from the fact that most of the respondents' parents are casual labourers. They are mostly hired to pick tea in areas of Kiambu which is well endowed with tea plantations. The whole activity involves setting quotas and most of the parents take their children along with them to possibly hit these quotas. One of the respondents mentioned that he had to cover for his parents on night shift duty in the plantation to give them a time to rest. Thus, according to the participants, they reported to school very tired and could then not concentrate in class.

The end result was poor performance in school that motivated him to drop out of school. Fetching water was mentioned 45 times. Girls mentioned that fetching water can earn the extra money they need to meet basic needs.

Influence of household income on girls' dropout from day secondary school in Murang'a

Table 4 summarizes the results of the influence of household income on girls' dropout from day secondary schools in Murang'a. The research examined the influence of household income on girls' dropouts by use of four item-scale type of statement, on the scale of 4 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. The four statements included: "..girls from families which struggle with lack of money to pay school fees for their children are likely to drop out of secondary school; girls from families where parents struggle with lack of money to provide money for the girl to buy sanitary towels are likely to drop out of school; girls from families where parents struggle with lack of money to buy school uniforms are likely to drop out of school; girls from families where parents struggle with lack of money for extra tuition to support revision in difficult subjects are likely to drop out of school".

Majority (58%) of the respondents were strongly agreeable with the statement that girls from families which struggle with lack of money to pay school fees for their children are likely to drop out of secondary school, followed by 35% (agreeable), while 7% disagreed with the statement posed. Majority (57%) of the respondents were strongly agreeable with the statement that girls from families where parents struggle with lack of money for the girl to buy sanitary towels are likely to drop out of school; followed by 21% (agreeable), while 22% disagreed with the statement posed. There was thus, a relatively higher level of disagreement with this item compared to responses concerning the lack of school fees as a factor in girls' dropout from day schools (Table 4).

Overall, majority (67%) of the respondents were agreeable with the statement that girls from families where parents struggle with lack of money to buy school uniforms are likely to drop out of school, while 31% disagreed with the statement posed. There was thus a relatively higher level of disagreement with this item compared to responses concerning the lack of school fees as a factor in girls dropping out from day schools.

Also, 52% of the participants were agreeable that girls from families where parents struggle with lack of money for extra tuition to support revision in difficult subjects are likely to drop out of school".

The low proportion compared to the rest of the statements highlights that lack of money for needs such as support for extra tuition is a significant contributor to the problem of girls dropping out of day secondary schools in Murang'a County.

Table 4: Influence of household income on girls' dropout

Statement	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Girls from families which struggle with lack of money to pay school fees for their children are likely to drop out of secondary school	4%	3%	35%	58%
Girls from families where parents struggle with lack of money to provide money for the girl to buy sanitary towels are likely to drop out of school	12%	10%	21%	57%
Girls from families where parents struggle with lack of money to buy school uniforms are likely to drop out of school	15%	16%	52%	17%
Girls from families where parents struggle with lack of money for extra tuition to support revision in difficult subjects are likely to drop out of school	21%	22%	33%	19%

Influence of family demands / family structure on girls' dropouts

The structure of the family can be used as an indicator of family social stability. The support a family offers to the students goes a long way to ensure that the student remains in school. It is this family structure that ensures that the student is raised all rounded to ensure that there is no gap in morals and in spirituality and is in harmonious coexistence with other people. Table 5 summarizes the results of the influence of family demands / family structure on girls' drop out from day secondary schools in Murang'a. The researchers examined the influence of household income on girls' dropout by use of four item-scale type of statement, on the scale of 4 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. The five statements included: "Girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance collecting water after school, are likely to drop out of school; girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance collecting firewood after school, are likely to drop out of school; girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance cooking after school, are likely to drop out of school; girls from households where

the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance taking care of young siblings, are likely to drop out of school ".

Majority (72%) of the respondents were strongly agreeable with the statement that girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance collecting water after school, are likely to drop out of school, while 33% disagreed with the statement posed. Majority (68%) of the respondents were strongly agreeable with the statement that girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance collecting firewood after school, are likely to drop out of school, while 22% disagreed with the statement posed. There was thus a relatively higher level of disagreement with this item compared to responses concerning the lack of school fees as a factor in girls dropping out from day schools. (Table 4).

Overall, majority (64%) of the respondents were agreeable with the statement that girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance collecting firewood after school, are likely to drop out of school, while 35% disagreed with the statement posed. Thus, compared to the rest of the two statements discussed above, this was a less important factor contributing to the dropout of girls from day secondary schools in Murang'a County. Also, 64% of the participants were agreeable that girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance cooking after school, are likely to drop out of school, while 36% disagreed". A considerable higher proportion (75%) of the participants were agreeable with the statement that girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance taking care of young siblings, are likely to drop out of school. This is a significant contributor to the problem of girls dropping from day secondary schools in Murang'a county. The findings of this study seem to suggest that household chores are a significant part of the reasons why girls drop out from day secondary schools in Murang'a County.

Household chores

Child-care and taking of siblings was mentioned 36 times among the household chores that participants mentioned they were involved in at the time of dropping out of school. This is because most of their parents could not afford to hire househelps for the same purpose. Taking care of babies means that the student could skip school to take care of their siblings in order for the parent to find time to engage in income generating activities.

Others had to take care of babies after school and therefore had little time for study at home. All this interrupted their education negatively which could lead to dropping out. One participant remarked that her sole cause of dropping out of school was that she was forced to take care of her younger siblings:

"…. *nii nindendete githomo ona nindakiiguaga, no mami anjiraga no muhaka njikare na ciana nake agethe irio na biithi, niwareriwo nawe rera*." (I loved education and I was doing well but my mother would force me to take care of my younger siblings as she went out to look for food and fees. Others took care of you, it is your turn to reciprocate*).*

Water is a basic requirement for life and lack of it might mean the absence of life. This makes this commodity very precious especially to those who don't easily access it. Collecting water was mentioned 47 times as part of the household chores that participants were involved in at the time of dropping out from school. Most households in Murang'a East Sub-County still face challenges of accessibility to piped water at their homes, or compounds. Families expect students to help their parents in fetching water required for the various home needs. Others get an opportunity to get money from fetching water for other households in exchange for extra coins that they later use to fill a gap in their basic needs. The study also noted that collecting of firewood was mentioned 47 times as part of the household chores that participants were involved in at the time of dropping out from school. Few households have access to clean energy sources for cooking and rely on firewood for cooking. Helping parents with shopping was mentioned 36 times. Participants narrated that this involved travelling to towns and malls in search of commodities needed.

Table 5: Influence of family demands / family structure on girls' dropout

Statement	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Girls from households where parent/s are rarely at home are likely to drop out of school	**12%**	**16%**	**45%**	**27%**
Girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance collecting water after school, are likely to drop out of school	**14%**	**19%**	**33%**	**34%**
Girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance collecting firewood after school, are likely to drop out of school	**9%**	**27%**	**38%**	**26%**
Girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance cooking after school, are	**26%**	**10%**	**36%**	**28%**

likely to drop out of school				
Girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance taking care of young siblings, are likely to drop out of school	**5%**	**19%**	**22%**	**53%**

Influence of parents' and siblings' level education on girls' dropout

The researchers examined the influence of parents' and siblings' level education on girls' dropout by use of five item-scale type of statement, on the scale of 4 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. The five statements included: "Girls from households where parent/s are rarely at home are likely to drop out of school; girls from households where the mother has NO formal education are likely to drop out of school; girls from households where the mother did NOT complete secondary education are likely to drop out of school; girls from households where the father has no formal education are likely to drop out of school; girls from households where the father did NOT complete secondary education are likely to drop out of school; girls from households where NONE of the siblings has formal education are likely to drop out of school; girls from households where NONE of the siblings completed secondary school are likely to drop out of school…..".

Majority (69%) of the respondents were strongly agreeable with the statement that girls from households where the mother has NO formal education are likely to drop out of school, while 32% disagreed with the statement posed. Majority (66%) of the respondents were strongly agreeable with the statement that girls from households where the mother did NOT complete secondary education are likely to drop out of school, while 49% disagreed with the statement posed. There was thus, a relatively higher level of disagreement with this item compared to responses concerning the mother having NO formal education (Table 6). The study findings seem to suggest that access to basic education by mothers has influence of girls remaining in secondary school.

Overall, majority (69%) of the respondents were agreeable with the statement that girls from households where the father has no formal education are likely to drop out of school, while 31% disagreed with the statement posed.

Also, 61% of the participants were agreeable that girls from households where the father did NOT complete secondary education are likely to drop out of school, while 38% disagreed". A considerable higher proportion (76%) of the participants were agreeable with the statement that girls from households where NONE of the siblings has formal education are likely to drop out of school, while 24% disagreed. The findings of this study seem to suggest that siblings' education has a significant part of the reasons why girls drop out from day secondary schools in Murang'a County.

Seventy four percent of the participants were agreeable with the statement that girls from households where NONE of the siblings completed secondary school are likely to drop out of school, while 25% disagreed. The findings of this study seem to suggest that siblings' secondary school educational attainment plays a role in influencing girls to remain in secondary school.

Table 6: Influence of parents' / siblings' level education and influence on students' dropout

Statement	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Girls from households were the mother has NO formal education are likely to drop out of school	24%	7%	54%	15%
Girls from households were the mother did NOT complete secondary education are likely to drop out of school	28%	21%	47%	29%
Girls from households were the father has no formal education are likely to drop out of school	17%	14%	52%	17%
Girls from households were the father did NOT complete secondary education are likely to drop out of school	26%	12%	43%	19%
Girls from households were NONE of the siblings has formal education are likely to drop out of school	7%	17%	47%	29%
Girls from households were NONE of the siblings completed Secondary school are likely to drop out of school	22%	3%	28%	46%

Conclusions

The study sought to examine reasons for the dropout of girls from day secondary schools in Murang'a East Sub-County; examine the influence of household income, family structure and parents' and siblings' highest educational attainment on the girls' dropout. Concerning the reasons associated with dropouts, majority (67%) of the participants were agreeable with the statement; girls from families where parents struggle with lack of money to buy school uniforms were likely to drop out of school, compared to other statements posed related to income.

Concerning the influence of family demands and family structure, majority of the participants pointed to girls from households where the girl has to undertake household chores, for instance taking care of young siblings, are likely to drop out of school is a significant contributor to the problem of girls dropping out from day secondary schools in Murang'a county. Household chores, therefore, appear to have significant contribution to the number of girls dropping out of day secondary schools in Murang'a County. Also, siblings' highest level of educational attainment seems to be an important contributor to girls dropping out from school. Over half of the participants had a sibling that had dropped out of school and 76% ranked this to be a factor among the six statements posed in relation to the influence of parents' and siblings' highest level of educational attainment on girls' dropout. It should be noted that the range of themes that emerged from the data on reasons for dropping out of school do not act independently of each other, rather there is a complex interaction among school factors, family factors, individual factors and environmental factors that contribute to the eventual decision by a high school girl to drop out of school.

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