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Gender-related barriers to schooling: What do we know about the effects of sexuality and life skills education?

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Gender-related barriers to schooling: What do we know about the effects of sexuality and life skills education?

Nicole Haberland
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Expert Group Meeting
Population, Education and Sustainable Development
Population Division, UN DESA
6-7 September 2022

A stylized world map in shades of blue and teal, serving as a background for the slide. The map is centered and shows the outlines of continents.

Overview

1. Background
2. Systematic Review
3. Exploration of Life Skills and CSE

The Girls' Education Landscape

The Good News

- Dramatic increase in girls' enrollment globally
- Gender parity achieved globally in primary and secondary enrollment

The Remaining Challenges

- Gender gaps in enrollment remain
- Progress in attainment has stagnated
- Very low levels of learning
- Conflicts between schooling and adult roles (marriage, parenthood)
- Extended learning disruptions due to epidemics (COVID-19), environmental disasters, conflict, etc.

Gender disparities in education persist, especially when we take an intersectional lens.

The poorest girls have the lowest attainment, worst learning outcomes, and biggest gender gaps.

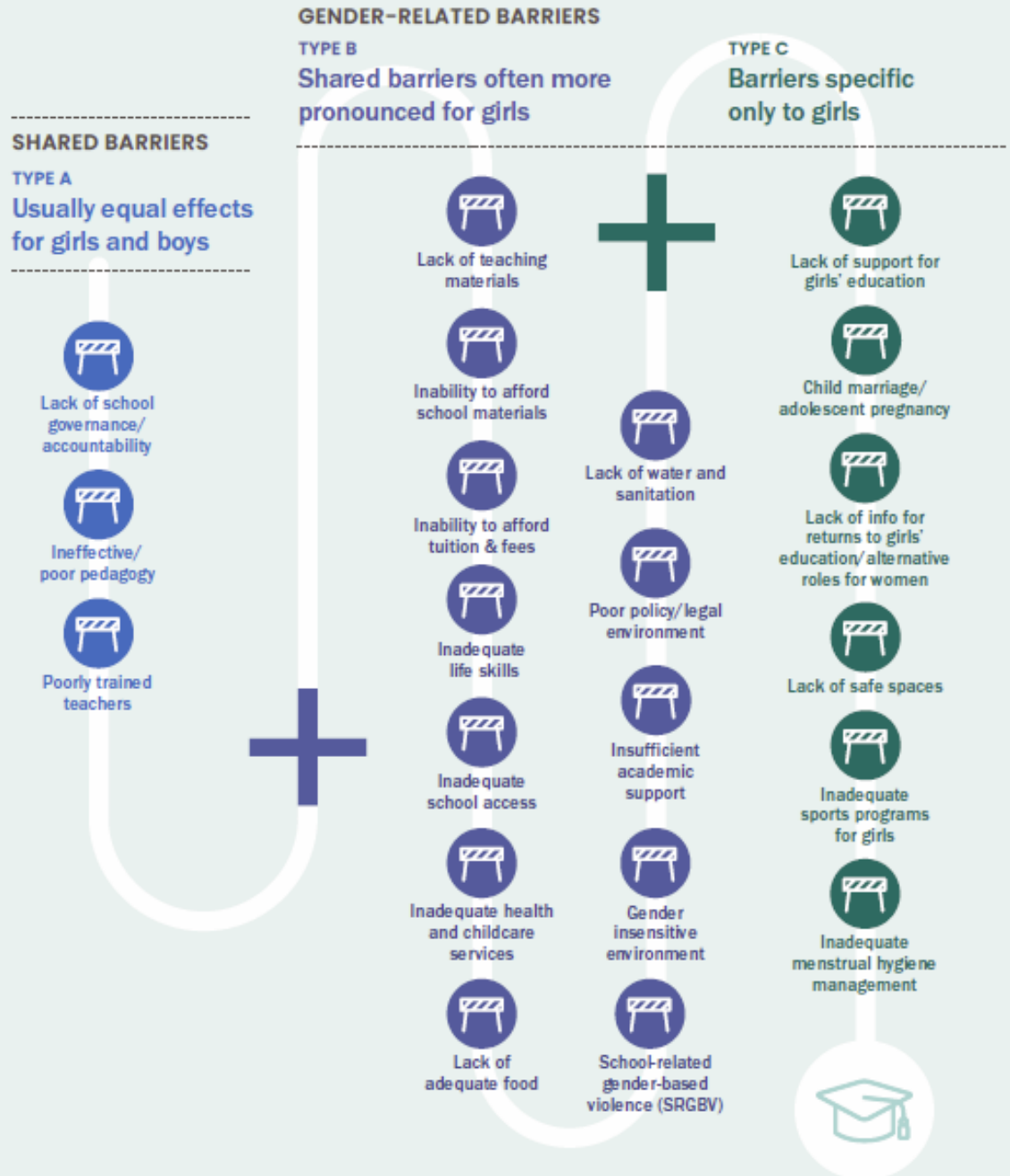
FIGURE 5 Percent of population aged 20–24 completing primary school, by wealth quintile

This figure shows the gender gap in primary school attainment stratified by the poorest and richest quintiles, as defined by the DHS wealth quintile variable.



Perceived barriers to education for girls

Some barriers may affect girls and boys equally, some may be more pronounced for girls, and some are shouldered by girls alone



GENDER-RELATED BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

COMMUNITY



Lack of Safe Spaces & Social Connections



Lack of Support for Girls' Education



Child Marriage & Adolescent Pregnancy



Poor Policy/Legal Environment



Inadequate Sports Programs for Girls



Inadequate Health & Childcare Services

SCHOOL



Inadequate Life Skills



Insufficient Academic Support



Gender-Insensitive School Environment



Lack of Water & Sanitation



Lack of Teaching Materials & Supplies



School-Related Gender-Based Violence

HOUSEHOLD



Lack of Access to School



Inability to Afford Materials



Inability to Afford Tuition/Fees



Lack of Information on Returns to Girls' Schooling



Lack of Adequate Food



Inadequate Menstrual Hygiene Management

Systematic Review

DOI: 10.1002/d2.1207

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

WILEY Campbell Collaboration   International Initiative for Impact Evaluation

Policies and interventions to remove gender-related barriers to girls' school participation and learning in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review of the evidence

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Ethical Giving

Abstract

Background: Gender disparities in education continue to undermine girls' opportunities, despite enormous strides in recent years to improve primary enrollment and attainment for girls in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). At the regional, country and subnational levels, gender gaps remain, with girls in many settings less likely to complete primary school, less likely to complete secondary, and often less likely to be literate than boys. The academic and policy literatures on the topic of gender-related barriers to girls' education are both extensive. However, there remain gaps in knowledge regarding which interventions are most likely to work in contexts with different combinations of barriers.

Objectives: This systematic review identified and assessed the strength of the evidence of interventions and exposures addressing gender-related barriers to schooling for girls in LMICs.

Search Strategy

- The AEA RCT Registry, Africa Bibliography, African Education Research Database, African Journals Online, DEC USAID, Dissertation Abstracts, EconLit, ELDIS, Evidence Hub, Global Index Medicus, IDEAS-Repec, Intl Clinical Trials Registry, NBER, OpenGrey, Open Knowledge Repository, POPLINE, PsychINFO, PubMed, Research for Development Outputs, ScienceDirect, Sociological Abstracts, Web of Science
- Relevant organizations' websites
- Review of bibliographies
- Inquiries to authors of included studies, relevant researchers and relevant organizations

Inclusion Criteria

- Randomized controlled trials
- Quasi-experimental studies that used quantitative models that attempt to control for endogeneity
- Data from LMICs
- Published, peer-reviewed articles or grey literature such as working papers, reports and dissertations
- Published in or after 2000
- Analyzed the effects of the intervention/exposure on primary outcomes of interest (girls' enrollment/attainment and learning)
- Intervention or exposure that attempted to address a gender-related barrier to schooling

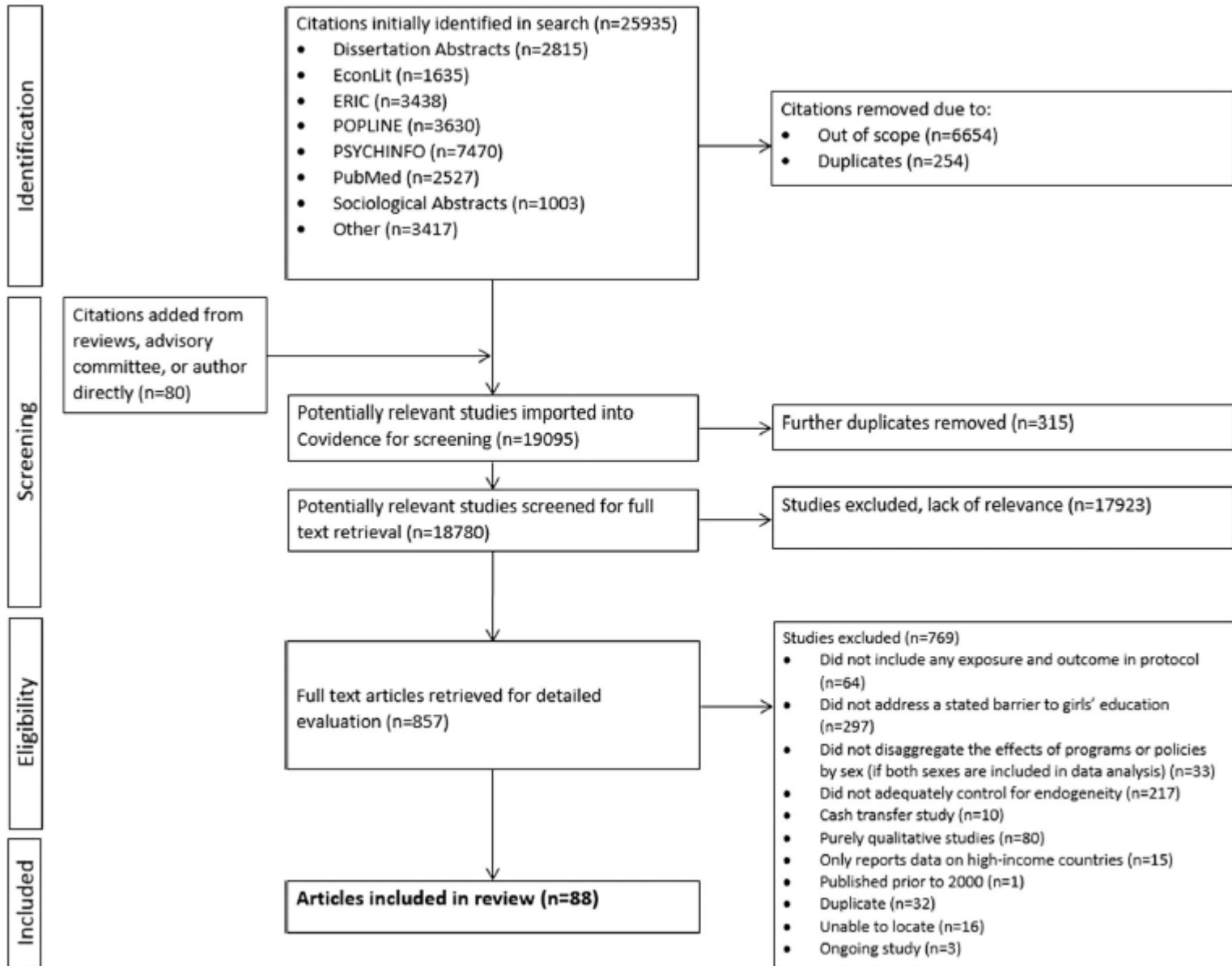
Data collection/analysis

- Pairs of reviewers independently screened for relevance, extracted data, assessed risk of bias
- Risk of bias assessed through:
 - RoB 2 tool (experimental studies)
 - ROBINS-I tool (quasi-experimental studies)
- Converted effect sizes to partial correlation coefficients given variety of model types
- Used the GRADE (Grading of Recommendation, Assessment, Development and Evaluation) approach to synthesize research as opposed to meta-analysis, due to heterogeneity of study characteristics and reported outcome measures between studies.

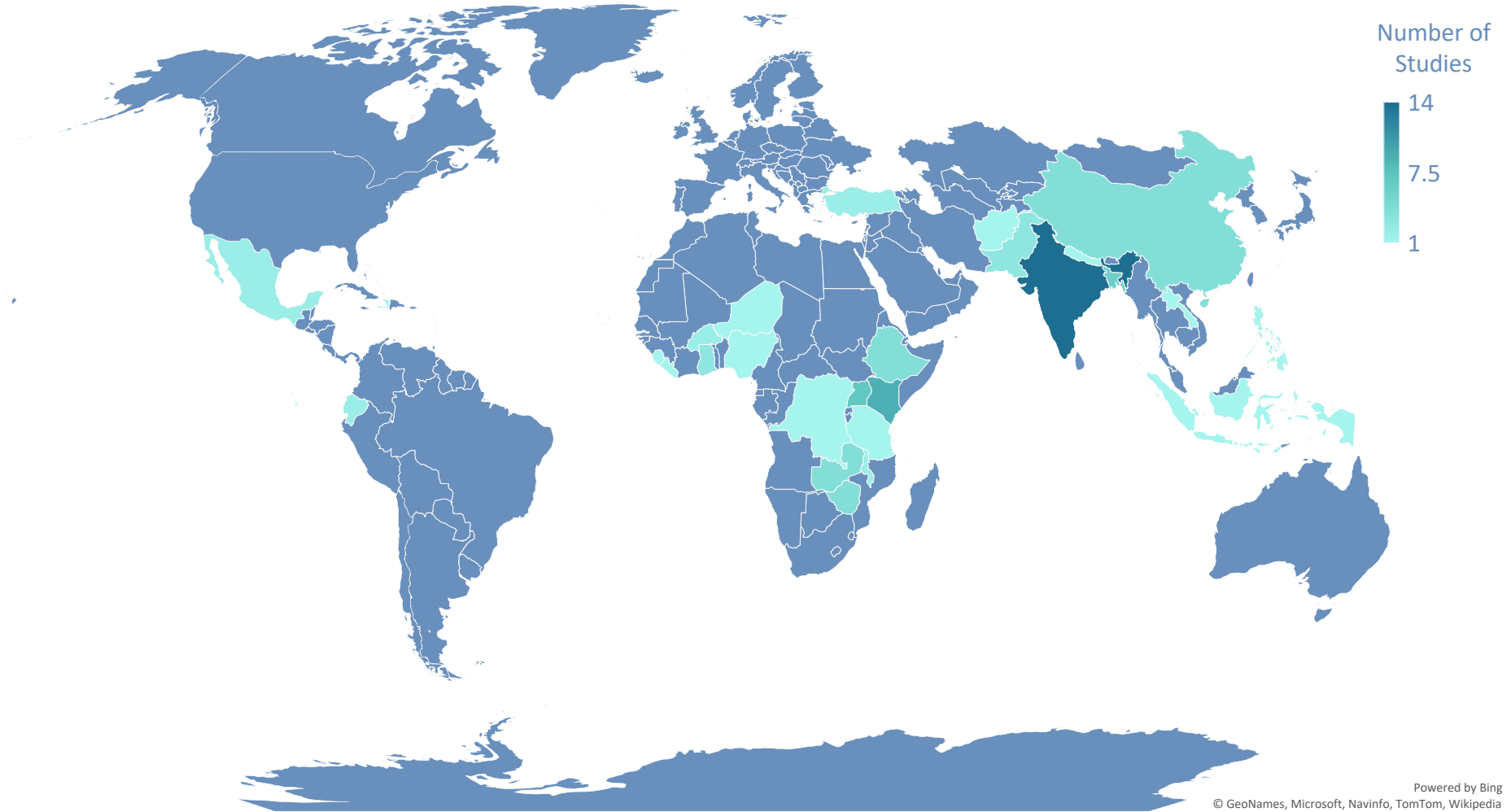
A world map with a light blue background. The landmasses are outlined in a darker blue. Several regions are highlighted in a teal color: Mexico, Central America, South America, Africa, India, and parts of Asia and Europe. The word "Results" is centered over the map in white text.

Results

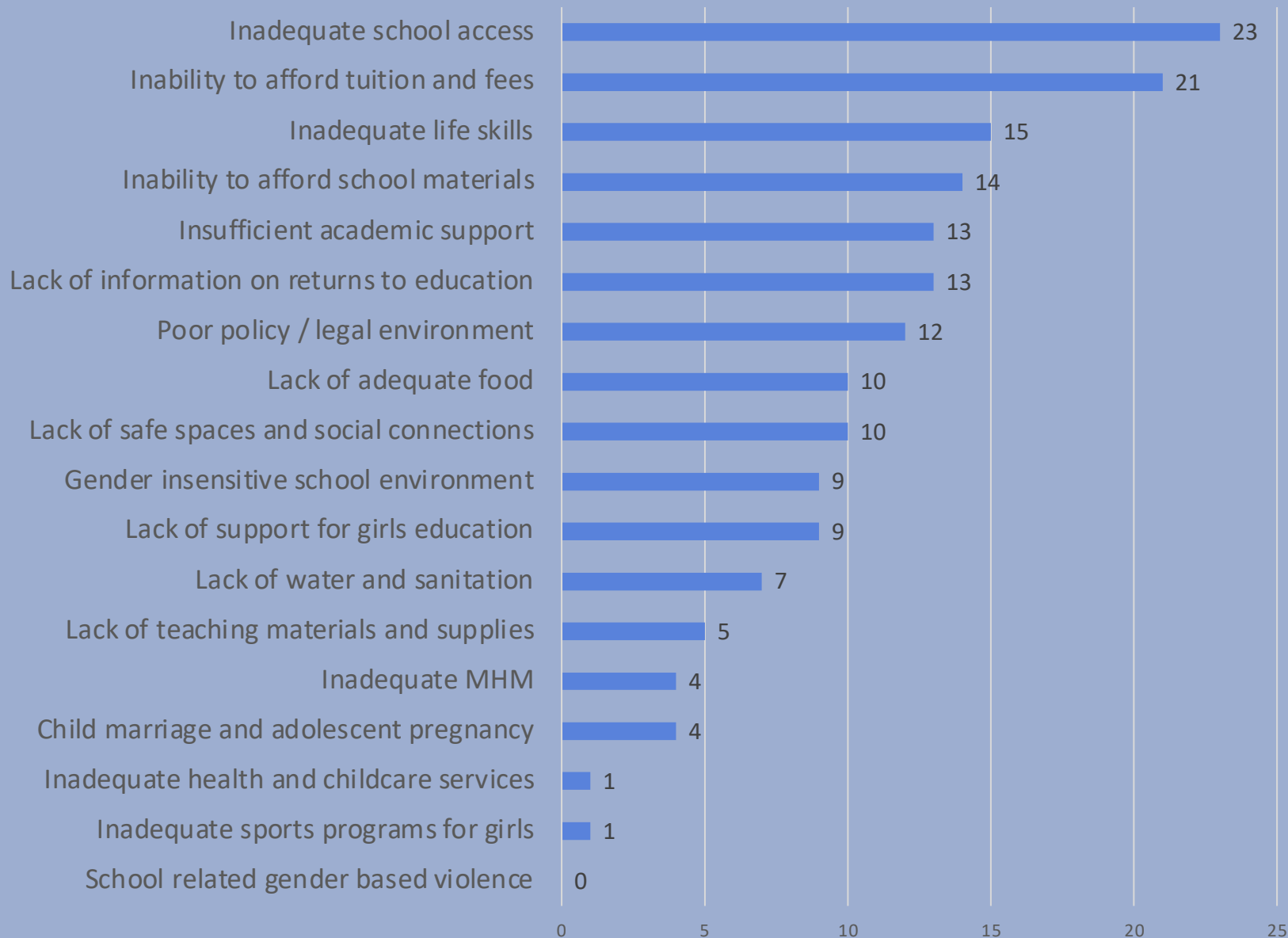
PRISMA Flow Diagram



Studies by Country

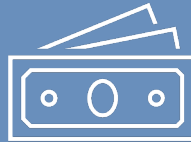


Studies by Barrier



Effective Interventions Exist to Address the Following Barriers:

Inability to afford tuition and fees



Addressing the cost of schooling, e.g., conditional cash transfers, scholarships, elimination of tuition and fees

Lack of adequate food



Providing food in school or as take-home rations

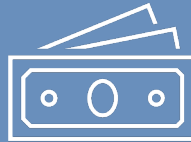
Insufficient academic support



Providing academic support, e.g., tutoring, remedial education, integrating technology into curriculum

Promising Interventions Exist to Address the Following Barriers:

Inability to afford school materials



Addressing the cost of schooling, e.g., provision of uniforms, provision of textbooks

Inadequate school access



Making schools accessible, e.g., school construction, community schools, school transport

Lack of water and sanitation



Providing clean water, constructing/improving toilets at school

More Research is Needed for the Following Barriers Due to Too Few Studies:

Lack of support for girls' education

Lack of teaching materials & supplies

Child marriage and adolescent pregnancy

Inadequate sports programs for girls

School-related gender-based violence

Inadequate health and childcare services

Lack of safe spaces and social connections

Inadequate menstrual hygiene management

More Research is Needed for the Following Barriers Due to Heterogenous Effects:

Lack of information on returns to education/ alternative roles

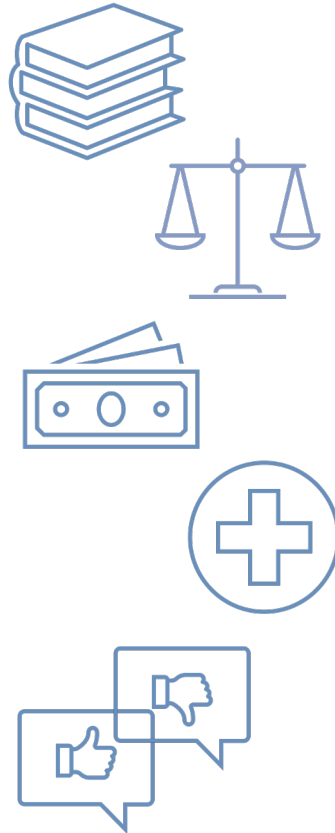
Inadequate life skills

Gender insensitive school environment

Poor policy / legal environment

However...

Education outcomes aren't the only reason to address gender-related barriers to schooling.



How do life skills programs do when we look at a broader range of outcomes?

Life skills and sexuality education: What does a wider lens suggest?

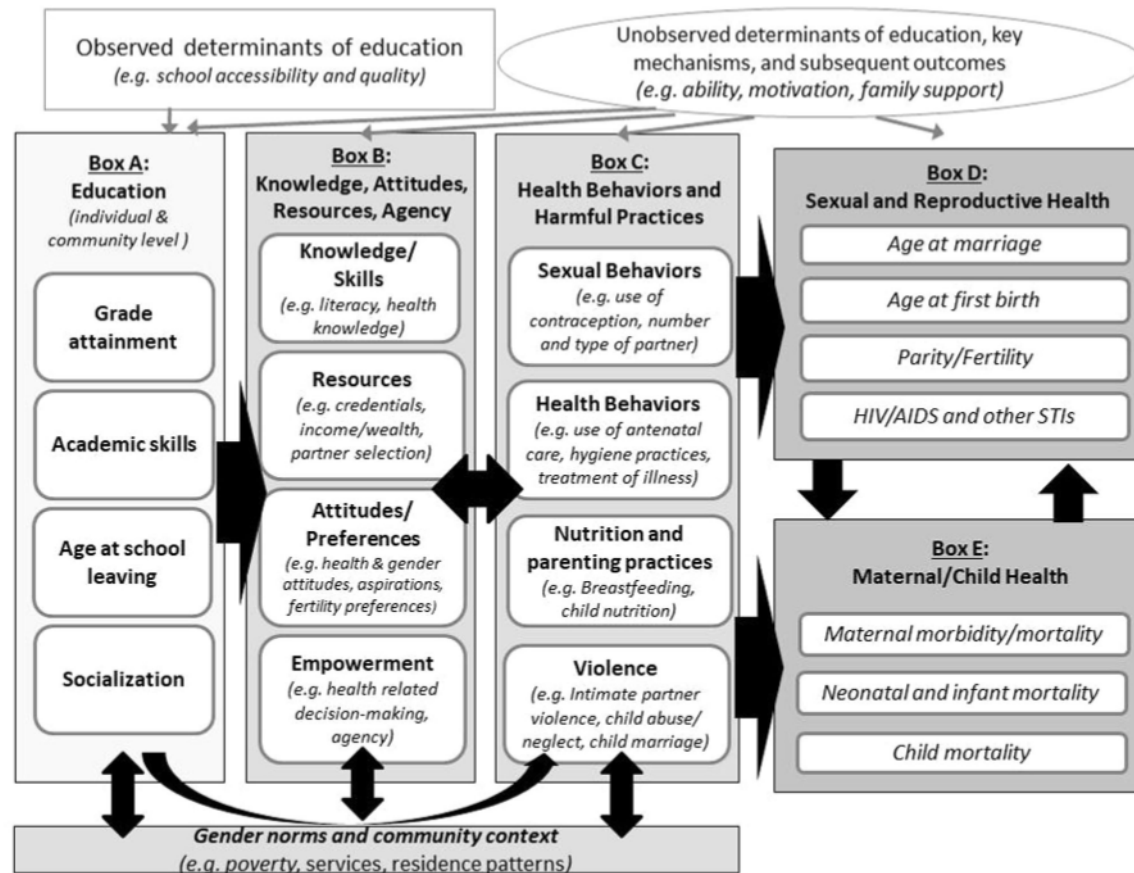
Again, we're confronted with the same challenges:

- Heterogeneity of programs (content, implementation, context)
- Comparison groups vary
- Heterogeneity of outcome measures
- Directness of evidence (multi-component programs)

Life skills and sexuality education: What does a wider lens suggest?

- Mixed but broad potential for:
 - SEL/Transversal/21st Century skills
 - Gender (gender attitudes, child marriage)
 - Sexual and reproductive health/ behavior and outcomes
 - Violence
 - Economic
 - Education
- Content, complementary elements, and how taught matters quite a bit
- Lack of evidence on pathways (direct and indirect)

Underway: Systematic review of causal mechanisms linking education with fertility, HIV, and child mortality



Some next steps / recommendations

- Research that directly measures the effects of life skills education / sexuality education on a broad range of outcomes across sectors
- Measure (and figure out how to best measure) indicators such as agency, and other SEL and 21st century skills
- Research on longer term outcomes is urgently needed
- Research on implementation – such as optimal duration, saturation, grade level, etc. – is another evidence gap



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