



Turkana Schools in Kenya: An Analysis of the Hygiene and Sanitation Management Approach and the Completion Rates for Girls

Christine Nabwire 

School of Education, Kibabii University, Kenya

Sarah Likoko

School of Education, Kibabii University, Kenya

Suggested Citation

Nabwire, C. & Likoko, C. (2024). Turkana Schools in Kenya: An Analysis of the Hygiene and Sanitation Management Approach and the Completion Rates for Girls. *European Journal of Theoretical and Applied Sciences*, 2(2), 686-691. DOI: [10.59324/ejtas.2024.2\(2\).59](https://doi.org/10.59324/ejtas.2024.2(2).59)

Abstract:

The Kenyan government has started implementing measures to improve gender equality in the availability of basic education. Low girls' participation in basic education has been connected to factors originating from the home environment. The majority of females do not finish their eight years of elementary school, as intended by Kenyan curriculum developers. This study looked into the impact of school hygiene and sanitation practices on girls' completion rates in Turkana County. A descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. The study was carried out in a primary public school. There were 14 head teachers, 110 instructors, and 112 girls in the

study's sample. The girls, teachers, and head teachers were chosen by a straightforward random sample technique. Head teachers were interviewed in order to gather data. Data was gathered via focus groups with eight girls in each group (a total of 14 discussion groups), questionnaires given to teachers, and interviews with head teachers. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1989), the study was conducted. The results of the study indicated that improving sanitation and hygiene will raise the percentage of females who graduate from public elementary schools in Turkana County.

Keywords: *Completion, Hygiene, Girl, Sanitation Management.*

Introduction

Attainment of gender equality in education has taken on a prominent position in international development goals more than thirty years ago (McCadden, 2015). The issue of gender equality in education is captured in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Beijing Declaration, and the Education for All Dakar Declaration, all children should have access to the same education, regardless of whether they are males or females (United Nations Scientific

and Cultural Organisation-UNESCO, 2012). Recently, one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda four is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (Vanner, 2019). Even in Kenya, Article 53 (1) of the constitution states that every child irrespective of gender has a right to free and compulsory basic education (Republic of Kenya, 2013). This shows the emphasis of attainment of equality in education across all spectrums of education.



Despite the policies promoting equality in education, UNESCO (2012) report showed that girls fail to complete primary school at a higher rate than boys. Multiple causes for this divergence vary from country to country and even among different locales within the same country. In United States, Hilbert (2020) observed that chronic absenteeism and low completion rate is a rising concern for schools affecting girl children. During this period of absenteeism girls, miss valuable teaching time, which has a negative impact on their ability to achieve academically leading to grade repetition and ultimately dropping out of school permanently. Without a basic education, girls are at a disadvantage in finding meaningful employment (Appollis, 2014). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the primary net enrolment rate in 2012 was 78% (UN, 2014). Throughout the region, girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school during at all grade levels, and less likely than boys to transition from primary to secondary school (McCadden, 2015). In Tanzania, Joyce-Gibbons, Galloway, Mollel, Mgoma, Pima and Deogratias (2018) observed that transition to secondary school is a problem internationally because many girls are not finishing well.

One of the reasons why girl's participation in school was due to internal factors that can push learners out of school early before their programme ends and external factors that can pull learners out of school (Hilbert, 2020). The research noted that one of the strategies that needed to be applied was to ensure mentoring initiatives was well practiced in schools to ensure students are retained until the end of their education cycle. Kinyanjui (2016) noted that mentoring assisted girls to achieve equitable and quality primary education as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 4. The author noted that mentorship initiatives being undertaken in schools tackle some problems, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early and forced marriages, early pregnancies, school violence, managing menstruation, risky sexual behaviour, substance abuse, negative attitudes towards education, and weak peer, school, and family relationships. This research examined

whether schools in Loima Sub County were implementing mentoring initiatives to ensure girls complete their primary education.

Another issue that facing learners' participation in education is safety concerns which are associated with bullying incidents in schools. Unsafe school environments can involve a variety of causes including bullying, sexual harassment, and the use of abusive language and corporal punishment by teachers (Verner, 2019). Mink (2014) indicated that bullying is a common occurrence in schools and it can have many serious consequences to the learners in schools if appropriate strategies are not done. This means that appropriate measures need to be put in place in schools to ensure schools are secure and safe for learning of girls who seem to be vulnerable.

Another issue that may affect participation of girls relates to hygiene and sanitation materials provision. Research across countries such as India, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Bolivia, Kenya and Tanzania has documented the lack of separate toilets as well as insufficient information and guidance about how to manage menstruation at school (Vanner, 2019). In Ghana, Ameade and Majeed (2015) noted that absence of appropriate sanitary materials to absorb menstrual flow does not only affect female's reproductive health but their acquisition of education. Such experiences are often exacerbated by a lack of emotional support; a lack of adequate menstrual materials (pads, cloth, underwear), including emergency menstrual-related supplies in schools; and a lack of private spaces to rest when they are experiencing significant menstrual cramping. In addition, unfortunately, many of these factors lead to disrupted classroom engagement and some absenteeism among girls (Sommer, Kwauk & Fyles, 2018). To address this, government proposed provision of free disposable sanitary pads to assist brilliant but poor school girls remain in school. The research investigated whether this happened in Loima Sub County public primary schools.

Di Marco (2018) observed that while most headline data for enrolment, completion, attendance and learning in Sub-Saharan Africa

and Kenya are encouraging, the high-level statistics mask regional variation and gender disparities. Poorer girls in Nairobi slums and Turkana have lower enrolment and completion rates, as well as lower learning outcomes. Waithira, Kiumi and Ngugi (2015) noted that girls hailing from poor households tend to experience the duo challenges of inadequate supply of personal effect and this makes them to miss coming to school to look for money. Girls affected by lack of appropriate materials tend to withdraw from school prematurely (Kiumi, Kibe, & Nganga, 2013). This situation has the potential to make a girl lose interest in education, a and in most cases, girls tend to be more affected than boys due to the tendency by economically poor parents to attach a low premium on girl child education (Waithira et al., 2018). This means that appropriate support strategies need to be put in place to ensure the needs of girls are met from the school situation and surrounding community.

To address the gender disparity in education right from primary level, the Government of Kenya has initiated strategies to enhance gender parity in access to primary education. These strategies among others include, positive discrimination in favour of girls during admission, creation of girls rescue centers in arid

regions like Turkana, provision of sanitary towels to girls in schools in low-income areas, campaigns against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and implementation of the Return to School Policy for young mothers (Republic of Kenya, 2006, Republic of Kenya, 2005). These are among strategies that the government has done but the efforts towards ensuring all females completing their education remains a significant challenge especially in Turkana County.

Results and Discussion

Effects of Sanitation and Hygiene Management on girls Completion rate in Public Primary Schools

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of sanitation and hygiene management practices on girls' completion rate in public primary schools in Turkana County. The study collected information from questionnaire, interview schedule and document checklist. The teachers were asked to indicate the frequency at which their schools performed various hygiene and sanitation activities aimed at keeping girls in schools and ensuring that they participated in education. The scale used was; Never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4) and always (5). The results are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Teachers Rating of Hygiene and Sanitation Management Measures for Girls in Schools

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	SD
The school has adequate toilets / facilities to ensure girls remain in school	2 (1.9%)	10 (9.3%)	18 (16.8%)	19 (17.8%)	58 (54.2%)	4.1308	1.1166
The school provides adequate clean water for use by girls to make them remain in school		5 (4.7%)	23 (21.5%)	14 (13.1%)	65 (60.7%)	4.2991	.9636
The school makes efforts to provide reusable sanitary pads for girls during menstruation	8 (7.5%)	12 (11.2%)	32 (29.9%)	22 (20.6%)	33 (30.8%)	3.5607	1.2452
There are medications (emergency menstrual supplies) provided for girls during their menstruation period in school	26 (24.3%)	35 (32.7%)	18 (16.8%)	17 (15.9%)	11 (10.3%)	2.5514	1.2976

The schools provides toilet papers for girls	78 (72.9%)	15 (14.0%)	11 (10.3%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.8%)	1.4579	.8932
Private spaces to rest for girls when they experience menstrual cramps	56 (52.3%)	22 (20.6%)	14 (13.1%)	13 (12.1%)	2 (1.9%)	1.9065	1.1454
Teaching girls on the importance of menstrual hygiene	8 (7.5%)	9 (8.4%)	20 (18.7%)	28 (26.2%)	42 (39.3%)	3.8131	1.25240
Average						3.1028	1.1306

Findings of the study show that more than half 58 (54.2%) of teachers agreed that their institutions has adequate toilet/latrine facilities for both boys and girls and this helps to keep them in school. This means that schools management have ensured that their schools have adequate toilets facilities for girls which are separated from the one used by teachers and boys.

Secondly, 65 (60.7%) of teachers said that their schools always provide clean water for use by all people in schools including to be used by girls for their use (bathing and cleaning) to make them remain school. This means that schools management in Turkana County has made efforts to make sure clean water is available in school. The information is corroborated with head teachers' interview where eight of them said that they use water from the borehole while two said that they have been connected with tap water. Nearly all the head teachers (8) agreed that water in their schools was clean and used by all learners to drink and do their washing.

Thirdly, 33 (30.8%) of teachers said that always, their girls are provided with sanitary pads on a regular basis, 22 (20.6%) said that it is often provided to girls, 32 (29.9%) indicted that sometimes their school girls were provided with these resources, 12 (11.2%) said that their girls were rarely provided and 8 (7.5%) indicated that they were never provided with. The above results shows that most schools have made efforts to regularly provide sanitary pads (including reusable ones).

Fourthly, it was clear that 35 (32.7%) of teachers said that rarely are medications provided for girls to help them during their menstruation period while at school and 26 (24.3%) admitted that their schools have never provided such medications. Nevertheless, 8 (168%) said that

medications for girls are sometimes provided, 17 (15.9%) mentioned that they are often provided and 11 (10.3%) said that medications associated with girls menstruation are always provided in their institutions. The result shows that more than half (57.0%) of schools do not provide emergency menstrual medical supplies to girls in their schools. This could be due to the lack of adequate finances by the schools to purchase the drugs as the funds available have been budgeted for. On the provision of toilet papers for girls, majority of teachers 78 (72.9%) said that this was not provided for in their schools. This means that girls in schools have either to purchase toilets papers to use or else use other alternatives in schools when cleaning up themselves. The unavailability of provision of toilet papers could be due to their costs, which the school budget cannot properly cater for.

When asked as to whether the school had set aside private spaces/rooms/areas where girls with menstrual cramps could rest, more than half 56 (52.3%) reported that these spaces were not present in their schools, 22 (20.6%) said that the spaces were rarely provided for girls, 14 (13.1%) of teachers said that these spaces were sometimes provided, 13 (12.1%) indicated that the spaces were often provided and only 2(1.9%) indicated that these spaces were available in their schools. From the statistics, it can be deduced that over 72.9% of schools have not set aside places/areas/rooms for girls to rest during their menstrual period as a result of experiencing cramps. Hence, it seems that some girls could fail to report to schools since they would not feel comfortable sitting in their classes when undergoing menstruation cramps.

Lastly, research findings said that 42 (39.3%) of teachers agreed that girls are taught on the importance of menstrual hygiene on a regular

basis. This means that schools have made efforts to regularly inform girls about menstrual hygiene to make sure that they understand and take necessary actions if they experience periods while in schools and at home. Average statistics shows that over 62.0% of schools in Turkana County (M=3.10, SD=1.13) do provide hygiene and sanitation management measures to keep girls in schools. However, this support was not across the seven items as it has been seen in the interpretation above based on the standard deviation values that are above 1.0. Nevertheless, it can be deduced that efforts have been done to make sure that hygiene and

sanitation issues are addressed in schools to make sure girls are retained and complete their primary schooling.

To determine the effect of sanitation and hygiene management practices on girls' completion, the researcher collected information from interview on the completion rate of girls.

The head teachers from 10 schools were asked to provide data on completion of boys and girls from 2013 to 2020. The study computed average completion rate for boys and girls over the years and results are given in Figure 1.

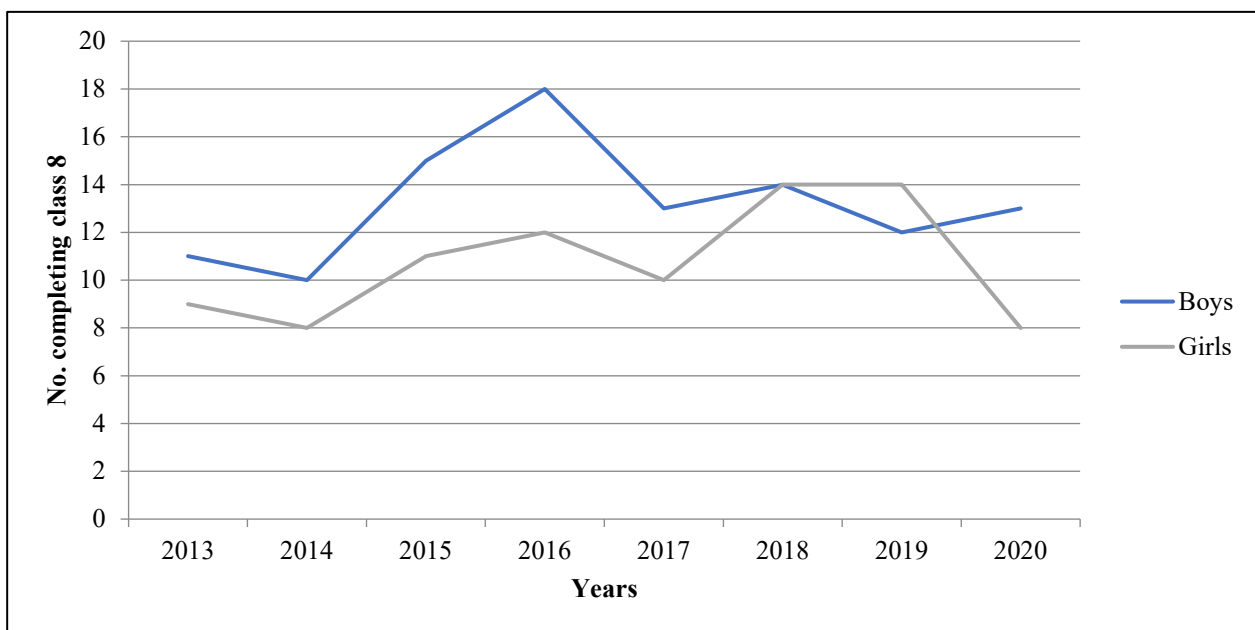


Figure 1. Girls and Boys Enrolment in Turkana County Public Primary Schools

The completion rate for girls from the year 2013 has been below that of boys as can be seen from aggregated data from the public primary schools in Turkana County. Further, the significant reduction in the year 2020 could be because of long closure of schools due to Covid 19 pandemic, which affected girls' resumption of schooling. The findings of the study coincide with Wanjiku and Munyua (2019) who concluded that there were increased differences in completion rate between boys and girls in primary schools as girls' rate was lower than their counterparts were.

Conclusion

The study discovered that practices related to sanitation and hygiene management, such as providing clean water, restrooms for girls, sanitary towels, and soaps, increased the completion rate in public primary schools. This suggests that schools should regularly and progressively implement these practices to ensure that more girls enrolled in grade one complete their primary education without any problems. It was discovered through sanitation and hygiene management that more females learned how important it is to keep themselves

clean both before and after their periods. Due to the schools' effective handling of girls' menstrual and hygiene concerns, these programs guaranteed that all girls attended class every day.

Recommendation

The study recommends that the government should guarantee an adequate supply of water to schools in order to retain females and, consequently, completion.

References

Ameade, E.P., & Majeed, S. (2015). Improving Girl Child Education and Menstrual Hygiene through Free Sanitary Pad Provision to Secondary School Girls-opinion of Female University Students in Ghana. *Journal of Health Education Research & Development*, 2015, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2380-5439.1000143>

Appollis, T. (2014). *Keeping girls in school through better menstrual hygiene management: An outcome evaluation of the always keeping girls in school programme*. M.Phil Dissertation, University of Cape Town.

Birdthistle, I., Dickson, K., Freeman, M. & Javidi, L. (2011). *What is the impact of separate toilets for girls at schools on girls' educational outcomes?* A systematic review of the evidence. MARCH Centre at LSHTM and EPPI-Centre, University of London.

Bradley, H.G. (2014). *Teachers creating safe school environments: Prevention of elementary student-to-student bullying*. MED Thesis, Dominican University of California, San Rafael, CA.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Retrieved from <https://khoerulanwarbk.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/uric-bronfenbrenner-the-ecology-of-human-developbokos-z1.pdf>

Di Marco A. (2018). *Disadvantaged girls in Kenyan schools*. Reading, Berkshire: Education Development Trust.

Hilbert, T.A. (2020). *Mentoring as a pathway to addressing chronic absenteeism in urban high school academies*. PhD Dissertation, Seton Hall University.

Kinyanjui, J.W. (2016). *One solution to several problems: How mentoring is changing girls' education in Kenya*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2016/09/20/one-solutions-to-several-problems-how-mentoring-is-changing-girls-education-in-kenya/>

McCadden, D.T. (2015). *An assessment of the impact of Zambia's school re-entry policy on female educational attainment and adolescent fertility*. Msc. Thesis, Georgetown University.

Republic of Kenya (2001). *Children's Act CAP141*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

Republic of Kenya (2013). *Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

Republic of Kenya (2019). *Schools enrolment Analysis*, Turkana.

UNESCO. (2018). *SDG 4 Data Digest 2018: Data to Nurture Learning*. New York: UNESCO. Retrieved from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/news/launch-sdg-4-data-digest-data-nurture-learning>.

UNESCO. (2012). *World atlas of gender equality of education*. Published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France.

Vanner, C. (2019). Examining Gender Safety in Schools: Teacher Agency and Resistance in Two Primary Schools in Kirinyaga, Kenya. *Education Sciences*, 9(63). <https://doi.org/10.3390/EDUCSCI9010063>

Waithira, J.G., Kiumi, K. & Ngugi, M. (2015). To determine the influence of selected school based factors on girls' participation rate in public day secondary schools in Naivasha Sub-County, Kenya. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management*, 6(7), 528-540. <https://doi.org/10.18535/ijssrm/v6i7.el05>