**MAKERERE UNIVERSITY**

# EXAMINING INCLUSIVE PRIMARY EDUCATION AND THE GIRLS' RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN MASINYA SUB-COUNTY BUSIA DISTRICT

**BY**

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# DECLARATION

I, **Patricia Whitney Ajambo**, do hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been previously submitted as an academic work for any award in any university or institution of learning.

Signature: ..................................

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Date: ........... 05|01|2023

# APPROVAL

This dissertation is submitted with my approval as a university Supervisor.

Signature: ...Kasozi................

**Dr. Ferdinand. M. Kasozi**

Date: 05th January 2023

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the rural girl child who struggles to attain an education amidst challenging circumstances, to my husband and our children Jordana, Jordan, Jethro, and Johanna.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHPR    The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

ACRWC   The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

AGP       Adolescent Girls Program

EMIS      Education Management Information System

EPRC      Education Policy Review Commission

FGDs      Focus Group Discussions

GBV       Gender Based Violence

GUIU      Girl Up Initiative Uganda

ICESCR    The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

IDIs       In-Depth Interviews

IOB        Policy and Operations Evaluation Department

KIIs       Key Informant Interviews

MDGs      Millennium Development Goals

MoES      Ministry of Education and Sports

NDP       National Development Plan

NSGE      National Strategy for Education of Girls

PTA        Parents Teachers Association

SDGs      Sustainable Development Goals

SEM       Social-Ecological Model

SRH       Sexual and Reproductive Health

SWT       Senior Woman Teacher

UPE       Universal Primary Education

**ABSTRACT**

This study was set to examine inclusive primary education and the right to education of the girl child in Masinya Sub County and why gender inequalities in primary education completion persist. The study was guided by three objectives that included: to establish the different societal perceptions on the right to education of the girl child and how they affect the right to education of girls in Masinya Sub County; to examine challenges that lead to the abuse of the right to girl child education in Masinya Sub County and establish how schools, communities and the government have responded to these challenges; and to assess the impact of Girl Up Initiative Uganda (GUIU) in its efforts to provide an environment where the right to education of the girl child has been promoted. The study employed an explanatory research design with a qualitative research approach. The study used a sample of 141 participants who were selected using random, snowball and purposive sampling techniques. The study employed Key Informant Interviews, In-Depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions backed up by Documentary review to collect data. Collected data was analysed thematically. Key findings revealed that the social-cultural norms including patriarchal systems, bride wealth, early marriages, perceived girl's duties, and the perceived obligation of government to be the sole provider of education negatively affected the education of girls. The study also established other challenges surrounding the girls' right to education to include poverty, sexual maturation and adolescence, teenage pregnancies, gender-based violence, lack of adequately contextualized government support and the gender-biased Uganda primary education curriculum. Some of the responses to the challenges include increasing the number of female teachers, institutionalizing the positions of Senior Woman Teachers (SWTs), enactment of sexual and gender-based violence by-law, the establishment of Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) and institutionalizing guidance and counselling in schools. The study recommends that the government and the line agency create a gender-sensitive educational context curriculum that will integrate the topics of sexual and reproductive health, family planning and menstrual health early, equipping and facilitating the office of SWT to function effectively, recruiting more female teachers to teach upper primary, improvement in the enforcement of laws and policies, and sensitizing the communities about the dangers of some cultural practices. Further research should focus on a comparative study to establish if these findings represent the private primary schools, school environment practices and how they affect the right to education and girl education policies in Uganda and to what extent have they caused change.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

**1.0 Introduction to the study**

Women and girls are over-represented in global rates of illiteracy. For a developing country like Uganda, the so-called ‗gender gap' in rates of illiteracy has adverse consequences both for the empowerment of women and for societal development. Inadequate education for girls and women reinforces the sexual division of labour. The low payment and undervalued work increase women's economic dependency making them vulnerable to gender-based violence, exploitation and to being trafficked for sex or labour. It further lessens women's ability to participate in public offices, impacts upon their health and the health of their families.

This study examines inclusive primary education in light of the right to education of the girl child in Masinya Sub County. The study also examines  why gender inequalities persist despite the interventions by the government and other stakeholders to bring about equality in equality. The study also, as a practical example, assesses the impact of Girl Up Initiative Uganda (GUIU) in its efforts to provide an environment for the girl child education. In this first chapter, I discuss the background, problem statement, purpose, objectives, research questions, theoretical framework, significance and justification, scope, and definition of key terms.

**1.1 Background to the study**

**1.1.1 Women and the evolution of the right to education in the medieval period (before 1500)**

Although education in ancient history was a privilege of men, there have always been some educated women. In ancient civilizations generally, upper-class women were well educated while middle-class women often had some education. But poor girls like poor boys had limited or no access to education. In the  ancient and world's oldest civilization of Sumer (now Iraq), founded in the Mesopotamia region of the Fertile Crescent situated between the Tigris and Euphrates which arose in about 3,500 BC, some of the  women had learned to write, and some were scribes. In Ancient Egypt, some of the girls were taught to read and write. Upper-class women were often well educated. There were some women doctors in

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Ancient Egypt as was the case with Merit Ptah a famous woman doctor who lived around 2700 BC. The Ancient Egyptians had a goddess of reading, writing, and arithmetic named Seshat. In Ancient Greece too, some of the girls were taught to read and write. The women from the wealthy families are often well educated. In ancient Rome, many girls were taught to read and write at school. Their upper-class women were also educated although these were always few compared to the men

The women's education in the Middle Ages and renaissance did not significantly differ from its manifestation in ancient times. In Europe, before the enlightenment of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, education was the responsibility of parents and the church. Although during this period, European countries like England and France had established grammar schools, girls were not allowed in these schools. Girls from wealthy families were educated at home. However, in some religious denominations, like the Catholics, some women for instance nuns were often highly educated from convents. Girls from the well-off families were taught reading, writing and arithmetic but more significant time was allocated to practical lessons like learning music and dancing and needlework. Additionally, daughters of merchants were often taught to run their fathers' businesses.

### 1.1.2 Women and the evolution of the right to education in the early modern period (1500-1900)

In the wake of the seventeenth century, most countries in Europe established more schools. This significantly contributed to girl education as more girls got accepted into schools. In England and Italy for instance, many schools both day and boarding were established with some of them being specifically for girls. These were mostly private schools and girls from well-off families sent to boarding schools. It was not until the early 19th century, in Britain, that the churches provided a rudimentary education for many poor children. In 1811, the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor was founded by the Church of England to support schools.

Furthermore, significant state involvement in education emerged with the French and American revolutions at the end of the 18$^{th}$ century. The immediate impact of these revolutions was the establishment of education as a public function. It was thought that the new states that assumed a more active role in the sphere of education, could help to make

education available and accessible to all. Since education had thus far been primarily available to the upper social classes, public education was perceived as a means of realising the egalitarian ideals underlining both revolutions. This had an impact on the rest of the world, in Europe especially in Britain whereby in the mid-19th century, the state had begun to provide schooling and eventually school was made compulsory for 5 to 10-year-olds. However, the school was not free, and no special focus was given to the girl children. At the end of the 19th century, most countries in Europe and North America had abolished school fees and children were not required to go to school until they were mature enough. Different countries had developed a significant interest in girl child education and legislations had been born with liberal concepts of human rights taking center stage in education. It was the States' obligation to ensure that parents complied with this duty, and many States enacted legislation making school attendance compulsory.

### 1.1.3 Women and the evolution of the right to education in the contemporary era (1900 to present)

The major turning point in human rights history was provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. After the adoption of the global human rights charter in 1948, human rights took the precedence of being universal and applying to the entire human race equally. By so doing, these rights were known to apply to all children (boys and girls), all women and all men worldwide in all aspects of life including education. Furthermore, the establishments and provision by the UDHR also went ahead to define human rights as being inalienable and indivisible whereby the former meant that these rights are unchallengeable, one cannot lose these rights anymore as they are a definite of our humanity and the latter being a confirmation that a human right cannot be taken away on account of it being less important or non-essential.

The need to further protect and enhance the education and general wellbeing of seemingly vulnerable groups such as women and children also saw the establishment of treaties for instance Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. Drawing from Articles 2 and 3 of CEDAW for instance, it challenges any discrimination that is geared towards the person of a woman and further challenges state parties to enact policy to redress such discrimination; and taking all appropriate measures including political, social, economic,

and cultural to ensure the full development of women. The CRC on the other hand asserting its mandate on the need for every child to enjoy their childhood argues for the best interests of the child to be the primary objective in all matters regarding children in Article 2. Furthermore, Article 28 specifically guarantees every child the right to an education and in so doing, it declares that primary education must be compulsory and free for all children and this responsibility must be implemented by sitting governments (UNICEF, 2007).

In Africa, there was no formal education not until the arrival of missionaries towards the end of the 20th century. Not much was achieved in terms of access, quality, and equality. The Phelps Stokes Fund, an American foundation, convened several commissions in the 1920s to study the educational conditions and needs of Africans and made recommendations for improving access and quality (Fourie, 2013). These recommendations were taken up especially after the Second World War, as European colonizers started to realize that they had to fundamentally change the principles and legitimization of colonial governance to maintain power. But the time African countries were attaining their independence, some colonialists for instance the British had already taken steps to encourage girls to take on education.

Independence from colonial rulers occurred mostly in the 1950s and 1960s. Many African nations maintaining their membership with the United Nations (UN) and wanting to make progress with better educational prospects to African citizens. In an effort to promote gender equality in education, some new political rulers invested in formal education, building new schools and providing more and better-qualified teachers. This led to a revolution in African education, as literacy rates increased at massive rates (Clemens, 2004). However, boys continued to dominate in numbers and not much was done in legislation to attract or force girls into education until the last two decades of the 19th century (Fourie, 2013).

At the start of the new century, significant progress was achieved towards gender equality and girls' empowerment in education under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) including the target of access to primary education between girls and boys. Legislations were invoked to make some policies to help states reach some of the targets. This global effort to enable all the world's children to receive quality primary education has made impressive gains since 2000. The UN (2015) report highlights notable advances in primary school net enrolment rates, decreases in the number of out-of-school students, rises in literacy rates for children and adults and a growing balance – and, in many countries and regions parity

between girls and boys who go to and complete primary school. Despite enormous progress during the 15 years, the UN (2015) report concludes, ‒achieving universal primary education will require renewed attention in the post-2015 era, just as the global community seeks to extend the scope to universal secondary education. Interventions will need to be tailored to the needs of specific groups of children, particularly girls. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the end of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs stressed to member States the need to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to education for the vulnerable including girls and children with disabilities. Many African countries have had their legislation reflect on deliberate efforts to ensure the realisation of these commitments.

Despite these global, continental, and state efforts, UNICEF (2020) estimates, that over 129 million girls worldwide are out of school, including 32 million of primary school age going, and 97 million of secondary school age (UNICEF, 2020). Globally, primary school enrolment rates are getting closer to equal for girls and boys (90% male, 89% female). But while enrolment rates are similar, two-thirds of all countries have reached gender parity in primary school enrolment – completion rates for girls are lower in low-income countries where 63% of female primary school students complete primary school, compared to 67% of male primary school students. Considering school attendance in Africa, even though there has been a radical increase in girls‘ educational participation in most low-income countries since the millennium, gender inequality is still widely extended (UN, 2020). UNESCO (2019) states that 16.6 million girls and only 11.8 million are out-of-school in Sub-Saharan Africa. The reasons for this might be due to poverty, religion, cultural norms, social exclusion, geographic inaccessibility, domestic workload, security, and ethnicity, living in rural or slum residences, conflicts, poor quality of education or lack of basic facilities. Often these barriers are related to gender which causes bigger disadvantages in attending education (Rutaremwa and Bemanzi, 2019; UN, 2020).


## 1.2 Overview of the Education System in Uganda
### 1.2.1 The history of Uganda's Education
The formal education system in Uganda dates way back to the coming of missionaries and, during the colonial era, when Uganda became a British protectorate. The Christian missionaries are known to have played a leading role in the development of learning in

Uganda and to date, most of the prominent schools were established by them. The Ugandan education system went from being one of the best to one of the worst in the period 1971 to 1985 and this was largely influenced by political and economic instability that was characterised by coups. As such, the schooling calendar was constantly interrupted and a large human resource within the education sector opted for a relatively peaceful working environment in places such as Kenya, Zambia, and Tanzania (IOB, 2008).

In the aftermath of this instability, the implementation of educational reforms to try and revamp the education system started in the last half of the 1980s with the establishment of educational commissions for instance the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC). One of the recommendations of this EPRC was the universalization of primary education. The government later in 1996 appointed a committee to review and identify the EPRC recommendations suitable for implementation (MoES, 1999). Additionally, the 1992 Government of Uganda White paper had advanced some educational reforms. For instance, it suggested that the entire UPE cycle should have been achieved by the year 2003 (MoES, 2004). Furthermore, the Education Management Information System (EMIS) was introduced and adopted in 2004, to improve the management and planning procedures of the Ugandan education system (MoES, 2005a).

Almost a decade later, Universal Secondary Education (USE) was introduced to majorly cater for the children that had completed the primary cycle through UPE (Stasavage, 2005). Both the UPE and USE education cycle continue to grapple with limited funding despite the existence of support such as the UPE capitation grant. The inability of the government to have these two educational cycles meet a definite standard to quality education in Uganda has seen the private sector have an upper hand in running the education system in the country. The liberalisation of education in Uganda has come with a cost that has made private education institutions the preferred choices as opposed to the now low rated government-aided schools. This however has come with a biting cost as private education institutions are charging exorbitant prices which has an implication on the cost and affordability of education in the country. In other words, the liberalised education system has created a class system within the Ugandan society where most urban people and a few well-off rural people have opted for the private school citing low-quality education in government-run schools. This, therefore, means that majority of the poor and vulnerable groups like girls who are in the rural and peripheral parts of Uganda are left with no choice but to depend on the low-quality

education provided by the government.

**1.2.2 The place of the girl within the Ugandan education system**

The education story of Uganda is a relatively good one as indicated by several pieces of literature. Besides the adoption of international and universal provisions, Uganda has also gone ahead to domesticate some of the provisions into its local laws allowing for a more contextual understanding in the implementation of laws regarding the education of the girl child (Atekyereza, 2001). For that matter, the place of the girl child within the education system has continuously evolved in tandem with the policies and laws to that effect. It should be noted that, historically, the place of the girl child was defined and confined to the domestic sphere where they were assigned roles by virtue of gender and eventually married off as they came of age. With time, there was change although not significantly with the enrolment of girls into school but confined to specific professionals such as secretarial work, clerkship, and nursing. This was because these professionals were constructed as simple and not tasking to undertake and the women perceived as the weaker gender would easily excel in such rather easier professions.

Uganda continued to register gains in girl education through increased enrolment of girls with the introduction of Universal Primary Education (1997) and Universal Secondary Education (2007). Approaches to improve school environments by encouraging teachers to practice positive discipline, promotion of gender-responsive methods of teaching and adolescent-friendly environments and participation are prioritized to reduce violence in schools, empower children and adolescents as well as equip them with life skills (UNICEF, 2020; Stasavage, 2005). More girls started opting for previously men biased professions like medicine, engineering and law, and research has revealed that some women have even performed far much better than their male counterparts (Atekyereza, 2001). Also, to ascertain the place of the girl child in the education system, the government introduced affirmative action for girls entering higher institutions of learning. The need for affirmative action to redress inequalities brought about by gender, historical or cultural biases is provided for in Article (32) of the Constitution of Uganda. For instance, the awarding of every girl entering a public institution of learning an additional 1.5 points. It is argued that this educational reform at higher learning institutions was aimed at checking dropout levels at the lower levels and encouraging completion of education by the girls. Although this received a lot of criticism especially from the male students who argued that this was unfair competition, the Ministry

of Education (MoES, 2005a) reported an increased completion rate for girls at higher institutions of learning.

With the earlier introduction of free education under UPE and later USE, the government of Uganda had got on the right way to check illiteracy more so among its female population (Stasavage, 2005). Increased enrolment was however not supported by the weak retention and completion gaps that saw huge dropouts not only for girls but even boys. Faced with the challenge of supporting these two education cycles, the school capitation grant especially for UPE has been inadequate right from its inception and this partly explained why most schools had to reintroduce some costs such as meal costs which fees have caused a lot of controversy in an education system thought to be entirely free.

Although the gender gap has become smaller, serious issues are holding back the progress of the development of girls' education nationally. Girls' education continues to vary from region to region which some regions and areas (especially rural ones) chronically lagging (MoES (2018). The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) reported that more than 700,000 girls in Uganda between the ages of six to 12 have never attended school. In fact, around half of girls between the ages of 15 to 24 are illiterate and four in five girls do not attend high school (UNGEI, 2018). These continued to define and redefine the place of the girl child within the education system in Uganda. It was therefore important for this research to try and understand how the concept of inclusive primary education is constructed within Masinya Sub County, examine the challenges of the right to girl child education and understand the extent to which these challenges have been responded to.

### 1.2.3 Overview of education of Masinya in Busia district

UNICEF notes that as of 2018, 80–90% of children in Busia participated in primary education. Unfortunately, by end of primary school that number drops by 16–18% of children. Not only is there a significant drop-off of students attending school, the problem is worse among the girls who face a web of issues including: lack of food, hygiene, resources, and support. Education of girls in Busia is particularly complicated because it involves various groups holding different perspectives. Although, the UPE continues to provide free tuition for students on Masinya Sub County, it now requires students to pay for all other school supplies, exam fees, and uniforms, among others. The median annual income for

Busia people is only $520–640. Most parents are unable to pay for these additional costs causing many students to drop out of school. In the early 2010s, study by UNICEF established that in a class of 150 girls in Masinya Sub County, only 8 completed primary and proceeded to secondary school. High dropout rates were established to have been worsened by an insufficiency of parental support that was exacerbated by perceptions held by the community.


## 1.3 Problem statement

Uganda adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) in 2015 whose goal in education was to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to education for all, with girls at the centre (UN, 2020). This comes after fifteen years of implementing the MDGs which targeted 2015, to have children everywhere, boys and girls alike, to be completing a full course of primary schooling. In response to the MDGs of 2000, the government had drawn the National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE) (2000 – 2013) and later revised (2013 – 2019) to promote girls' education and create gender equity and equality in the education system. In the NSGE, the government regarded education for girls as a basic human right that should be interpreted as such by all stakeholders and duty bearers. The earlier education reforms such as the 1992 Education White Paper had led to the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1996 which provided free primary education to all and the 2008 Education Act made primary education compulsory and parents are obliged to send their children to school.

Despite these interventions, individuals, as well as communities, continue to violate the right to Education more so based on gender biases. The girl child is the most affected and such biases have continued to affect the enrolment, retention, and enjoyment of education specifically for an underprivileged rural girl child. For instance, UNESCO (2018) showed that Uganda had the highest school drop-out rate for female students in the East Africa region. Uganda has a very low primary survival rate of 33%, survival rate being the number of children starting together in primary one, progressing through the cycle with their peers still being together when finishing the primary cycle in primary seven. The primary survival rate in Kenya is 84%, in Tanzania 78% and Rwanda 81% (UNESCO, 2018). Also, the review of MDGs after 2015 show that the intended education goal fell short in Uganda.

This gap between the aspirations of the government and implementation of the obligation to promote the right to education of the girl child provided a basis for this study to probe the society perceptions to the right to education and the challenges surrounding the right to girl child education in Masinya Sub County.

**1.4 Objectives of the study**

**1.4.1 General objective of the study**

The study examined inclusive primary education in light of the right to education of the girl child in Masinya Sub County and why gender inequalities persist despite deliberate efforts to eradicate them.

**1.4.2 Specific objectives of the study**

1.  To establish the different societal perceptions on the right to education of the girl child and how they affect the right to education of girls in Masinya Sub County.
2.  To examine challenges that lead to the abuse of the right to girl child education in Masinya Sub County and establish how schools, communities and the government have responded to these challenges.
3.  To assess the impact of Girl Up Initiative Uganda (GUIU) in its efforts to provide an environment where the right to education of the girl child has been promoted.

**1.4.3 Research Questions**

1.  What are the different societal perceptions on the right to education of the girl child and how do they affect the education of girls in Masinya Sub County?
2.  What are the challenges that lead to the abuse of the right to girl child education in Masinya Sub County and how have schools, communities and the government responded to these challenges?
3.  What is the impact of Girl Up Initiative Uganda (GUIU) in its efforts to provide an environment where the right to education of the girl child has been promoted?

**1.5 Scope of the study**

**1.5.1 Content scope**

The study examined different societal perceptions on the right to education of the girl child in Masinya Sub County and why gender inequalities in primary education persist despite deliberate efforts to eradicate them. It specifically investigated the societal perceptions on the girls' right to education, the abuse surrounding the right to girl child education and how schools, communities and the government were responding to these challenges. The study identified and assessed the impact created by GUIU in its effort to create an environment where the right to education of the girl child has been respected.

**1.5.2 Geographical scope**

The study was conducted in the Eastern border district of Busia. Busia has got 10 sub-counties, 58 parishes and 534 villages (Busia District Local Government, 2020). The district has mainly two ethnic groups namely, Samia and Bagwe although other people like Iteso, Basoga and Baganda among others reside in the urban centres of the border town. The study was limited to Masinya Sub County and covered selected three parishes of the sub-county namely Butote, Busiho and Masinya. This area was chosen for this research given the fact that there is a great number of girls who drop out of primary schools and get married, relocate to Busia town to engage in border trade (*Magendo*) or relocate to urban centres to work as housemaids which compromise the enjoyment of the right to education of the girls.

**1.5.3 Time scope**

The study was limited to a time frame of 2010-2019. This period was chosen because it presents a lengthy and sufficient time since the introduction of educational reforms such as UPE, designing and adoption of the National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE) and the adoption of MDGs at the start of the new century. It was anticipated that the adoption of the National Development Plans (NDPs) I and II as well as SDGs during this period (2010-2019) would strengthen the implementation of the right to education and the right would be enjoyed equally by both boys and girls.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study.

Education is crucial for building human empowerment as an end and as a means to deliver economic progress. This study gave a first-hand account of perceptions surrounding the right to an education of the girl child. The study provides data and information on the education of girls and the challenges they face. It provides data on perceptions to the right to education of the girl child, challenges surrounding the abuse of these rights and the extent to which the schools, communities and the government have responded to these challenges.

To the policymakers, these perceptions from community, family, and the girls themselves availed in-depth insights on the issues that affect the rights of girls to education and the efforts the community is taking to try and promote the right. Such insights will be critical in informing key policy reforms in improving and ensuring that girls are not only enrolled at school but also stay, complete, and enjoy their full entitlement within the right to education as provided for within the different statutory provisions in Uganda and also within the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The study is beneficial to researchers, who intend to conduct further research in the field of education especially regarding the girl child. It generates gaps that can be based on for the researchers to investigate more girl-child education-related topics.

## 1.7 Justification of the study

Education is a fundamental tenet of any nation's capital investment. This defines the reason why Article 26 of the UDHR links education to the importance of developing the whole person and the ability to participate effectively in a free society (Bösl & Diescho, 2009). The rights of women and girls are a current concern both in local communities and internationally; and their right to education, in particular, is widely recognized in international and regional human rights instruments as well as some special instruments such as the World Declaration on Education for All.

Over 13% of female youth in Uganda do not access primary school, mainly because of decisions made by their guardians, parents, or relatives (EPDC, 2014). The general perceptions of the community shape the attitudes of parents, and these are crucial in the

decision-making on school attendance for the children (Sarker et.al. 2017). Also, the fact remains that girls encounter many problems like unplanned or unwanted pregnancies, early marriages, gender attitudes, household chores and responsibilities that restrict the pursuance of their education.

Considering the empowered women principle, education increases the opportunities of obtaining a well-paid job, which again has several advantages including social security and old age security. However, in some cultures in Uganda, girls are denied access to education. Despite Uganda having progressive laws and policies that bring free primary education to all children, gender inequalities in primary education persist. Masinya Sub County in Busia district where this study is conducted presents one of the highest incidences of the problem in the country (MoES, 2018). While an abundance of literature on children's education and gender equality on the continental and national levels are commonly available, research documentation is scarce on this problem at local levels to understand the specific and contextual picture. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine different societal perceptions to the right to education of the girl child in Masinya Sub County and by so doing, it offered possible solutions that can be used to enhance the right of girls to an education, and this could possibly see an increment in enrolment, retention, and completion of school of more girl children not only in Masinya Sub County. More so, the same concepts can be used in other parts of Uganda and globally to promote the right to education of the girl child.

## 1.8 Theoretical perspective
Two key theories were examined in light of this study.

## 1.8.1 Distributive Justice Theory
The Distributive Justice theory by John Rawls argues that for fairness, justice and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens, states need to step in to regulate institutions and give a practical approach to the law. Otherwise, the vulnerable in society will be forgotten in the basic provisions (Rawls, 1971). The benefits and burdens include education, shelter, health care, economic wealth, political power, and work obligations that every state should by use of the law examine through the lens of justice. Unequal distribution can only be entertained, if it will benefit the least advantaged in society like the girls in poor rural communities. Arguably

to achieve accessibility to social, economic, and cultural rights, states should employ positive and deliberate interventions such as affirmative action.

Affirmative action justifies positive discrimination of lifting the disadvantaged in society and placing them in a position where they can compete with the advantaged in society. The affirmative action originates from libertarians who believe that the function of the state is to redistribute resources and avoid the situation where the less fortunate remain disadvantaged such as the girl child from poor rural communities. Distributive justice theory is based on utilitarianism philosophy that takes into consideration three patterns; need identification, equality and utility when determining a situation (Sandel, 1998). Government ought to come up with interventions that will ensure equal access to rights by distribution of resources to protect the least advantaged, and hence maximize life achievement and happiness for the greatest number in society. The philosophy supports the right to education for the girl child in poor communities since it argues that no member of society should live in deprivation.

The question is, can the facilitation by the state to the right to education be fulfilled when education does not happen in a vacuum? That brings us to the need for another theory to fill in that gap and in this case, the social-ecological Model comes in.


### 1.8.2 The social-ecological Model

The study also adopted the social-ecological model (SEM) that details the interplay of variables in the education sector. To prevent and address adverse education outcomes, a multilevel approach is key. Shams, Garmaroudi, Nedjat, & Yekaninejad (2018) argue that this model considers the complex interplay between individual relationships, community, and societal factors, [and] allows for the organisation of the range of factors that put equal access to education at risk.

A key assumption of such ecological models is that in addition to individual characteristics, social and physical environments impact education, and both environments are dynamic and complex. Stokols (1992) notes that another key assumption is that complex relationships, organizational, and community systems influence one another. However, to Glanz, Rimer and Viswanath (2015), SEM is itself not a theory, nor does it describe the variables of processes at each level expected to be the most influential on behaviour. SEM is a framework and allows us to organize a comprehensive model of the factors influencing education within

a population to thoughtfully inform interventions (Glanz, et al., 2015). SEM is also used as an interpretive framework.

The SEM model posits that students exist and interact within a complex ecological system, consisting of three interrelated systems: microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem includes settings in which the student participates directly (e.g., home, school, peers). The mesosystem interprets relationships between microsystems, which indirectly influence students (e.g., parental involvement in education) (Shams, et al., 2018). SEM aids us in conceptualizing and understanding the individual, interpersonal, organizational, and community factors that impact education. This system is composed of socially organised subsystems that may affect the development of a variety of students. Each subsystem depends on the contextual nature of the student's life, offering a growing diversity of options (Shams, et al., 2018). Within and between each subsystem, are bidirectional influences.

**Table 1. 1Adapted Socio-ecological Model (SEM)**

| Individual/Family | Interpersonal | Organisational | Community |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Age<br>• Family income<br>• Knowledge about the education system in Uganda.<br>• Personal beliefs about education<br>• Family education history<br>• Family status | • Communication with education providers (teachers, headteachers)<br>• Role loss and interpersonal relationships<br>• Changes to social networks<br>• Violence against girls & traumatization<br>• Time spent within schools | • Relationships between education sector stakeholders<br>• Links for interpretation and interpersonal services/relationships<br>• Logistics of navigating systems (menstrual environment & care, fees, meals, transportation) | • Cultural values and norms<br>• Relationships and communication between education sector stakeholders<br>• Education policy implementation |

*Source: Conceptualized as informed by* Shams, et al., (2018*) and* Bronfenbrenner, (2005)

The SEM includes the following subsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005): (1) Individual refers here to the students; Microsystem refers to the layer closest to the student. This subsystem contains the structures within which the student has direct contact with his/her immediate surroundings, such as family; (2) Mesosystem (Interpersonal) provides the relationship

between the sub-systems of the student's world. For example, in this study, the relationship between the student's (girl) teachers and parents; (3) Exosystem (Organizational) defines the larger social system (e.g., school). The structures in this layer impact the student's development by interacting with some structure in his/her microsystem; (4) Macrosystem (Community) is composed of cultural values, norms, and laws, which in this study depend on sectors and districts; and (6) Public policy, which comprises policy and laws at local and national levels, referring in this study to educational systems that may have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other layers.

Based on the SEM model, the study investigated the relationships between independent variables in the micro-subsystem such as family socioeconomic factors (external school factors), in the exo-subsystem such as internal school factors (including school violence against girls and classroom environment factors), and girls' right to education (dependent variable).

## 1.9 Definition of Key Terms

**Rights:** This study conceptualized rights as legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement; that is, rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people, according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory.

**Girl** as a female child in the period of development made up of infancy, childhood, and adolescence stages where the Ugandan law stipulates it stops at the age of 18 years before which a girl should be totally under adult (parental or guardian) care. Offorma (2009) states that a girl during this period is always malleable, defenseless, and very dependent on the significant others on whom she models her behaviour through observation, repetition, and imitation; the period during which her physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional developments start and progress to gets to the peak at the young adult stage.

**Primary education** in this study adopted the MoES definition which refers to the first stage of formal education, coming after preschool and before secondary education and is composed of seven classes (grades). The official primary starting age quoted by MoES is 6

years but unlike other countries (especially European and North America) there is no ending age.  A child will complete primary education only when he/she successfully passes the end of primary examinations (Primary Leaving Examinations).

**Inclusive education** in this study adopted part of the MoES definition which refers to an education where all students, regardless of their gender are placed in appropriate general education classes that are in their neighbourhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions, and supports that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum.

**Right to education** definition was informed by the Education act of 2008 which stipulates that education is a fundamental human right and every person is entitled to quality education without discrimination, which means a compulsory free primary school education for every child.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, international and regional legal frameworks providing for the right of education were reviewed and so were Uganda's legal frame works. Policy frameworks and instruments used in the promotion of the right to education were also reviewed as they were core and central in this study. Literature related to inclusive education and the right to education of a girl child was reviewed following the thematic areas presented by the study objectives.

## 2.1 International and regional legal and policy frameworks providing for the right to education of the girl child.

### 2.1.1 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Human rights first gained international recognition in 1948 when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guaranteed the inalienable and inviolable civil and political rights as well as social, economic and cultural rights to which people everywhere are entitled (UN, 1948). The UDHR however, has no binding legal force but has an undeniable moral force that provides practical rules of conduct to guide the action of state parties (OHCHR, 2016). Included in the range of rights provided by the UDHR is the right to education.

Article 26(1) of the UDHR states that everyone has the right to education, that education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages, that elementary education shall be compulsory, and that technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit. According to the Declaration, everyone is entitled to the right to education, which means that government has a responsibility according to its available resources to ensure that everyone has access to education regardless of sex. The purpose of education, therefore, is to promote the complete development of the person that will provide him or her the opportunity to demand other human rights. Thus, the right to education is fundamental in empowering the individual to claim and enjoy not only socio and economic rights but also civil and political rights. The preamble reaffirms the commitment of the State parties in respecting, promoting, and protecting the fundamental rights, the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of men and women.

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### 2.1.2 Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the International Bill of Rights for Women and serves as binding international law for the 189 States that have, as of June 2017, ratified it (Byrnes, & Freeman, 2012). Article 10 addresses women's and girls' legal right to education and calls on States parties to _take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women to ensure their equal rights with men in the field of education. It thereby requires States parties to eliminate discrimination against women in education throughout the life cycle and at all levels of education. To meet the criterion of non-discrimination, education must be accessible in both law and practice, to all girls and women, including those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, without discrimination on any prohibited ground.

The right not to be discriminated against in education is a particularly significant entitlement. The Convention specifically provides in Article 10 that states take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination between women and men, girls and boys, in the field of education (Byrnes, & Freeman, 2012). It provides that States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women to ensure their equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men. The main elements of the right to education in CEDAW include: Elimination of discrimination in access to educational facilities at all levels (and thus at all ages, taking a life cycle approach); this is especially important for women who may have had to leave schooling at an early age and wish to access educational facilities as adults, removal of discrimination and stereotyping within educational establishments, curricula and material, lessening the disparity between women and men in educational achievement, the importance of ensuring women receive vocational and technical training; and ensuring equal access to sports and physical training (Byrnes, & Freeman, 2012).

The Committee emphasises the importance of considering the needs of differently situated women and girls. As with GR 35, GR 36 is intersectional throughout, drawing attention to how Article 10 of the Convention interrelates with Article 14 on rural women and girls. GR 36 has a specific section on disadvantaged groups of girls and women: ethnic minorities and indigenous women. It also mainstreams the intersectionality of gender and disability throughout. The Committee recommends that States parties take all appropriate measures to

ensure the right of all categories of disadvantaged and marginalised groups to education by eliminating stereotyping and discrimination and by removing barriers to access. GR 36 importantly emphasises the integration of gender equality content into curricula at all levels of education from early childhood, targeting stereotyped gender roles and ensuring age-appropriate, evidence-based, and scientifically accurate and comprehensive sexuality education for girls and boys as measures for the prevention of violence against women and girls. In turn, GR 36 addresses gender-based violence against women and girls, noting that in relation to such violence in public spaces and the risk of violence that females face when travelling to schools availability and accessibility require educational institutions, particularly in rural areas, to be proximate and within their safe reach.

### 2.1.3 The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) devotes two Articles to the right to education, Articles 13 and 14. Article 13, the longest provision in the Covenant, is the most wide-ranging and comprehensive Article on the right to education in international human rights law. The Committee has already adopted a general comment, No. 11 on Article 14 (plans of action for primary education); general comment No. 11 and the present general comment are complementary and should be considered together. The Committee is aware that for millions of people throughout the world, the enjoyment of the right to education remains a distant goal. Moreover, in many cases, this goal is becoming increasingly remote. The Committee is also conscious of the formidable structural and other obstacles impeding the full implementation of Article 13 in many States parties.

While the precise and appropriate application of the terms will depend upon the conditions prevailing in a particular State party, education in all its forms and at all levels according to Article 13 of the general comment shall exhibit the interrelated and essential features availability, accessibility, adaptability, and acceptability by all irrespective of the gender.

### 2.1.4 Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC)

The Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) acknowledges that education has a vital role in promoting human rights and democracy. It has the potential to set the girl child-free because Article 28 of the CRC provides that States parties must recognise the right of the child to education based on equal opportunity and should take measures to encourage regular

attendance at schools and also ensure that drop-out rates are reduced (OHCHR, 1989). As is the case with the UDHR, all States parties to the CRC acknowledge that education shall be directed to the development of the child, his or her preparation for responsible life in a free society (OHCHR, 1989).

Becoming a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the country assumes the obligation to undertake ‒all appropriate legislative measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the Convention‖. By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child Uganda has effectively made the convention binding domestically. According to constitutional provisions, courts must favour any reasonable interpretation of legislation that is consistent with international law

## 2.1.5 The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights was adopted by the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), and it remains the pivotal human rights instrument for the African continent (Heyns & Killander, 2007). They note that the charter recognises individual rights as well as peoples' rights and duties, and some socio-economic rights. In most cases, it only prohibits discrimination in the enjoyment of the right and freedoms as is provided for by Article 2 which states, ‒every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or another status.‖ Article 3(1) provides that ‒every individual shall be equal before the law‖. Its only provision about education is Article 17(1) which states that ‒every individual shall have the right to education.‖

## 2.1.6 The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)

The ACRWC is similar to the CRC but makes special provisions to ensure and guarantee girls' right to education. Article 11 of the ACRWC provides for the right to education for every child and in section (3) enjoins States Parties to the convention to take all appropriate measures to achieve the full realisation of the right and more specifically obliges States Parties in section 3(e) to ‗take special measures in respect of female, gifted and disadvantaged children, to ensure equal access to education for all sections of the community (emphasis added)' (ACRWC, 1999). Persons under the age of 18 years enjoy a higher level

of protection under the Charter than in the UNCRC, which besides protecting the rights also provides an individual complaint procedure (Heyns & Killander, 2007). The African Charter gives a better African perspective and lays more emphasis on the best interest of the child Che (2003). Concerning education, the ACRWC states:

i. Every child shall have the right to education

ii. The education of the child shall be directed to the promotion and development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

iii. States parties to the Charter shall take appropriate measures with a view to achieving the full realisation of this right and shall in particular (b) encourage the development of secondary education in its different forms and to progressively make it free and accessible to all; (c) Make higher education accessible to all based on capacity and ability by every appropriate means; (d) take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.

### 2.1.7 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo protocol)

Adopted in Maputo, Mozambique in July 2003 and entered into force in November 2005, the Protocol recognises that there still exists inequality between men and women in Africa (Heyns & Killander, 2007). Article 2 of the Protocol puts the responsibility on States Parties to combat all forms of discrimination against women through appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures. Article 12 pertaining to the right to education and non-discrimination states as follows:

a) *Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and guarantee equal opportunity and access in the sphere of education and training.*

b) *Eliminate all stereotypes in textbooks, syllabuses and the media, that perpetuate such discrimination;*

c) *Protect women, especially the girl-child from all forms of abuse, including sexual harassment in school and other educational institutions and provide for sanctions against the perpetrators of such practices.*

d) *Provide access to counselling and rehabilitation services to women who suffer abuses and sexual harassment.*

e) *Integrate gender sensitization and human rights education at all levels of education*

*curricula including teacher training.*

1. States Parties shall take specific positive action to:

a. *Promote literacy among women.*

b. *Promote education and training for women at all levels and in all disciplines, particularly in the fields of science and technology.*

c. *Promote the enrolment and retention of girls in schools and other training institutions and the organization of programmes for women who leave school prematurely.*

**2.1.8 African Youth Charter (AYC)**

The AYC was adopted in Banjul, Gambia in July 2006 (Heyns & Killander, 2007). The Charter is similar to the ACWRC and carries with it the spirit that Africa's greatest resource is its youthful population whose active and full participation has the potential to enable all Africans without any discrimination to surmount the difficulties that lie ahead. Aarticle 13 entitled _skills and development' says that every young person shall have the right to education of good quality, education of young people shall be directed to the promotion and holistic development of the young person's cognitive and creative and emotional abilities to their full potential. The AYC adds more value to the protection of the right to education as compared to the ACWRC. Article 13(4) states that parties shall take all appropriate measures with a view to achieving the full realisation of the right to education and shall take steps to encourage regular school attendance and reduce drop-out rates.

**2.2 Uganda's legal frameworks, policy frameworks and instruments used in the promotion of the right to education of the girl child**

**2.2.1 The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995)**

At the national level, commitment to girls' education is reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995). The Constitution emphasizes that all Ugandans must enjoy rights and opportunities and access to education without any form of discrimination. (chap. 4 clause 30). The Constitution also emphasizes the need for affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized based on gender, among other social categories to redress imbalances that exist against them. Further, the Uganda Gender Policy (2007) situates itself as a guiding framework for gender mainstreaming in Uganda. The policy further calls upon all actors (state and non-state) to take appropriate action to address gender inequalities within their

areas of mandate. At the sector level, the Gender in Education Policy (2009) provides a guiding framework for the implementation and monitoring of a gender-sensitive and responsive education system in Uganda. The Policy also indicates that achieving gender equality at all levels of education is regarded as a Human Rights issue.

Article 30 of the Constitution recognizes in general terms the right of all persons to education. Article 34, further stipulates that ‒a child is entitled to basic education which shall be the responsibility of the State and the parents of the child.‖ The most relevant legislation is The Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-Primary) Act of 2008, which provides that ‒basic education shall be provided and enjoyed as a right by all persons‖ and that ‒provision of education and training to the child shall be a joint responsibility of the State, the parent or guardian and other stakeholders.‖ The Act recognises four categories of educational institutions: Public (i.e., Government-funded); private; and Government grant-aided, in addition to non-formal education centres designed to meet the demands and lifestyles of indigenous communities. The ‗basic' education to which all are entitled includes primary and non-formal education.

The Education Act recognises the responsibility of the Government to set the aims of education, but the Act itself does not do so. It also recognises the responsibility of the Government to ensure that private schools ‒conform to the rules and regulations governing the provision of educational services.‖ All teachers must be registered and only persons having completed a recognised training course may be registered. Furthermore, it provides that teachers convicted of a crime of moral turpitude or found guilty of conduct prejudicial to the physical, mental or moral welfare of any pupil (for example a primary school student) may be deprived of their license to teach, after a hearing.

However, some rights, principles and obligations recognised by the CRC and African Charter are not recognised by the legislation mentioned above. Even though primary education is compulsory, and the legislation has some provisions about out-of-school children, it does not provide specifically for the prevention of school leaving. Other gaps in the legislation are with regard to the provision of information and guidance on education and vocational training, making higher education available to all having the capacity to benefit from it, and the education of gifted children. Legislation is not the only way of addressing issues such as these and may not be the most effective way to do so. It can, however, be a useful part of a comprehensive approach.

**2.2.2 The National strategy for Girls' Education (2000 – 2013; 2013 – 2019)**

In 2000, MoES designed a National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE) as a mechanism to concretize concerns on the girl child- education as provided for in the Education Sector Investment Plan (1997-2003). The goal of the National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE) was to promote girls' education as an integral part of the government's efforts to create gender equity and equality in the education system. The design of this strategy was premised on the national desire to provide an implementation framework, laying out strategies to achieve the goal of narrowing the gender gap in education particularly through promoting girls' education, as a form of affirmative action. The Strategy was pegged to addressing the most pressing barriers to girls' full and equal participation in education in Uganda, clustered as social-cultural factors, school-related factors, political, economic as well as administrative factors. The Strategy was also to act as a plan of action highlighting the roles of different stakeholders in the sector, in the joint promotion of girls' education.

In 2013, MoES revised the NSGE. The revision of the NSGE was largely prompted by emerging concerns in Uganda's education sector in general and in girls' education in particular. These concerns included among others; taking into consideration renewed emphasis, both nationally and internationally, on, emphasis on the quality of education, promotion of science education, skilling Uganda and the persistent barriers to girls' education, among others. The revision was also intended to create a framework within which critical challenges such as gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy are decisively addressed. The revised version also widened the coverage to all education sub-sectors, beyond primary and secondary sectors.

The revised NSGE provided for a national implementation framework, laying out strategies to achieve the goal of narrowing the gender gap in education, to accord the girl child the right to equal access, equal chances to take part or share in the education system and equal educational results or education outcomes. The priority areas of focus in this NSGE were: Effective Policy Implementation Framework for Girls' Education, harmonization of Education Sector Programmes on Girls' Education, commitment of requisite resources to girls' education, institutionalized/routine research in the area of girls' education and capacity enhancement and involvement for all critical actors in girls' education.

Strategic interventions of the NSGE were arranged into five key areas of focus: effective

policy implementation framework, harmonized education sector programmes, requisite resourcing, institutionalized research and capacity utilization and enhancement. These strategic areas of intervention were systematically identified based on the findings of the NSGE review. The review found that despite the existence of policies, programmes and even a strategy on girls' education, implementation suffered from low levels of awareness, inadequate coordination among education actors, limited resource commitments as well as limited availability of information in schools.

### 2.2.3 National Development Plan (NDP) I, NDP II & NDP III

As a framework for planning in Uganda, the National Development Plans (NDP) of 2010, 2015 and 2020 identify education among its investment priorities. The plan also calls for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the economic sectors, particularly in the areas of governance, education, among others, through gender-responsive strategies such as improving retention and participation rates for girls in schools.

In 2010, GOU released the first of the five planned five-year NDPs, covering the fiscal period 2010/11-2014/15. The NDP stipulates the country's medium-term strategic direction, status, challenges and opportunities. In the education sector, NDPI focused on completion of the MDG goals, namely primary school access; however, there was also a focus on school quality, as well as on disadvantaged populations such as girls and SNE students.

NDP II, released in 2015, combined equitable access and quality into one single objective. Its stated interventions focused on improving the implementation of UPE and USE, with a focus on improving the capitation grants – the mechanism by which the government subsidizes schools to eliminate tuition. There was special attention to improving school infrastructure, particularly water and sanitation. Specific gender and SNE needs were also highlighted. Notably, NDP II was published in June 2015, several months before Uganda adopted the SDG framework. As a result, NDP II is not framed in terms of the specific SDG goals, even if the SDG shift to a focus on the quality of education is mirrored in the NDP II objectives. The NDP III developed in 2020 after the declaration and adoption of the SDGs reflects under target 4.5 the need to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to education for the vulnerable including girls and children with disabilities. These and many other policies and legal structures provide a legal basis and a supportive policy environment through which the NSGE is being implemented.

## 2.3 Societal perceptions on the girls' right to education

Various studies have shown that educational decisions are associated with social aspects such as cultural opinions, traditional norms and values (Moghadam, 2004; Kakuba, 2014; and Sarker, Ahm and Suffiun, 2017). According to Sen (1992), cultural aspects have an intermediate role in influencing an individual's choices. Education for girls is significantly associated with parental attitudes which in turn are related to cultural values that restraints educational gender equity in most developing countries (Hamid, 2013). Moghadam (2004) describes how a patriarchal society is characterized by ‒male domination, son preference, restrictive codes of behaviour for women, and the association of family honour with female virtue‖. Patriarchal norms are a common reason that hinders girls to access school because of the favoured treatment of boys (Davison and Kanyuka, 2012; Hyde 2018). Examples in Africa show how the combination of cultural and economic elements can explain the households' choice of school attendance for their children, such as bride price or social behaviour (Kakuba, 2014). Consequently, parents' attitudes regarding the education of children may differ depending on gender given the culture in the society (Sarker, et.al. 2017). These studies have been conducted on regional and continental levels and give generalized pictures. The localized study of Kakuba (2014) looked at the influence of culture on education but only with an economic lens. Therefore, this study is culture-specific and establishes the specific culture-related challenges that surround the education of girl child in Masinya Sub County

Sarker, et.al. (2017) conducted a study on parental attitudes, gender equality and school attainment in Bangladesh. In their result, they argue that even though socio-economic factors of the household matter, the factor influencing educational attainment the most is parental attitudes, particularly for the girls. Further, they discovered that cultural and traditional attitudes are of great importance regarding school attainment for girls. Parents focus on raising their daughters to become ideal caretakers of the households, which is of greater importance than receiving higher education. DeJaeghere, Kendall and Khan (2011) conducted a study in Bangladesh and Malawi. The general opinion that derived from traditional attitudes, roles and norms based on gender, was that girls should aim for becoming good wives and not focus on education. Sarker, et.al. (2017) conclude by clarifying that the traditional gender role attitudes of parents support the model of cultural determinants of

school attainment. Parents' gender bias attitudes favour boys and decrease the opportunities for educational attainment for girls significantly.

Earlier studies like Mincer (1974) and Becker (1991) had also established that social power structures and socially constructed norms create gender roles that are influencing the school attainment for girls to a great extent. These studies are corroborated in recent literature. For insistence, Eagly and Wood (2012); Sarker, et al. (2017); and Sida, (2017) argue that these gender roles are affecting the opportunities, rights, capabilities, and responsibilities for girls to access school. To close the gender gap in school attendance, especially at higher levels, the systemic discriminatory environments that are affecting girls need to be recognized. Further, even if institutional and legal frameworks may support achievements, success will not be reached without undertaking the social norms surrounding girls' education (UNDP, 2016).

Stephens (2015) observed that from birth, a child's position within society is governed by specific rules and patterns of behaviours and by reciprocal duties, obligations and responsibilities and argues that the gender of the child and the gendered nature of relations between family members define his/her identity and opportunity. This is particularly evident in the strongly patriarchal cultures that dominate in many developing countries, particularly in Africa and South Asia. Here patriarchy and its economic structures create conditions of ―all-round‖ dependency of women as a function of ‒patrilineal principles of inheritance of property‖, a ‒patriarchal structure of authority‖ and a ‒patrilocal system of marriage‖ (UNESCO, 2017). Gender inequality in education in these societies is a manifestation of the generalized and systematic discrimination against women and girls. Although Stephen's (2015) study gives a conclusion about Africa and South Asia, it was conducted in Ghana, thus this study was carried out to see if the findings would corroborate these earlier findings on the continental scale

In earlier studies in Africa, Brown (1991) had already pointed out that cultural factors can prevent girls from entering school. Through a survey conducted in Togo, she found that families were reluctant to keep girls at school as they considered this a waste of money since the girls would move out of their parent's house after marriage. The belief and feeling that ‒girls belong to their husband's family‖ has serious implications for the decisions of families regarding their daughters‖ schooling (Jha & Jhingran, (2015)). Parents tend to invest in the education of their sons since they remain in the natal family and not in that of girls as they will join another family on marriage. It is therefore not surprising that studies have found that

there is the parental preference of sons over their daughters, especially when faced with a decision to choose among the children whom to send to school (Thornton, 2016; UNDP, 2006; 2013, World Bank, 2017) since sons inherit family property as well as the responsibility of the family. To avoid social criticism for educating girls beyond ‒customary levels‖ and when the quality of education is not satisfactory, parents tend not to send their girls to school.

A study on parental perceptions on children‘s enrolment in Kenya by Buchmann (2000) showed that parents are more likely to support education when they expect financial help from the children in the future. Hence, they partly base the decision for the children‘s education on securing their economic welfare. In terms of scarce resources and the ability to support education, the households in Kenya chose to invest more in boys. Daumerie & Madsen (2010) discovered the same pattern in Uganda. However, Edewor (2017) found the opposite in a study on parental perceptions on girls‘ schooling in Nigeria. The result showed changing perceptions of the parents towards girls‘ education, where girls were even favoured. Concurrently, the study in Turkey by Mercan (2010) also found positive perceptions on girls‘ schooling and the benefits from it. Several studies in Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa and Thailand found female advantages in educational attainment out of those that had attended primary school (Hallman & Grant, 2004, Tfaily, 2006).

Similarly, some of the recent studies have established that traditional cultural practices strongly mitigate girls‘ enrolment in the educational system as families with limited resources tend to place more priority on boy child education recognizing them as future heads of household. It was established that as part of the culture, even when girls are enrolled, they often face many more barriers to learning than boys do. For example, Levine, Lloyd, Greene, *et al.,* (2018) findings, among others, include girls ‒engagement in domestic chores, caring for younger children, early marriage and childbearing which put them in a vicious cycle which continues generation after generation. Given the paucity of adequate day-care centres throughout much of the developing world and high levels of women‘s participation in the informal and formal labour markets, it is not uncommon for young girls to have to bring younger siblings to school with them, disrupting not only their studies but those of other children (Thornton, 2016).

Plan International (2015), calls ‗entrenched assumptions about girls‘ roles as care givers, mothers, and brides as something attached to communities‘ beliefs. According to their

findings, in a country like Kenya, parents have expressed the idea that a man would not prefer to marry a woman if she was educated, and he was not. This ingrained kind of value would then be passed onto the girls' beliefs and affect their willingness to go to school, let alone stay in one (UNDP, 2016). A study on girls' education in Siaya, a rural county in Kenya, for example, observes that morning domestic chores can make girls distressed and unable to focus in class, which results in them choosing not to go to school (Oruko et al., 2015). In addition, the Global Partnership for Girls and Women's Education reports that patriarchy still dominates in Kenya, where financially deprived families would rather send their sons to school UNESCO (2018). Girls of Kenya are in this way pushed to ˍsuppress expressions of their own intelligence' (Abuya & Onsomu, 2014). Although these studies concluded that traditional gender roles are a part of African cultural ideology and due to its prevalence, girls might be considered as social outcasts for going to school, these studies were carried out in Kenya with three dominant tribes. IT is not known if the same would apply in Uganda, particularly among the identified cultural groups of people that live in Masinya Sub County in Busia district.

Closely related to the above, a study carried out by Odomore (2015) found out that females in Northern Nigeria are held back from school because their parents fear that when they acquire an education, they will no longer respect them or their husbands when they get married. These parents see Western education as a threat to the institution of marriage and family. They suffer from the false perception that an educated female would not want to get married after attaining an education. Studies show, though, that while an educated female is more likely to marry late, she will marry and, when she does, she will have the tools necessary to be a good wife, mother, and community woman (Odomore, 2015). Parents, however, disregard the voices and interests of their daughters. The parents or guardians go as far as engaging a baby girl at birth to the boy whom they select for her to marry when she becomes older, which, they say, custom demands. This study being carried out in the northern part of the country that is predominantly Muslim let the researcher if the findings would apply in the rest of Nigeria and later alone in Uganda.


According to ILO (2009) over Atayi (2008) in one of the few studies carried out in Uganda observed that Parents' demand for the education of their daughters is low, reflecting both cultural norms and girls' work in and around the home. In addition, the cultural perceptions

of girls as childminders, marriage material and a burden to the family influences their educational attainment the contemporary society. Also, some parents decided in many cultures that, education is not worthwhile for their daughters who will move into their husbands' families when they marry and that the gains in productivity or income due to education will accrue to the families of the sons-in-law rather than to them. Although the study concluded that cultural practices among other practices, as shown above, was a barrier to girls' education, the study did not use the human rights approach to pin the community practices to that effect. The study was also limited to Arua district, thus necessitating this study. Also, Tumushabe, Barasa, Muhanguzi & Otim-Nape (1999) together with other stakeholders, investigated the causes of low participation, performance and persistence of girls in primary school in Uganda. They found that the girls are disadvantaged in some parts of Uganda due to the bride wealth for marriages. Some parents showed greater interest in the dowry than in the education for the girls with the reasoning that ‒they will end up in the kitchen‖ anyway. Thus, the conclusion with ‒some parts of Uganda‖ does not encourage for study findings to be used in other areas like Masinya Sub County.

A study in Adamawa, a northern state of Nigeria revealed that fathers are deliberately not allowing their daughters to go to school because they consider investment in female education as unprofitable since the girls are likely to end up in another man's home (Abubakar, 2013). In related studies in the neighbouring countries, it has been established that parental influence has been identified as an important factor affecting girl students' academic achievement; parents' education and encouragement are strongly related to improved student achievement (Kibugi, Cheserek, Murgor, & Mutwol, 2013 in Kenya and Mushi, Malekela, & Bhalalusesa, 2012 in Tanzania). Parental education and social-economic status influence student's achievement. Students with parents who were both college-educated tended to achieve at the highest levels. Children whose parents are of high educational status have a better statistical chance of participating in secondary Education (UNDP, 2016). Important factors include parental involvement in their children education, how much Television children are allowed to watch and how often students change schools (Kibugi, et al., 2013; Mushi, et al., 2012; Abubakar, 2013). While the above studies were centred on socio-economic status in the analysis, this study is not bound by economics alone.

Faughnan (2016) found in a study in Uganda that there is a perception that the school environment is a threat to the girls' virginity. Grant (2011) also came across this pattern in

research in rural Malawi on parents' perceptions on adolescent sexual activity and early pregnancy in relation to their expectations and aspirations on school attendance for girls. The result showed that parents' concern regards even their daughters that have not yet gone through puberty or are sexually active. In the conclusion, Grant (2011) states that ‒Although all parents aspire for their children to attend secondary school, these perceptions of daughters' relative risk weaken parents' motivation to encourage daughters to remain in school‖.

## 2.4 Challenges that lead to the abuse of the right to girl education

Various studies have shown that poverty has remained a serious enemy of girl child education (Kola 2014; Sperling 2005; in Onyeike, & Angela, 2011). Kola (2014) asserted that parents struggling to raise a child, often see poverty as adding extensive stress to the family hence many girls who should be attending class have been withdrawn to work for money. This sometimes results in child labour.

Available study indicates that rightly or wrongly impoverished parents often feel they need their girl-child labour for additional income, just to help with the grueling requirements of life (Sperling 2005; in Onyeike, & Angela, 2011). In some parts of Nigeria, it is a known fact that the input of the girl child into the family income is so high that it becomes economically unwise to allow such a child to go to school. Examples of such inputs include generating income by way of hawking food items. The girl child also helps with the household chores and look after the younger ones which relieve the parents of employing paid house helps. This, therefore, reduces the financial burden on the family (Kola 2014).

Similarly, Lund (2018) in his study observed that resource constraints are another way to determine educational decisions on a household level. Inadequate resources in a household limit the parents' opportunity to follow altruistic ambitions for their children. In the choice of acting for immediate or future needs, poor families find it harder to risk the immediate welfare based on expectations that future education might have been able to give. A common strategy for survival in poor families is to allow the children to go for income activities (Buchmann, 2000).

Another commonly cited factor militating against girl child education is early marriages which conflict with educational programmes. Bolaji (2007) noted that early marriage has

been institutionalized in many parts of Nigeria especially in Kano, Kastina, Sokoto, Bauchi and Kaduna. He further said that early marriage used to be the case among the Ibos, Ibibios and Urhobos, but with Western education, the practice has abated but not completely eradicated. Child marriage is a global problem affecting 15 million girls every year (UNICEF, 2014a). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reported that despite national laws and international agreements, child marriage remains a real and present threat to the human rights, lives, and health of children, especially girls, in more than a hundred countries (UNFPA, 2018). Moreover, according to UNFPA, ‒one in three girls in low and middle-income countries (excluding China) will marry before the age of 18. One in nine girls will marry before their 15ᵗʰ birthday‖ (UNFPA, 2018). UNICEF predicts that if there is no reduction in child marriage, 1.2 billion girls will marry as children by 2050 (UNICEF, 2014a). Similarly, King & Winthrop (2015) argued that the practice of child marriage undermines efforts to improve girls' education and must be addressed if real, lasting progress is to be made in improving the lives of girls.

In his study, Lund (2018) argued that the inevitability of girls' biology means that menstruation can act as an interruption of girls' education. In many poor communities, sanitary products are not an option and are often not provided at school. By simply not having the resources to manage their period, girls will have to miss school which often leads to a permanent drop-out (Lund, 2018). With their monthly period comes some added stress on their wellbeing mentally and physically, including pains associated with migraines, cramps, etc. Females in developing countries face an even bigger challenge during their menstrual period than females in developed countries due to a lack of access to sanitation products, washrooms with toilets, and privacy. They also sometimes confront bullying and embarrassment from ignorant persons.

Studies have found that the provision of sanitary products is linked to a female stay in school in school and have proven to be important to the education of females. Miiro, et al. 2018, Hasan, et al., 2021, Grant, Lloyd, & Mensch, 2013, Shamsudeen, Larsen-Reindorf, & Awal, 2020 argued that that in places like Uganda, females miss school because of menstruation for one to three days of primary school per month, which, when added up, is eight to twenty-four days of not attending school per year. This translates into missing eleven per cent of study days out of the 220 study school days in a year due to menstrual periods. However, the study in Uganda was based on respondents picked in the capital Kampala to generate comparisons

with other African countries. The situation is much different in the upcountry locations since the culture there are stronger and their influence on education is different.

King & Winthrop (2015) opined that school-based violence or threats of violence of different forms militate against learning for all students but most especially girls and serve as a deterrent to both school continuation rates and academic performance. The sexual harassment or abuse of girls by teachers and peers imposes huge physical and psychic costs on parents and students that deter schooling. A study carried out in South Africa and Sudan by Nomlomo, Farag, & Holmarsdottir (2018) established that in both countries, girls were vulnerable and were victims of sexual abuse and rape. Earlier on, Unterhalter (2005: 84) had stated that ‖… high levels of sexual violence reported in schools are one feature of how participation is not a simple process of enrolment and retention and passing exams‖; likewise empowerment of women and girls in both South Africa and Sudan might not be a simple process of changing traditional practices.

A study using the 1998 Demographic & Health Survey in South Africa found that 1.6 per cent of the adult female respondents reported being raped before the age of 15 and that the most common perpetrators (one-third of the cases) were male teachers (Jewkes et al. 2012). Another study finds that more than 30 per cent of girls in southern Africa are raped in and around the school (Prinsloo, 2016). Students suffer other forms of violence at the hands of their teachers. In middle schools in Ghana, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, a study using survey data from schools finds that the abuse of girls by male teachers is part of a wider problem of school-based violence (which includes the excessive use of corporal punishment and bullying), much of it perpetrated by males (Leach et al., 2018). Likewise, survey data from middle and secondary public schools in Egypt show that, despite a ministerial decree against the use of physical punishment as a disciplinary action, both boys (80 per cent) and girls (62 per cent) were subjected to corporal punishment, usually for poor behaviour or academic performance— with boys usually suffering the worse injuries from this type of punishment (Youssef, Attia, & Kamel, 2008). A study based on a representative sample of more than 10,000 public school students in grades 7-11 in Israel found that 29 per cent of students have been victims of specific acts of sexual harassment in school during the month before the survey (Zeira, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2012).

Amina (2015) in her study put much emphasis on the failure of schools and teachers‗ role as guides and counsellors for the girl students and parents to make them understand the value of

education. They also highlighted that the, lacking proactive measures from the school, poor households' condition, and early marriage and pregnancy cumulatively forced those girls to quit schools before they even finish primary education. According to (Esther, 2016), major factors for dropout are the influence of teachers and school, peer groups, among others. The noble laureate (Banerjee & Duflo, 2013) established that a significant number of girl students who dropped out of school had teachers who were never proactive to teach students who were lagging in studies especially in subjects that were rendered hard.

Literature has pointed out lack of self-confidence as well as low self-esteem as limiting factors to a girls' education. In a 2015 Baseline Report of 19 diverse and innovative education projects for marginalized girls supported by the U.K.'s Department for International Development's (DFID) Girls' Education Challenge Fund (GEC), six projects being evaluated identified the lack of self-confidence as a barrier to girls' education (Coffey, 2015). The same report identifies female aspirations, motivation, and autonomy factors such as self-confidence as a barrier ‒that has a direct influence on girls' enrollment, retention, attendance, and learning‖ (Coffey, 2015, 54). Campaign for Female Education (an NGO)'s SEM statistical model (the same model adopted by this study) designed to examine their education data from programming in Zimbabwe also finds a strong relationship between academic success and academic self-efficacy (―the sense of being good at and enjoying academically related activities‖ (Johnson & Liht, 2015). This correlation suggests that a strong academic achiever perceives himself or herself as a strong student. In addition, children's perceptions of their self-efficacy in their academic performance are correlated with choices and aspirations about their occupation (Rolleston & James, 2012). Program findings of an overall lack of self-esteem, confidence, and self-efficacy among adolescent girls have led development actors such as CARE to develop a Girls' Leadership Model for their girls' education programming. This model identifies self-confidence as a key component for girls to gain agency in their decisions and in becoming leaders (CARE, 2012). Good quality education can help boost the confidence and motivation among girls who may have low self-esteem due to their socio-cultural environment (UNESCO, 2012)

Gender differences in benefit streams help explain why parents might invest less in girls'

education than boys' even within the same family (King & Winthrop, 2015). The belief is that parents and students themselves try to see into the future and form expectations about how education might improve their lives. Where parents and students expect that education will open up possibilities of a better life for their children (and the family as a whole), they are more likely to spend time and resources for education, at a given level of costs, than where they do not expect such benefits (King & Winthrop, 2015). In a study carried out in West Bengal, Beaman et al. (2011) found that, in places where no woman had ever been the local leader, 86 per cent of parents wanted their daughters to be either a housewife or whatever their in-laws would decide for her, compared with less than 1 per cent for their sons. Also, twice as many parents reported that they wanted their teenage sons to graduate from secondary school or college as those who wished the same for their daughters.

Jensen (2010a) similarly established that the large variation in the number and type of income-earning opportunities that await girls and boys after school matters to parents and students themselves when they make education decisions, although this consideration likely differs across families and communities according to prevailing social norms and also poverty levels. In the Middle East, the average Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of adult women in 2012 is 21 per cent as compared with 85 per cent for adult men. In Latin America, the average LFPR of adult men is about the same as in the Middle East at 85.5 per cent, but the average LFPR of adult women is 57 per cent. In sub-Saharan Africa, although average education levels are lower than in any other region, the average LFPR of men is 87 per cent and that of women, 72 per cent.

Blumberg (2007) links the gender bias in textbooks to a hidden gender bias in formal curricula that leads girls away from school. The evidence suggests that insufficient work is occurring in most national educational systems to modify curriculum content, textbooks, and teachers' skills and understanding of gender issues. Institutions such as governments and conservative religious hierarchies are reluctant to alter curriculum and practices toward greater gender equity (Blumberg (2007). Despite the weak attention to gender equity in schooling, it may represent the strongest source of counter messages to traditional norms learned in the family, community, and national media (Blumberg, 2007).


## 2.5 Responses to the challenges surrounding the right to girl child education

Studies show that investing in girls' education has been called ‒the world's best investment‖

(Sperling & Winthrop, 2015). Evidence on what works to improve the quality of education is accumulating at an unprecedented rate (World Bank 2018b). Studies have in recent years revealed hundreds of impact evaluations in low- and middle-income countries have demonstrated the effectiveness – or lack thereof – of a range of interventions at improving education outcomes, for girls and boys (Evans & Popova 2016; J-PAL 2017). Reviews that examine the most effective ways to boost girls' education tend to focus on interventions that target girls – for example, building girls' latrines at schools or providing scholarships for girls potentially missing large educational benefits for girls from interventions that are not gender-specific (Unterhalter et al. 2014; Sperling & Winthrop 2015; Haberland, McCarthy & Brady 2018).

A study in Ghana by Montgomery found that after 3 months of implementation of a program providing pads with education, there was improved attendance among participants (Montgomery et al., 2012). Similar to the finding of the study by Montgomery, Mucherah assessing the impact of the provision of sanitary and puberty education in Kenya found that girls who were provided with pads and puberty education reported a less negative impact on their school attendance and grades (Mucherah & Thomas, 2017).

Several studies have revealed interventions that have been implemented focusing on improving infrastructure and schools designed with incentives for girls in mind to ensure that they improve girls' education aspirations (Rutaremwa & Bemanzi, 2013; UNDP, 2016; King and Winthrop, 2015; Youssef et al., 2008; and Amina, 2015). In Burkina Faso, Kazianga et al., (2012) note a government program, the Burkinabé Response to Improve Girls' Chances to Succeed (BRIGHT) program, which placed well-resourced schools in 132 villages, with girl child at the centre of planning and implementation. The evaluation of the programme established that girls' enrollment increased by 5 percentage points more than boys' enrollment and the evaluation also established that the ‒girl-friendly‖ amenities alone increased enrollment by 13 percentage points and 27 percentage points for remaining in school.

A study done in Uganda by DeSoto found that the early warning system led to a significant reduction in the number of girls who dropped out of school. The qualitative component of the

study found that four out of five teachers who were interviewed said the reduction in school dropouts was due to increased sensitization of and awareness caused by the project on the value of girl child education among parents and community (Desoto et al., 2019). The role of information was also explored in India where a study found that youth information centres and exposure to mass media showed an effect in reducing early marriage and early pregnancy, and improved school retention (Mehra et al., 2018).

According to Kirk (2016), female teachers may act as advocates for girls, representing their perceptions and needs, and promoting a more girl-friendly learning environment. Women teachers may be able to advocate for better toilet and washing facilities for the girls. Kirk (2016) reported that there is evidence to show a correlation between the number of women teachers and girls' enrollment, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The placement of a female teacher, therefore, can have an immediate impact on access to education by the girls. In a study by Bista (2015), it was established that the presence of women teachers in schools impacted positively on girls' retention in school and on their achievement. Bista (2015) like in this study noted that a female role model can support and encourage girls to complete their studies. She can also be there to listen to any problems and provide guidance when necessary. The presence of one or more female teachers may also ensure protection for girls in the minority from unwanted attention from boys or male teachers, and even from sexual abuse and exploitation

School dropout is often linked with poverty; poverty affects the ability of households to pay school fees and other costs associated with education. In our scoping review (Duflo et al., 2006; Hallfors et al., 2011; Hallfors et al., 2012; Hallfors et al., 2015; Iritani et al., 2016; Cho et al., 2017; Cho et al., 2018), the studies show that supporting household with costs associated with schoolings such as payment of school fees, provision of uniforms, and other materials reduces dropouts. These cash transfers were all conditioned upon the girls attending school, an approach that implies a top-down approach in decision-making. In such interventions, the parents are the recipients of the decision by stakeholders and various organizations to send girls to school (Bundy et al., 2017). Several studies have suggested that interventions conditional upon school attendance have a pronounced impact of about 60% improvement in enrollment compared to interventions with no conditions (Baird *et al.,* 2011; Baird et al., 2014; Benhassine et al., 2015; Akresh et al., 2016). However, the associated limitation with interventions that provide monetary support is sustainability when the

program comes to an end. They should be implemented with a proper sustainability plan for when the program comes to an end (Cross et al., 2018).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria in its National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) recognised the importance of parents in the school management when it stated that ‒the local people particularly parents will be encouraged to participate in school management‖. Onderi and Makori, (2013) reported that PTAs are involved in classroom decisions, promoting communication, social events, fund-raising, and lobbying the state and national legislation on behalf of the students. They are involved in monitoring the implementation of school programmes, monitoring education services and mobilising additional resources. Also, they have been involved in providing personal hygiene facilities such as washbasins, stands and soap in classrooms and toilet rolls in latrines (UNICEF, 2009). Okendo (2012) opined that PTA is recognized as an effective means for the enhancement of parental involvement in the educational process to promote quality and equal learning. Perhaps it is for these reasons that Okendo (2012) regards PTA as one of the community agencies in the education system.

In Kenya, Duflo in 2006 found that reducing the cost of education by paying for school uniforms reduced dropout rates, teen marriage, and childbearing (Duflo et al., 2006). Cross et al., (2018) researched the most effective strategies and interventions employed by different countries and found out that the funding incentive intervention category was the second most common intervention, and it included the provision of school fees, school uniforms, stipends, and provision of sanitary towels. However, the most prominent type of intervention in the scoping review was the provision of any fees charged at school and school uniforms (Cross et al., 2018). Another study by Hallfors done in Kenya 2012 found that school provision of uniforms, school fees, sanitary pads and underpants for girls, monthly food supplements for the households, and community visitors reduced school dropouts and child marriage and pregnancies (Hallfors et al., 2012).

The studies done in Zimbabwe by Hallfors in 2011 and 2015 found that a daily feeding program, provision of school fees and uniforms, and having a school-based helper to monitor attendance and resolve problems reduced school dropouts and child marriage (Hallfors et al., 2011; Hallfors et al., 2015). Studies done by Cho in 2017 and 2018 found that payment of tuition fees, exam fees, and uniform costs to primary and secondary schools reduced the likelihood of dropping out of school and increased the chances of transitioning from primary school to secondary school, and achieving higher grades (Cho et al., 2017; Cho et al., 2018).

A study by Filmer found that the scholarship program increased enrollment and attendance (Filmer & Schady, 2008). Similarly, a study in Zimbabwe by Iritani found that a provision of school fees, uniform, school supplies, and a school-based ‒helper‖ reduced school dropout and absence, but the intervention did not improve test scores (Iritani et al*.,* 2016).

**2.6 Research Gap**

Several studies on girls' education have been conducted around the world as reviewed above. Uganda in particular, a couple of studies have been conducted. For instance, Rutaremwa & Bemanzi, 2013) researched on different factors that hinder school attendance for girls, Desoto et al*.,* (2019) studied early warning systems and school dropout, Atayi (2008) examined how to disable barriers to Girls' Primary Education in Arua District, Tumushabe*, et al.,* (1999) together with other stakeholders, investigated the causes of low participation, performance and persistence of girls in primary school in Uganda. None of these studies covered respondents from Busia. More so, all the studies adopted quantitative approaches and did not consider community perceptions with a human rights approach. UNDP (2016) states in its report that more qualitative data is needed to understand gender equality in relation to education in Africa. Relevant to know was what progress the structural efforts have made on the local community people like the residents of Masinya Sub County and how they perceive the girl's right to education especially at the primary education level.

# METHODOLOGY

## 3.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the methodology that was used to carry out the study. The chapter covers the research design, study population, sample size, sampling methods, data collection methods and instruments, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

## 3.1 Research design

A research design is the ‗procedure for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies' (Creswell & Clark, 2007). It is the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems with the pertinent (and achievable) empirical research (Grey, 2014). This study adopted an explanatory research design. An explanatory design sets out to explain and account for the descriptive information. Explanatory design was chosen because it answers the ‗why' and ‗how' questions (Grey, 2014) and builds on exploratory and descriptive research to identify actual reasons why a phenomenon occurs. It looks for causes and reasons and provides evidence to support or refute an explanation or prediction. Therefore, this design allowed the contextual understanding of social interactions, whereby social behaviour (perceptions) were understood in the context of education.

## 3.2 Research approach

This study also adopted a qualitative approach. The qualitative research approach is a research strategy that involves exploring and understanding meanings that individuals or groups construct from their social reality (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2012). The preference to use this research approach in this study was because the phenomena being studied demanded an understanding within the context to effect both knowledge generation and outcomes necessary for the wellbeing of society (Wertz et al., 2011). Furthermore, related literature has often quantified the issues surrounding girl child education for instance the levels of enrolment, retention, and completion. However, there is not enough knowledge that accompanies such statistical data and such own perceptions can be realised through a qualitative approach because it is usually inductive and places focus on the individual's

viewpoint about the subject matter in question (Creswell, 2012), in this case, girl child's education rights. This approach involved the use of multiple qualitative methods particularly in-depth interviews, Key Informants interviews and Focus Group Discussions. These were influenced by Interpretivism which assumes that access to reality is through social constructions (Myers, 2008). Interpretivists aim at understanding and interpreting meanings in human behaviour rather than generalizing, predicting causes and effects (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Neuman, 2000).

## 3.3 Study population

Masinya Sub County which is in the Eastern border district of Busia has a population of 20,500 people of which there are approximately 2,120 girls between the age of 14 and 18 years (Busia district reproductive health report, 2019). The Sub County has a total of four parishes: Bumunji, Busikho, Butote and Masinya and is served by a total of seven (7) UPE schools. Due to the effect of Covid-19 and the closure of schools, this study was carried out based on parishes rather than schools. Thus, the study was conducted in the parishes of Masinya, Busikho and Bumunji. The participants included girl children who are currently in school, dropouts from school and those who have never attended school. These girl participants were within the age bracket of 12 to 18 years. Also, participants included teachers, parents or guardians of the selected girls highlighted above. Members of the community were included in this study, and these included local council leaders particularly those dealing with education and women related issues. Additionally, leaders from Masinya Sub County were also included particularly those from the education and Community Development Officer (CDO). The study also included the District Education Officer (DEO) and the District Inspector of Schools (DIS).

## 3.4 Sample size selection

The sample size is the number of objects in the sample used for calculating estimates of a given population (McGraw-Hill, 2003). Research scholars argue that a good representative of the population must be chosen. A good sample is representative of the population with no bias in selection from the population. Burns and Grove (2001) state that there are no static rules about the sample size, but a sample should represent at least 10% of the population. The sample size of the study was a total of 141 respondents including 70 girls (40 in school, 20

dropped out of school, and 10 for girls who have never been in school), 40 community members, 8 Local Council members, 6 community opinion leaders, 3 head teachers and 3 teachers (senior women) from the 3 schools in the three parishes, Sub County Chief and Community Development Officer of Masinya Sub County, 2 parish chiefs from the 2 sampled parishes and the District Education Officer and the Busia District Inspector of Schools (DIS). Efforts to reach any official from MoES were futile for the period under which the study was conducted. Thus, the study used a total of 141 respondents including key informants and FGD participants.

**Table 3 1: Demographics of Study Respondents (N = 141).**

| Respondents Category | Gender | | Number | Sampling Technique |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | | |
| Girls in school | 0 | 40 | 40 | Simple random |
| Girls dropped out of schools | 0 | 20 | 20 | Snowball sampling |
| Girls never been to school | 0 | 10 | 10 | Snowball sampling |
| General Community (parents/guardians) | 20 | 20 | 40 | Simple random |
| Local Councils | 4 | 4 | 8 | Purposive |
| Community Opinion Leaders | 6 | 4 | 10 | Purposive |
| Senior Women Teachers | 0 | 3 | 3 | Purposive |
| Headteachers | 3 | 0 | 3 | Purposive |
| Sub County Chief | 1 | 0 | 1 | Purposive |
| Sub County CDO | 0 | 1 | 1 | Purposive |
| Parish Chiefs | 3 | 0 | 3 | Purposive |
| DEO | 1 | 0 | 1 | Purposive |
| DIS | 1 | 0 | 1 | Purposive |
| **Total** | **39** | **102** | **141** | |

Source: *Primary data, 2021*

### 3.5 Sampling techniques

Sampling techniques are methods used in drawing samples from a population usually in such a manner that the sample will facilitate the determination of some hypothesis concerning the population (McGraw-Hill, 2003).

Purposive sampling was employed in this study. Study participants were selected based on their roles and responsibility in ensuring the education of girl children within Masinya Sub County. Specifically, this technique was applied in choosing the key informants and participants that included LCs, senior woman teachers, Parish, Sub County, and district

officials. According to Kumar (2011), purposive sampling is extremely useful when one wants to construct a historical reality, describe a phenomenon, or develop something about which only a little is known.

The study also used a random sampling technique. Random sampling is a part of the sampling technique in which each sample has an equal probability of being chosen. In this study, girls in school and the general community were randomly selected because they were many and the researcher wanted to avoid bias. According to Taherdoost (2016), a sample chosen randomly is meant to be an unbiased representation of the total population and an unbiased random sample allows researchers to perform an analysis of the data that is collected with a lower margin of error and this is important for drawing conclusions.

The study also adopted the snowball sampling technique on girls who dropped out of school and the girls who had never been to school. According to Browne (2005), snowball sampling is often used because the population under investigation is ‗hidden' sometimes due to low numbers of potential participants. Thus, it was used on the categories of ‒dropped out of school‖ and ‒never been in school‖ because of their few numbers in the community.

## 3.6 Data collection methods and tools

The study adopted a qualitative methods approach because the study sought to explore people's perceptions towards the girl child's right to education. Colorafi & Evans (2016) have argued for the use of a qualitative approach in instances where issues of interest are complex, and the study phenomena are not necessarily being measured but rather explored for in-depth insights such as is the case with this study. Also, this study used multiple methods particularly interviews (both In-Depth Interviews and Key Informant Interviews) Focus Group Discussions and Documentary review. The use of multi-methods in this study allows several viewpoints to be captured using one or more methods. This multi-method approach in this study aimed to achieve equal participation and representation of the several research participants who were involved in this study. This resonates with viewpoints such as multi-methods having diverse data collection techniques which essentially allows the researcher to consider not only several viewpoints but also analyse emerging concepts from viewpoints put across by these methods (Abebe, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

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### 3.6.1 Interviews

### 3.6.1.1 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were used with participants who are relatively well informed about the issues surrounding girl child education in the research site and specifically about the rights of girls to education. These interviews were specifically used to get an overview of the right to education of the girl child in Masinya. Specifically, the participants subjected to this interview were engaged in some issues relating to the implementation of the education policies and human rights statutory instruments regarding the education of girl children in the area for instance DEOs, DIS, CDO, the Sub County and parish chiefs and head teachers. Through these interviews, participants were able to give insights into community perceptions on girl child rights to education in Masinya Sub County.

A KII guide was developed based on the objectives and research questions of this study. The KII interview guide was semi-structured, whereby the interviewer used a guide to ensure that all topics are covered, but a certain amount of flexibility was allowed to permit discussion of unanticipated but interesting issues that may arise. Thus, the semi-structured guide allowed the interviewer to ask more open-ended questions and not strictly follow a formalized list of questions, creating an environment for a discussion with the key informants rather than a straightforward question and answer format the interviewer does.

### 3.6.1.2 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

An In-Depth Interviews (IDI) is an open-ended, discovery-oriented method to obtain detailed information about a topic from a stakeholder (Atkinson, 2017). The goal for an IDI is to explore in-depth a respondent's point of view, experiences, feelings, and perceptions. In-depth interviews demand both active asking and listening (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011), this is because it involves the respondents negotiating meanings of questions and reframing their experiences in an act of retelling their stories to fit the immediate context. In using this method, observation and informal dialogue techniques were used as these are known to bring out the intense and intimate emotions and experiences of the participants (DeLyser & Sui, 2014) that go far beyond words. In this study, In-depth interviews were conducted with parents/guardians, community opinion leaders and senior women teachers. These interviews were conducted in places where the respondents were most comfortable. This method was particularly useful in examining and understanding the viewpoint of Senior

Women Teachers (SWTs), opinion leaders, and parents about education as a right for these girls.

The In-Depth Interview used an In-Depth Interview guide which had pre-developed semi-structured questions covering the research objectives. This allowed the interview to flow like a natural conversation. The interviewer could also modify some questions to suit the candidate's specific experiences as informed by past responses. This helped the researcher to develop a real sense of the respondents' understanding of the situation.

### 3.6.1.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) also known as group interviews (Atkinson, 2017) represent a conversation between the researcher and multiple participants at a particular given time. Atkinson (2017) argues that a FGD can either be structured or unstructured and can be useful in building a framework for exploring the participants' reality. In this study, FGDs were carried out among the girls. A total of 7 FGDs consisting of 10 participants each were conducted with girls in their respective categories. After sampling and identifying participants, they were gathered on agreed central points for the FGDs. Those who were still in schools had four FGDs, those who dropped out of school had two FGDs and those who never attended school were organised in one FGD. The essence of organizing girls into specific trait categories FGD was to allow girls to feel comfortable and open up to the researcher. This enabled experience sharing among participants. The FGDs were conducted by the researcher herself and these targeted all the research questions and objectives as spelt out in Chapter One.

These FGDs were administered using an FGD guide, which was developed in such a way that it entailed few and brief questions which were useful in provoking and generating discussions (Barbour, 2007). With the help of this Focus Group Discussion guide, rich data about different experiences from the girls was realised.

### 3.6.2 Documentary Review

The researcher used the documentary review method to collect secondary data. This was to provide the necessary background and the contextual information that would provide a basis for the systematic analysis of further data. Kothari (2004), Junker & Pennink (2010) note that

documentary reviews provide information that can be reused in further research, whether they are published or not published. Document review, therefore, supplemented the primary methods and provided the researcher with an opportunity to gain more contextual in-depth about the problem of the right to education of girl child in Uganda as a country but also where Uganda stands in the region and the world.

The researcher generated a Document Review Checklist as a tool to help in data collection. A document review checklist is a list of the various documents the researcher considers of interest in the data required by the study of concern (Kothari, 2006). Thus, researcher generated a list of documents that contained information about the right to education of a girl child. These included various international, regional and national legal and policy instruments to right to education, MoES publications and Busia district Local government publications. The researcher also included publications from international organisations and human rights bodies like the UN, UNICEF, UNHCR among others.

## 3.7 Data analysis

The study was qualitative and data analysis was done mainly using the thematic analysis method. Primary data from the field was transcribed, coded according to themes and sub-themes of the study's variables. During the interviews and FGDs, the researcher recorded and took notes from the respondents and later transcribed them to come up with clear opinions from the respondents worth reporting on. It is from these discussion notes that the themes and sub-themes were formed, and the views of the respondents were quoted verbatim for the specific objectives as stated in Chapter One. Mugenda & Mugenda (1999) asserted that it is from the results of such analysis that researchers can make sense of the data. Thus, the data was then interpreted, organised, and reported based on the main ideas, comments and concerns from respondents and participants according to these identified themes. This was eventually fully integrated into the findings in Chapter Four by presenting and discussing these findings with the help of the data collected from the review of documents.

## 3.8 Ethical considerations

Levin (2005) observes that in research, ethical considerations rest much and entirely on fairness, honesty, the openness of intent, disclosure of methods, confidentiality guarantees,

and voluntary and informed consent. Thus, the researcher working closely with all respondents including both primary and secondary sources of information endeavored not to abuse the moral and academic ethical concerns needed, such as confidentiality of the sources of data by assuring respondents that the study is purely for academic purposes, mentioning and recognizing the use of other authors academic work whenever they were used.

Regarding access to electronic information, the researcher abided by the Uganda Cyber Laws, which is a stack of three namely: Computer Misuse; Electronic Transactions and Electronic Signatures. The researcher observed the regulations regarding downloading, displaying, viewing and manipulation of material that was visited during the study. For data analysis purposes, the researcher used Alias names to hide the identity of participants and maintain their privacy and confidentiality.

With the help of the introductory letter from the directorate of research and graduate training of Makerere University, I sought permission from the relevant authorities, starting from the district of Busia, then to Masinya Sub County, Parish, and LC authorities in the villages, parents/guardians since some of my study participants were children, I sought the consent of their parents, guardians or those responsible for them before engaging them in the study.

The researcher also fully understood and took the responsibility to provide enough information that enabled research participants t o understand the essence of the study and why their participation was important. To this effect, I developed consent forms where I explicitly explained key issues like the purpose of the research, benefits, participation as well as protection.

## 3.9 Limitations of the study

Much of the work on this study was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic. This caused the researcher to first halt the activities more often to comply with the Ministry of Health standard operating procedures. Mobilizing respondents in such a period was time-consuming and expensive. Also, the Standard Operating Procedures that were instituted to curb the spread of the disease necessitated extra materials like protective gear including masks, hand sanitisers among others. This increased the cost as well as interfered with the proposed schedule resulting in delays to complete the study.

Accessing relevant documents for effective document review was one of the major limitations. Poor record-keeping or the unrefined document keeping systems at local government levels (Busia district and Masinya Sub County) made it difficult for the researcher to access several documents that were thought to be relevant in this study. The researcher managed to access only a few reports and hard to resort to national level reports to deduce the kind of information needed. This limited the contribution of the document review method to this study.

Some of the limitations included bias to participation that arose from either parent asserting their protective roles as adults and either refusing or restricting the participation of some of the would-be girl participants for example there were scenarios where the parents of the girls who had dropped out were reluctant to consent to their daughters participating in the study fearing that sharing such information may be linked to having legal implications such as arrests and prosecution. I addressed this through building relations that established trust among the study population. The trust-building process reassured participants of confidentiality of their information throughout the entire research process.

# PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

## 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents, describes, and analyses the data collected from the field following the research objectives, design and methodology laid out in the previous chapters. The main purpose of the study was to examine different societal perceptions on the right to education of the girl child in Masinya Sub County and why gender inequalities in primary education persisted despite deliberate efforts to eradicate them. The data collected was analyzed thematically by considering each of the specific research objectives stated in chapter one.

## 4.1 Background information of the respondents

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the sample size of the survey was 141 respondents who included girls, head teachers, Senior Women Teachers (SWTs), local council and opinion leaders and parents of the girls from the three UPE schools located in the three parishes: Masinya, Busikho and Bumunji. This sample size also included Key informants from Busia district education department, Masinya Sub County CDO and the parish chiefs from the selected parishes. To optimise space, only selected demographic aspects (age distribution, gender, marital positions, formal education, and religion) of the sample have been highlighted using statistical tables as below.

**Table 4. 1: The age distribution of the girls that participated in FGDs**

| Background Variable | Category | Age bracket | Freq | Percent |
|---------------------|----------|-------------|------|---------|
| Age | Girls in school | 12-15 | 12 | 30 |
| | | 16-18 | 28 | 70 |
| | | | **40** | **100** |
| | Girls dropped out of school | 12-15 | 07 | 35 |
| | | 16-18 | 13 | 65 |
| | | | **20** | **100** |
| | Girls who never attended school | 12-15 | 04 | 40 |
| | | 16-18 | 06 | 60 |
| | | | **10** | **100** |
| **Total** | | | **70** | **100** |

Source: *Primary Data, 2021*

From the table 4.1 above, the total number of girls who participated in the study were 70. The study targeted girls who were between 12 and 18 years old. These included 40 girls who were in school, 20 who had dropped out of school and 10 who were never in school. Of those who were in school, 30% respondents were between the ages of 12 – 15 years and the majority 70% were between the ages of 16 – 18 years. For the girls who had dropped out of school, the majority 65% were in the age bracket of 16 – 18 years while the rest 35% were in the bracket of 12 -15 years. For the 10 girls who never attended school, the majority 60% were in the age bracket of 16-18 years while 40% were in the 12-15 years.

**Table 4. 2: Presents the demographic information of the community members (Parents) that participated in the IDIs**

| Category | Variable | | Freq | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community members (Parents) | Sex | Male | 12 | 60 |
| | | Female | 08 | 40 |
| | | | **20** | **100** |
| | Age | 18-35 | 02 | 10 |
| | | 36-55 | 13 | 65 |
| | | Above 55 | 05 | 25 |
| | | | **20** | **100** |
| | Education | No formal Education | 05 | 25 |
| | | Primary | 08 | 40 |
| | | Secondary | 06 | 30 |
| | | Post-secondary | 01 | 05 |
| | | | **20** | **100** |
| | Religion | Catholic | 07 | 35 |
| | | Protestant | 06 | 30 |
| | | Muslim | 03 | 15 |
| | | Pentecostal | 02 | 10 |
| | | SDA | 02 | 10 |
| | | | **20** | **100** |
| | Martial | Married | 12 | 60 |
| | | Single | 02 | 10 |
| | | Widowed | 04 | 20 |
| | | Separated | 02 | 10 |
| | | | **20** | **100** |

Source: *Primary Data, 2021*

The study engaged 20 members of the community. These were parents in the community but were not necessarily parents of the parents of the girls who participated in the study. Of these 20 respondents, 60% were male while 40% were female.

Regarding their age, the majority 65% were in the age bracket of 36 – 55 years. Other 25% were above the age of 55 years while the rest 10% were in the age bracket of 18-35 years. For education, the majority 40% had attended primary education. Other 30% had attended secondary education, 25% had no formal education while 5% had attended some form of post-secondary education. About religion, the majority 35% were catholic, 30% were Protestants, 15% were Muslims while Pentecostals and Seventh Day Adventists were at 10% each. Considering the aspect of marital status, the majority 60% were married, 20% had lost their partners, and 10% were single parents while the remaining 10% had separated from their partners.

**Table 4. 3: The demographic information of the Local Council (LC) and other Opinion leaders that participated in the IDIs**

| Category | Variable | | Fre | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LC and Opinion leaders | Sex | Male | 10 | 56 |
| | | Female | 08 | 44 |
| | | | **18** | **100** |
| | Age | 18-35 | 04 | 22 |
| | | 31-55 | 09 | 50 |
| | | Above 55 | 05 | 28 |
| | | | **18** | **100** |
| | Education | No formal Education | 01 | 06 |
| | | Primary | 07 | 39 |
| | | Secondary | 06 | 33 |
| | | Post-Secondary | 04 | 22 |
| | | | **18** | **100** |
| | Religion | Catholic | 06 | 33 |
| | | Protestant | 08 | 40 |
| | | Muslim | 03 | 21 |
| | | Pentecostal | 01 | 06 |
| | | | **18** | **100** |

Source: *Primary Data, 2021*

The local leaders were from the three parishes where the study was carried out, of these 56% were male while 44% were female. Regarding their age 50% were in the age bracket of 31-55, 28% were above 55 and 22 percent were in the age bracket of 18-35.

Regarding education the majority 39% had attended primary education, 33% had attended secondary education, 22% had attended secondary education and 6% had no formal education. About religion, the majority 40% were Protestants, 33% Catholics, 21% Muslims and 6% Pentecostal.

**Table 4. 4: The demographic information of the Senior Women Teachers (SWTs) that participated in the IDIs**

| Category | Variable | | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senior Women Teachers | Age | 31-45 | 1 | 33 |
| | | 41-55 | 2 | 67 |
| | | | **3** | **100** |
| | Education | Grade III | 1 | 33 |
| | | Diploma | 2 | 67 |
| | | Graduate | 0 | 00 |
| | | | **3** | **100** |
| | Counselling and guidance certificate | Yes | 0 | 00 |
| | | No | 3 | 100 |
| | | | **3** | **100** |

Source: *Primary Data, 2021*

The study engaged Senior Women Teachers in IDIs. The senior women teachers were from the three UPE schools found in the three parishes where the study was carried out. Of these 3 SWTs, one was in the age bracket of 31-45 years while the other two fell in the age bracket of 41 – 55 years. For education, 2 SWTs were diploma holders while the other one had a grade III certificate. Since the SWT guidelines of 2020 specified that SWTs should receive professional training in counselling and guidance, the study sought to establish whether these SWTs had received this training and it was established that all the 3 SWTs had not received any professional training in counselling and guidance.

**Table 4. 5: The demographic information of the Key informants**

| Category | Gender | | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Male | Female | |
| Head teachers | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| Sub County Chief | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Sub County CDO | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Parish Chiefs | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| DEO | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| DIS | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| **Total** | **9** | **1** | **11** |

Source: *Primary Data, 2021*

The sex of the key informants has been profiled in the table above where the total male informants were 9 compared to one female.

## 4.2 Society perceptions on the right to education of the girl child and how they affect the education of girls in Masinya Sub County

The societal perceptions on the right to education of the girl child were found to be significantly influenced by the cultures and customs of the communities. The study established that the study area of Masinya Sub County district has mainly two ethnic groups namely Samia and Bagwe whose cultures have had a significant influence on the education of girls. The parental perceptions and attitude towards education of girls were found to be influenced by the socio-cultural systems of a patriarchal society, bride wealth and dowry which promote early marriages and viewing education as a sole obligation of the state. These have put girls at a significant disadvantage in relation to family educational investment choices.

### 4.2.1 A patriarchal society

Respondents revealed that Masinya Sub County is characterised by a patriarchal system where much of the aspects of social life is controlled by men who place limits on female sexuality and reproductive choices. Respondents revealed that this patriarchal system meant controlling how a girl behaves and dresses, where she goes, who she sees, and if, who and when she marries. In Masinya Sub County, girls who have relationships or become pregnant outside of marriage are shamed for bringing dishonour to their family, and as a result, are

stopped from going to school. Under this system, Masinya parents see early marriage as a way to protect their daughters and their families as one parent was quoted;

*"Modernisation is bringing a new trend of single mothers which was unheard of in the African setting. Our daughters need to be guided and protected. Every girl needs to live in a family with a husband. This is the same with children. All children deserve to have fathers. That's why parents in this area try to protect their daughter at all costs. Even if it means stopping them from school to get a responsible husband and raise a responsible family".*

IDIs with community opinion leaders revealed the cultural system in Masinya placed men and their power over women in all life aspects. Relations between men and women contained patriarchal values which place men as a superior component compared to women. Therefore, the social and cultural dimension of the study areas that girls must be monitored, protected and directed even if it means being denied education as one opinion leader was quoted.

*"Although the local tribes here have appreciated the value of education, it is not spread equally among sexes of the children. So many parents still look at boys as the extension of family and gladly take boys to schools but are reluctant to extend the same to the girls. These parents instead prepare girls for marriage".*

Views from girls in the FGDs reveals that Masinya Sub County is still a patriarchal society that believes in the education of boys than girls. They acknowledged the fact that many families hide under the guise of poverty to educate boys but the fact is they are driven by the patriarchal systems of the society as one girl was quoted;

*"I am the firstborn in our family but my follower sister and I were never allowed to go beyond Primary three. Our parents say there is no money but our younger brother has now reached Primary Seven. When I insisted on asking our mother why we are not in school, she said we were sacrificed for our brother since there was not enough money". (Girl 4, FGD 7)*

### 4.2.2 Bride wealth and early marriages

The study revealed that bride wealth has contributed to child marriages in the study area. Parents in Masinya Sub County oftentimes give out their daughters to marriage when they are

in their teenage years either to friends, benefactors, visitors, strangers, or even betroth them to respected persons, thus ending their education prematurely. Girls are being removed from school to be married off as young as possible so the families can get this bride wealth- the younger the bride, the higher the bride wealth paid. Responses from Key informants at the Sub County and district acknowledged that although Uganda's UPE policy has seen more girls in primary school, they tend to drop out before they complete. Interviews with community opinion leaders revealed that sometimes girls are forced to marry older men who are in their 50s or 60s. They believe they are protecting their children from harm or stigma associated with having a relationship outside of marriage. To prevent shame to the family through teenage pregnancy, some parents decide to give their daughters in marriage and prevent them from accessing education as one community leader explained;

> *"Some of the parents in this community are not that poor, they just don't believe in the education of girls. They care about two things; that their girls get stable families where they can get married and secondly that they can receive substantial bride wealth".*

However, IDIs in SWTs and community opinion leaders revealed that some of the parents did not pull the girls out of school and force them to get married. These early marriages were initiated by teenage pregnancies. It is the cultural practice of the people of Masinya Sub County that when a girl got pregnant and dropped out of school that the parents come in and demand that the man responsible for the pregnancy pay the bride wealth and marry the girl. It was also established that some girls just elope and run away from school to start cohabiting with a man and when the parents learn of this they come in to demand bride wealth. Views from the community opinion leaders were in agreement with views from SWTs where one had this to say;

> *"Parents are complacent with the situation of girls who get pregnant. That's why teenage pregnancies are a big problem in our school here. When we discover that a girl is pregnant and we send her back home. Almost all of these girls are under age, instead of parent reporting cases to law enforcement, they look for the man responsible for the pregnancy and force him to pay bride wealth and marry the girl".*

### 4.2.3 Perceived girls' duties, obligations and responsibilities

The study established that the value of the girl child was also perceived along the dimensions of family labour and not school, providing labour for the family was prioritised above attending school. This view was one commonly expressed by participants from financially challenged families and households as well as those from low or no educational backgrounds. The study revealed that society culturally expected girl children to take care of the family and household work as part of training for future responsibilities. The study established that some parents withdraw their children from school to take care of household affairs. All the respondent categories agreed that women and girls disproportionately share the burden and care of household work as one girl in an FGD stressed;

> *"Our mother used to refuse us to attend school. She always wanted my sister*
> *and me to stay home and help with the housework".*

Additionally, most respondents stressed that society expected girls do domestic work in the morning before going to school which is not the same for the boys. It was revealed that girls engage in house chores such as washing utensils, sweeping the compound, fetching water among others and this makes them reach school late and sometimes miss out on some classes in the morning. This indicates that the girl attending school is secondary to her roles in the home, the house chores come first and school second. This affected not only whether they can attend school but also the time and energy they can devote to schoolwork. On this matter, one head teacher was quoted;

> *"This is a challenge all over, most of the girls are allocated work in the*
> *morning. They take care of cleaning the homestead, washing utensils, etc.*
> *This work is not given to the boys, so you realise that boys come to school*
> *earlier than the girls".*

Similarly, another girl narrates,

> *"My brother comes earlier than me because he does not do housework in the*
> *morning before school as I do".* (Girl 8, FGD 1)


### 4.2.4 Education viewed as a government obligation

The study established that a significant number of parents (especially the poor and uneducated) perceived the right to girls' education as allowing the girls to attend school but

not providing the basics they needed for schools such as meals and scholastic materials. Interviews with parents, Opinion leaders and teachers revealed that parents looked at the education of children as a government obligation that did not require their input as parents.

In most IDIs, KIIs and FGDs with girls, it was revealed that the parents are not supporting the girls, most girls complained of lack of scholastic materials and the teachers raised the issue of girls not having school uniforms which puts the girls at risk of being abused sometimes sexually in the community as they cannot be easily identified as school going. For instance, during a KII with a head teacher, he had this to say on the same,'

> *"We have a big misconception amongst some parents that the education of their children is the sole responsibility of government. Even the smallest things like books, pens ...etc., these parents just do not feel like they have an obligation to them. Taking an example of school uniform, it is a big problem. Girls come to school without uniforms so it is hard to differentiate them from women in the locality who are just moving. When they move around anybody can find them and misuse them and we have examples of those who have taken advantage of and end up becoming pregnant. School going children should at least have a uniform as a standard to avoid intruders".*

Similarly, girls in the FGDs decried of lack of scholastic materials from their parents. Some girls lack motivation and support from family. It was established that some girls start school but eventually drop out due to lack of support from parents in providing school requirements as one girl was quoted;

> *"I performed poorly at the end of Primary six and I knew I would fail Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). This was because I always lacked books, pens and other class materials. I felt my poor performance was because my father could not provide them as always depended on my mother who could give me what she afforded. The teachers were not supportive and I guess it is because they were tired of my failure to have these materials. I decided to drop and my father does not care. I am looking forward to going to Kampala and maybe getting a job as a maid".* (Girl 7, FGD 6)

**4.3 Challenges surrounding the right to girl child education in Masinya Sub County**

**4.3.1 Poverty**

The study established the primary challenge to girls' education in Masinya Sub County as poverty and its related financial challenges. The majority of the participants and respondents from the KIIs, IDIs and FGDs indicated that lack of financial support was a major challenge for their progress of girls in school. Not having needed funds for schooling has been detrimental to children's retention in schools. Views from the key informants revealed that even though the government funds primary education, household poverty prohibits families from providing other direct costs of education including school fees, transport, educational materials, and cost of food among other things. Thus, most parents weigh the opportunity costs of schooling to reduce the chances of girls' education. During an FGD with girls who were in school, it was established that schooling especially in upper primary required some amount of money that some households in Masinya Sub County could not afford. During that specific FGD, a girl who dropped out of school but was back to school again as a result of her uncle's help had this to say;

> *I dropped out of school because my parents could not pay the school requirements. They are poor and my mother asked me to help her in the market to sell food products. I was an average student in school doing well but you know things happen and have to stop going to school. I used to feel sad because I love education. I am glad that my Uncle can meet whatever the school asks and gives me all materials needed in class and school (Participant 8, FGD 3)*

Key informants from Busia District Education Department as well as Sub County and Parish levels revealed that despite endless calls by the president of the Republic of Uganda to end charging any monies from students, UPE schools are allowed to charge extra fees because government provisions are too little to cater for teachers' welfare and infrastructure development. It was established that UPE schools received capitation grants quarterly which was computed based on enrolment, with each pupil getting only Shs10,000 for a whole year. They noted that charging an extra fee is not a problem as long as parents and school management committees agree on a certain amount to be paid by each student as one official was quoted;

> *"We are equally concerned when it comes to unnecessary demands for money*

*from the parents in UPE schools and we at the education department of Busia District Local government do not accept that. But in situations where parents want their children to live a better life, such parents agree to provide some small contribution and we cannot stop them since it's their arrangement".*

In another interview with a parent who doubled as a Parents Teachers Association (PTA), it was revealed that parents, during their annual general meeting decided on an amount to be charged and which projects to work on. He further noted;

*"The capitation grant is too little to take care of all the needs of UPE schools. Besides, the grant comes at the end of the month sometimes quarter yet it is also small. Teachers need breakfast, lunch and transport. We have also to take care of the school utility bills and other basic needs which need to be handled by parents".*

However, this has turned out to affect many families who cannot afford the agreed amounts as revealed by many parents and community leaders who were interviewed. During an interview with one a single mother of four from Busikho parish and was financially incapacitated to afford the extra fees that were charged in UPE schools

*"As parents, we are not supposed to pay fees in these schools; they force us to do so yet some of us are financially unstable so our children end up dropping out of school,"*

The study further established that poverty and its associated lack of material support demotivated the girls and they ended up dropping from school and opting for child labour. Interviews with parents revealed that most of them due to peer pressure leave for urban centres looking for jobs as housemaids with the help of their parents and guardians. These girls leave for the border town of Busia, while others go as far as Kampala and Nairobi in Kenya. Some respondents mentioned a case where parents forged documents for a girl of 17 years who dropped from Primary Six and was able to be exported to Saudi Arabia where she is working as a housemaid. The money earned by the girls is used to supplement household incomes as it is often sent to the parents who use it to buy scholastic materials and pay school fees for their siblings and other needs in the home. This presents typical exploitation of the girl child in addition to denying her the opportunity to have an education. From the IDIs conducted with the parents when asked about this issue, they justified it saying it is because of the difficult economic situation that they let their girls go to work so that they can

support the younger children at home, the salary is normally paid directly to the parents or guardians and a small percentage left for the girl to buy basics.

However, views from parents in IDIs, as well as girls in the FGDs, revealed that sometimes the girls perform poorly in school and when they repeat several times, they lose interest and opt to drop out opting to go and work as one girl, aged 17 who dropped out of school in Primary Six noted;

> *"I don't think I can go back to school again. I want to look for work in Kampala, or if possible in Arab countries (if I get a sponsor) and help my mother to buy books for my younger sisters and brothers. My friend also dropped out in Primary Five and went to work in Kampala as a housemaid. She has made enough money and now I hear she wants to go to work in Dubai".*(Girl 5, FGD 6)

### 4.3.2 Sexual maturation

Adolescence and its related challenges featured prominently among the different respondent categories. The process of growing up and how it is managed by children, their families and schools were  identified as a potential challenge to girls' education in the study area. The issues raised ranged from personal experiences to interpersonal relations among children, the confusion engendered by body changes, the kind of information provided to children, the reactions of people to the physical and psychosocial changes girls go through, to the hardware facilities for school sanitation (water, latrines, washrooms, etc.), girls' feminine products and other forms of support.

Views gathered from girls in all the FGDs revealed that girls were left to discover for themselves that they were transiting into adulthood. Asked whether adolescence was a challenge, girls were acutely aware of this as a challenging stage especially in relation to the lack of sanitary protection and the possibility of being taunted about it. Teachers and head teachers also agreed that it was a challenging period in the lives of girls as one senior woman was quoted

> *"Some girls may get menstruation; then they feel that they are dying. Unfortunately, they may not know that their time has come so they panic. After the first experience, the anticipation of this in school is always traumatizing".*

Interviews with Head teachers and SWTs further elaborated on the problem of menstruation in girls. It affects girls' ability to stay in school and because of this some schools in the study area purchased some sanitary pads that could be kept in the custody of SWTs and the girls would approach SWTs in case of need. SWTs revealed that they used that chance to advise girls on the use of clean towels to manage their periods while at school and boost their confidence to be in school even on such days. However, these sanitary pads are given only on the first day and this was not enough as one SWT stated;

> *"The issue of girls' menstruation is still a challenge to many girls. The school tries to buy some sanitary pads which are given to girls on first-day emergencies when period finds them at school. I try to educate these girls on the usage of the washable cotton towel but some girls miss school because they are not comfortable without quality sanitary wear".*

### 4.3.3 Teenage pregnancies

All respondents in the study stated that when girl learners get pregnant, they automatically stop going to school. Although the Ugandan law does not allow pregnancy to halt a student's education, key informants revealed that all schools oppose this and once a girl gets pregnant, the school administration suspends the victim, for the least. Responses from the head teachers showed that these learners can only be allowed back to school after they have given birth. Once pregnant girls are suspended or expelled from school, most of them end up dropping out of school thus being denied their right to education. In IDIs with SWTs, it was revealed that although schools have no problem in allowing girls back after the delivery, they are reluctant to allow girls back for fear of creating a complacent environment that would encourage other girls to get pregnant. The PTAs are also supportive of such decisions and this makes it difficult for girls to enjoy their right to education as one SWT explained;

> *"Although I, personally agree with the law and feel that pregnant girls should be given chance, the school management and society, in general, think otherwise. The school is reluctant in taking pregnant girls back even after they have been delivered. It is a shame that parents in the annual PTA meetings agree to make school policies that deny these girls their rights. I think without a deliberate effort to enforce the MoES policies, schools in the localities will continue denying girls chance their right to education".*

During an interview with the head teacher of one of the schools in the study area, he also maintained the same;

*"As head teachers, we do not make decisions about such matters. We have PTA, management and disciplinary committees who decide on these matters. They passed that once a girl gets pregnant she should be suspended from school until after delivery. Some of the members of these committees strongly insist that even after delivery, these girls should try other schools where they are not known for fear of influencing other girls to get pregnant. Our hands as head teachers sometimes are tied and nothing much we can do".*

Looking at the effects of teenage pregnancy, responses from all the categories of study participants made it clear that the girls face stigmatization, ridicule, and neglect from parents and teachers' abuse. The study also showed that even after giving birth, most underage mothers terminate their education for fear of shame, stigmatization, and ridicule from the school and society and being rated as ill-mannered children as one head teacher explained;

*"Once these girls give birth, they can come back to classes and continue with school. However, our society is not friendly. Right from the homes and the students themselves. These mothers become laughing stocks as examples of bad manners and students make it worse with all sorts of bullying. These girls are not mentally strong to absorb all this and they end up dropping out of school".*

Views from girls in the FGDs revealed the same story. They acknowledged that once a girl gets pregnant, the chances of continuing with education even after birth are so slim. During an FGD with girls who dropped out of school, one girl was quoted;

*"When I got pregnant, I was in primary six, I really wanted to continue with school and become a doctor or nurse. I was told by my parents that I could not continue. Even after I got a miscarriage at four months they could not allow me to go back to school saying that I was a bad girl who did not deserve better. I tried to involve other relatives but they are all encouraging me to look for a man and get married".* (Girl 2, FGD 6).

Another girl also stressed;

>*"I got pregnant when schools first closed due to covid-19 in March 2020. When schools later opened I had given birth but when I reported back to my school, I was told that I was not welcome. I tried another school in the neighbouring village, they told me the same story. I really want to continue with school but I don't know where to go. My parents are not supportive to take me to a private school".* (Girl 9. FGD 5).

Even the few who manage to get back to school, chances of completion are in balance as one girl explained;

>*"When I got pregnant and delivered my father had refused me from going back to school. However, a local civil society organization helping girls supported me and took me back to school. The environment is not friendly. Fellow students abuse me all the time and teachers are not supportive even when I report some of the incidences. Girls do not want to be my friends and even their parents stop them from associating with me. Sometimes I feel that I may get peace when I leave school and maybe get married".* (Girl 1, FGD 2)

### 4.3.4 Gender-based violence

Gender norms of Masinya Sub County play a role in how girls understand abuse and violence and how they experience and react to it. Respondents revealed that the social norms in the study area devalue girls and limit their power to act against this violence. For example, IDIs with community opinion leaders and some parents revealed that most young girls in the study area are socially expected to be submissive and less assertive in expressing their feelings and often do not discuss personal issues in public. IDIs with parents revealed that girls always told their parents that they get harassed by teachers and by male students when they are going to school, in school or going home. This violence has acted as a deterrent for parents to send their daughters to school, as they fear risks to their safety as one parent was quoted;

>*"I married off my daughter before she finished Primary Seven because I had started hearing that some male teacher was involved with her. When I confronted her, she denied but I knew the stories were true. Instead of her getting pregnant before marriage (like our neighbour's daughter) I decided*

*she gets married".*

Responses from KII further revealed that there were inadequate mechanisms of support for school-going girls suffering from sexual abuse. The parents were confused on how to deal with information that mainly came as rumors. There were no avenues to deal with claims of violence and schools were completely ignored such claims unless there was physical violence or a girl got pregnant. One parent to this effect stressed;

> *"A parent can report claims of violence to teachers or head teachers.*
> *Unfortunately, many teachers will not do anything about these abuses until*
> *the parent of the girl turns up at the school to confront the teacher or students*
> *who are accused of harassing their child".*

IDIs with SWTs however contradicted the views of parents. SWTs claimed that victims of violence were not coming out to report cases for action. They claimed that they had instituted channels and mechanisms through which victims of violence could report. However, the SWTs also blamed the community expectations that victimized girls who came out to report violence especially of sexual nature as one SWT noted;

> *"It is not true that schools do not care about violence against girls. The only*
> *problem is that schools cannot act when girls do not report. In most cases,*
> *you look at a girl acting depressed and you suspect something wrong must*
> *have happened to her. You call her and ask her to open and after a struggle,*
> *she can tell you of how certain boys, or in rare cases a teacher has been*
> *disturbing her. Girls need to report as soon as unwanted harassment is*
> *directed to them".*

Views from girls in the FGDs revealed that violence within school environment was regarded as normal and as girls they had nothing much to do to control. They acknowledged that sexual bullying from boys was treated as normal and harassment from teachers was hard to report as girls feared being mistreated once they reported.

> *"A certain teacher kept of calling me to his residence after school hours.*
> *When I went there he started touching me. I went and reported to one*
> *teacher who instead reported back to the teacher who had harassed me.*
> *They started mistreating me in class".* (Girl 10, FGD 5).

Regarding violence outside schools, views from girls from FGDs revealed that some girls experienced violence from other members of the community. These included *boda boda* riders who hurl insults at girls as they commute to and from school. Other gangs of boys in trading centres and villages were also reported by girls to be the main inflictors of violence on girls. Some of these gangs elude community law enforcers and this scares girls and parents and some end up dropping out of school as one girl was quoted;

> *"There are groups of boys and men who take advantage of school girls. Some use material things and money to convince girls to engage in sexual activities while others can easily rape you since we go to school very early. One of my classmates was raped when we were coming from school late in the evening. Law enforcement never got the boys and they kept terrorizing other girls. My father decided that I drop out of school and now I am learning tailoring from a tailor shop in our trading centre".*

### 4.3.5 Lack of contextualized government support to create an inclusive and quality learning environment

Interviews with key informants revealed that free and compulsory education has proven not to be sufficient for girls to successfully stay and complete primary education. The majority of key informants believed that the government has failed to enact financial incentives to support families to maintain girls in school. The majority of respondents noted that girls' education has become extremely popular, but resources have not been adequately distributed to support girl education initiatives. For instance, key informants noted that one of the most significant barriers to an inclusive and quality learning environment is the lack of female teachers. With female teachers generally only at the lower primary levels, girls do not have strong women role models to whom they can reach out and receive moral and emotional support. This male-dominated atmosphere breeds instances of sexual harassment. Male teachers and classmates are ensured of impunity for their actions, and girls are afraid and unable to speak about their experiences, particularly in the power relationship of teacher-student.

Both KIIs and IDIs stressed that as girls progress through primary education classes, specific provisions for girls become increasingly scarce in UPE schools. Mature teenage girls need special provisions, such as sanitation facilities, provision of sanitary materials, and

nourishment to offset their inability to invest time in domestic chores, such as food preparation. In respect to the physical school environment, the majority of respondents stressed that inadequate and unsafe infrastructure, particularly the lack of toilets, gender-segregated toilets, changing facilities, and access to safe drinking water have discouraged girls in Busia district as a whole from attending school. Lack of toilets and in particular gender-segregated toilets affects both girls and boys, however, given the specific needs of girls, the impact disproportionately falls on girls. Respondents argued that girls require toilets for menstrual hygiene purposes, this includes access to sanitary products, without which girls often miss school because of the social stigma of menstruation. Experience has shown that when girls do not have access to these facilities and resources, girls drop out to provide for themselves and their families.

### 4.3.6 Uganda primary education curriculum

Responses from key informants noted that although the new curriculum tried to balance the gender regarding reference content, they noted that a significant part of the school design and curriculum, as well as treatment within the classroom, favours the education and development of boys over girls. They noted that the curriculum reinforces the existing traditional gender stereotypes, which means that girls and young women cannot envision themselves transcending these traditional cultural roles as one SWT in an In-depth interview opined;

> *"The new primary curriculum tried to tackle the issue of gendered stereotypes. However, the gendered stereotypes in reading schemes are still obvious. When you take a keen look, boys are being presented as more adventurous than girls, as physically stronger and as having more choices. Girls on the other hand are presented as more caring, more interested in domestic matters and as followers rather than leaders".*

Key informants from the Busia district education department stressed that despite improvements in the school curriculum regarding gender, primary schools remained important contexts for the socialization of young children's gender attitudes and behaviour towards liking education. They noted that teachers and classmates shape children's gender attitudes and, in turn, gender differences in cognition and behaviour. Unfortunately, teachers receive relatively little training in recognizing and combating gender stereotypes and prejudices - their own and others - and, as a consequence,

teachers often model, expect, reinforce, and lay the foundation for gender differentiation affecting girl pupils.

KIIs with district officials continued to reveal that gender stereotypes are still hidden in school routines and practices. Teachers and other support staff facilitate children's gender biases by marking gender as important and using it to label and organize students. They revealed that their inspections to schools found out that boys and girls are still being asked to line up separately and seating plans assume girls and boys never like to sit together or talk to each other. During one of the visits to schools in the district, one key informant noted that a Physical Education (PE) teacher was a large range of stereotyped insults, his most common, was _like a girl' in reference to weak students. Thus, Busia as a traditional district has reserved cultural beliefs against girl education, most schools create and maintain - rather than counteract - traditional gender stereotypes, biases, and differences and this have affected some girls who see no future in education and desire to pursue the expected life path from earlier on.


## 4.4 Responses to the challenges surrounding the right to girl child education in Masinya Sub County.

### 4.4.1 Increase in the number of female teachers

Responses from KIIs agreed that women in education have the power to uplift young girls and break gender norms in communities. They noted that increasing the number of female teachers improves gender equality by acting as inspiring role models for young girls to seek education. KIIs with officials from the district revealed that the government took a deliberate effort to increase female teachers in primary schools. These key informants revealed that about 70% of teachers are women in all levels of pre-secondary education in Busia district. This was reported as an improvement from the early 2000s when the number of female teachers stood at less than 30%. However, it was established that the greatest concentration of female teachers occurs in the earlier years of schooling, and the share shrinks at each successive level of education. It was established that while women represent 97% of the teaching staff at the pre-primary level and 83% at the lower primary level (primary 1 and 2 classes) and about 60% at the middle level (Primary 3 and 4 classes), they made up less than 30% at upper primary (Primary 5, 6 and 7 classes).

Similarly, views from girls in the FGDs revealed that the presence of female teachers was considered a major attraction, just as the services of senior women was widely acknowledged and celebrated by the children in those schools in Busia district.

Views from girls who participated in the FGDs revealed that female teachers encouraged and motivated girls to stay in schools. Girls reported that female teachers were always on hand to advise them against getting pregnant, as well as advising them on how to maintain personal hygiene.

> *"There are some of us girls who want to go for early marriage so the teachers encourage us to stay in school. Mostly these are female teachers. They are like our mothers. These female teachers advise us on how to behave and to hold ourselves in communities and families that push us to get married".* (Girl 3, FGD 1)

### 4.4.2 Senior Women Teachers

The interviews with key informants revealed that MoES has been implementing the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS) to ensure that schools provide a safe and supportive learning environment for the girl child. One of the important aspects emphasized by the BRMS is the institutionalization of the positions of Senior Woman Teacher (SWT) in primary schools to reshape the character and aspirations of girls while at school by offering guidance and counselling to the learners that either report their issues directly to them or through other peers and stakeholders. Key informants revealed that the government realized that there were some information gaps in HIV and AIDS, personal health, puberty and maturation, violence against girls, and sexual reproductive health among others. This limited access to information meant that girl learners possessed a limited capacity to protect themselves. Thus, it was established that the main task of these SWTs is to create awareness and provide life skills education to girl learners.

In assessing the role played by the SWTs, key respondents maintained that SWTs play a critical role in promoting learners' emotional, social and physical well-being. They support young people resolve challenges that accrue from growing up which would ultimately impede the achievement of their educational outcomes, and long term goals. Interviews with SWT revealed that they are required to work with the Head teacher and other stakeholders to offer relevant skills education to the girls as one SWT opined.

*"To contribute to the survival of girls in fragile school environments to be able to complete school, girls should be guided to achieve their desired dreams through training them on skills like negotiation, managing peer relationships, effective communication, relating well with others, self-esteem, assertiveness, effective decision making and creative and critical thinking. This is what we do as SWTs in these schools".*

Views from girls in the FGDs revealed that SWTs roles allowed girls to feel more comfortable coming to school during adolescence or menstruation. The girls noted that SWTs improved girls' education in many ways while providing them with a safer, more comfortable learning environment as one girl was quoted;

*"I used to absent myself from school during my menstruations because I would feel uncomfortable in class. However, when I missed a test and opened up to the teacher, he referred me to the senior woman. She counseled me and told me that with the right sanitary wear, there was no need for me to be absent because I would miss a lot of class activities in the whole term. I now do not miss classes even when I am menstruating".* (Girl 6, FGD 3)

Another girl in a school where the SWT organized group counselling opines;

*"Our Senior Woman organizes termly group counselling sessions for all girls from Primary 5 to Primary 7. Group counselling provides girls with a valuable learning experience because it offers an opportunity for young girls to learn from group members. When a girl contributes something meaningful to fellow group members, a positive sense of self occurs and all girls want to copy and do the same. The senior woman encourages mature and capable girls to offer support and help others facing girl challenges".*

However, it was established that although the SWT guidelines of 2020 produced a clear job description of SWTs, they get little support from other teachers and the community, little or no training, no budget for activities or salary for the extra work; their workload is huge since they are full-time teachers of two subjects in all grades. This limits the impact that they would have on the girls' education.

### 4.4.3 Guidance and counselling of girls

The study separated the SWTs and counselling because it was established that some schools had other designated girls' counsellors other than the SWTs. The study found out that schools understood that guidance and counselling were very important and instrumental in guiding and protecting the girl child from falling into traps that would hinder them from continuing with their education. They, therefore, instituted the *office* of the Senior Woman Teacher (SWT) which offers guidance and counselling to the girls while other schools had an extra teacher assigned that role. Interviews revealed that SWT and the designated girls' counselor were female teachers who had been entrusted by the school management (as provided in education policy or the PTA) to stand in for the students in case they have problems more so the girl child who faces social problems at school, home and the outside world. They encouraged girls to be courageous confident and guided them on how to overcome challenging situations that would otherwise hinder their education.

This study revealed that SWTs and girls' counselors performed major functions such as counsellor, health teacher, role model and life skills teacher, this was however a voluntary role that did not come with any remuneration. In their role as a health teacher, the SWT guided the girls on how to manage themselves when they were in their periods - this aspect was important because most girls tended to stay at home during the days of their periods since they did not know and did not have materials to use during such days which interfered in their right to education because they missed lessons which would make them perform poorly and in some cases give up on school altogether.

In her role as a counsellor, respondents revealed that the girls confided in the SWT in cases of sexual harassment at home or in the community and the SWT would comfort the girl and take an extra effort to reach out to the girl's parents especially the mothers and talk to them about the girl's situation and find a way forward, for example, reporting to the authorities, these innervations eliminated some of such vices that would otherwise hinder the girl from continuing with her education.

Views from FGDs with girls revealed that the SWTs constantly called for meetings with the girls especially from Primary Four to Primary Seven and talked to them about their rights as girls and encouraged them to stand up and say no to such vices such as early marriages, sexual exploitation from old men (*sugar daddies*), issues of early pregnancy and unlighted them on the need to resist all these temptations and stay in school. In support of this, one

SWT stressed;

*"The office of SWT is very important for the education on girls….. for instance, there some girls not minding about school because of the nearby trading centre some girls come to school with a uniform then later change into casual clothes on their way home and meet with boys and men due to lack of some basics at home that they look for them elsewhere. I usually collect this information call these girls and counsel them. While a few continue, get pregnant and drop out of school, many have been saved".*

Similarly, another girl emphasizing the role of SWTs explained;

*"The SWT has invited female role models who have come to school and talked to us. For instance, at the end of 2019, our SWT invited our female area MPS who came and had motivational talks with the girls"* (Girl 7, FGD 2)

### 4.4.4 Enactment of by-laws

The key informants from Masinya Sub County revealed that sexual and gender-based violence were some of the major factors that led to girls dropping out of school. They, therefore, enacted a by-law in 2018 to combat sexual and gender-based violence in the community to give chance to girls to stay in school. The by-law in Article II emphasized the right to education and stated that it was the community's role to protect women and girls at risk of being subjected to harmful cultural practices or other forms of violence, abuse and intolerances that would hinder them from enjoying their rights including the right to education. Article 5 of the by-laws shall be the duty of a parent, guardian or any person having custody of a child, and in particular, that duty gives a child the Right to Education and guidance, and that it was the responsibility of every parent or guardian in the Sub County to ensure that all school-age going children irrespective of gender are at school. The by-law puts the responsibility on a parent or guardian to provide: Scholastic materials; Uniforms; Foodstuffs for lunch meals at school; and Guidance to every child. On assessing the impact of this by-law on the right to education of girls, responses revealed although the impact is limited by lack of resources to popularize the by-law in communities, some of the leadership of parishes like Bumunji had enforced the implementation and had witnessed

significant improvement in the reduction of instances of early marriages, violence against children and household child labour.

Key informants from Busia district local government applauded the move by Masinya Sub County to put this by-law in place. Responses acknowledged that Sub Counties were more on the ground than the district. They stressed the Community Development Officers (CDOs) were grassroots development supervisors who were positioned to monitor and enforce efforts that were designed by communities to curb such social vices as school dropouts. The responses acknowledged that before the outbreak of Covid-19 and the closure of schools in 2020, Masinya Sub County had improved to one of the best Sub County regarding enrolment and retention of girls in primary schools.

### 4.4.5 Parents' Teachers' Association

The study established that the Parents Teachers' Association (PTA) is a formal establishment in the school system which is made up of parents whose children are currently registered as students in the school, together with teachers in the school. Generally, the study found out that PTAs provide a means for the parents and teachers to work together, a channel to articulate their needs, a forum for the exchange of educational views, an urge for the school to make a parent policy, an opportunity for them to participate in the educational process of their children, a means to pool the parents' strength in supporting the school development, a network for the parents to meet and exchange their views such that children could fully enjoy their right to quality education.

Furthermore, interviews with head teachers and parents revealed that PTAs aimed to motivate parents, especially in the rural areas, to send their children to school. They acknowledged that it is the responsibility of PTAs to find ways and means to decrease students' dropout ratio and teacher absenteeism in the institutions. In support of this, one parent, who doubled as the chairperson PTA of one school opined;

> *"PTA has done some pockets of good work in promoting education of girls. Although some parents out of ignorance to do not appreciate the work of PTAs and as a result do not cooperate, PTAs made an effort to contact parents whose children (especially girls) had missed school for some time and*

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*encouraged them to send their children back to school. Some have responded positively and sent pupils back to school".*

Interviews with parents and head teachers also revealed that PTAs have been involved in providing personal hygiene facilities such as washbasins, stands and soap in classrooms and toilet rolls in latrines and one head teacher explained;

*"We had a problem with latrine stance ratio for girls. In one general PTA meeting, it was resolved that each parent contribute Uganda shillings, Eight thousand shillings and at the end of one year, we had a latrine constructed. This has improved the hygiene and comfort of girls in this school".*

## 4.5 The case of Girl Up Initiative Uganda (GUIU) and promotion of the girls right to education in Butabika Parish, Nakawa Division, Kampala District

Girl Up Initiative Uganda (GUIU), founded in 2012, runs programs in Butabika Parish, Nakawa Division, Kampala District that aim to empower adolescent girls and young women through education, leadership skills and economic empowerment. The organization targets adolescent girls between the age of 9 and 24 years. Whilst girls and women constitute organisations focus group, their approach engages boys and men as well, as this is key to bringing about lasting gender transformation. The outcome is a harmonious and informed community of confident, aspirational independent girls and women, supported by gender-conscious boys and men.

This organization is implementing a number of programs focused on education and skilling to build young girls' aptitudes for individual empowerment and social survival. GUIU confronts gender inequality to help young girls through education to advocate for themselves and to build their self-esteem. GUIU addresses areas of education that are missing from young girls' everyday lives and schooling and this has equipped girls with critical thinking skills and gives them the tools to deal with unfair education realities in their daily lives thereby enhancing their right to education. Thematic areas for GUIU include self-esteem and body image, violence against women and children, children's rights and leadership skills. The organization is implementing the Adolescent Girls Program (AGP) to promote girls' right to education.

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**4.5.1 The Adolescent Girls Program (AGP)**

Adolescent Girls Program (AGP) was established in 2013 in Butabika Parish, Nakawa Division, Kampala District. Similar to the objectives of this study, the AGP is an in-school program that focuses on building adolescent girls' capacities for individual empowerment and social flourishment, especially in patriarchal environments that do not value and respect the rights of girls and women. AGP tackles gender inequalities head-on to ensure that women and girls become advocates for their human rights (with special emphasis to the right of education) and build their self-esteem, autonomy, and self-worth.

The specific objectives of the program consist of supporting adolescent girls, ages 8 to 15 years to: 1) Improve primary school retention; 2) Improve self-esteem and self-confidence; 3) Increase leadership skills; 4) Reduce school days missed during menstrual periods; and 5) Improve knowledge and skills in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality, and human rights. The program also recognizes the importance of engaging with other stakeholders and influencers who impact a girl's life and well-being, particularly men and boys. Therefore, two objectives are related to this aim: 1) Improve knowledge and skills in SRHR, gender equality, and human rights among boys; and 2) Increase engagement with parents and teachers to support girls' education.

The AGP consists of a cluster of synergistic activities to ensure that girls receive the skills, knowledge, tools, mentorship, and support to develop their self-confidence and voice to thrive as leaders in their schools and communities. The AGP model has been refined over the past 5 years of implementation. GUIU has designed a number of strategies to help in achieving these objectives as explained below;

Year-long Training Program: 10-day program for 80 girls per school which is spread over 10 months with one session per month covering the topics such as: life skills, self-esteem and body image, puberty and menstruation, and violence against women and children.

Parents' and Teachers' Meetings: GUIU organizes meetings with the parents and teachers of AGP girls to promote girl-friendly home and school environments. Parents are engaged throughout the project life cycle and must consent for their girls to participate in the program. Schools host three meetings a year for parents to learn about the program, ask questions, and discuss ways to jointly support girls.

Big Sister Network: Network established for AGP graduates to nurture girls as mentors and peer leaders. Activities include: an annual leadership camp, yearlong facilitation and mentorship, and advocacy outreaches. The involvement of female role models and mentors (including former programme beneficiaries) was a successful component for several interventions. It proved to be an effective way of engaging community members, showing parents and the wider community that girls and young women have enormous potential, and strengthening girls' own ambitions for greater opportunities through education.

Boys' Dialogues: GUIU engages with 80 boys per school, three times a year, to gain knowledge on critical topics such as life skills, relationships, and gender. The dialogues bring attention to boys' role in gender equality and nurturing girl-friendly environments. The Boy Champions Project also hosts parallel sessions with boys in schools to ensure that boys are also being invested in and obtaining the same information. Boys in the program are encouraged to recognize the value of girls and encourage them to pursue leadership positions.

Counselling and Emergency Support: GUIU provides emergency gender-based violence support and general counselling for vulnerable adolescent girls. Through this intervention, girls are enabled to recognize their personal values and strengths. Girls are given a variety of scenarios that educate them on the different types of violence, their impact, and how to prevent cases of GBV. The myths that surround violence against women are debunked and girls realize that gender-based violence is a violation of their human rights.

Other strategies adopted by the project include; Mass Campaigns, Girl Up Clubs and School Scholarship Program. GUIU holds mass campaigns for all school girls, ages 9 to 15 years on critical topics such as life skills, sexual and reproductive health, and gender based violence. In the Girl Up Club, Girls meet weekly to develop practical skills in making reusable sanitary pads, bags, notebooks, etc. as well as taking part in arts and painting and yoga and meditation. Under the School Scholarship Program, AGP participants who are at high risk of dropping out of school due to their parent/guardian's financial inability to pay school fees are provided with an annual scholarship.

**Table 4. 6: Impact of the AGP intervention on the Girl's education in Butabika Parish**

| Sn | Variable | After interventions (in per cent) | Before interventions (in per cent) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Primary completion parity | 49 boys : 51 girls | 53 boys : 47 girls |
| 2. | Girls who can refuse unwanted sexual attention | 87 | Not established |
| 3. | Girls believe in the power of education to improve their lives | 96 | Not established |
| 4. | Girls holding leadership positions in their schools | 40 | 31 |
| 5. | Girls knowing their human rights, specifically that every girl in Uganda has a right to an education. | 95 | 38 |
| 6. | Girls capable of making decisions about their bodies | 88 | 79 |
| 7. | Girls knowing that it is not ok for men and boys to expect girls to have sex with them in exchange for gifts | 96 | 58 |
| 8. | Woman should not tolerate violence for the sake of her family | 64 | 55 |
| 9. | Girls feeling confident enough to refuse unwanted sexual attention from a relative or someone they knew. | 83 | Not established |
| 10. | Girls who feel entitled to report abuse in all its forms from sexual abuse to physical abuse | 71 | 46 |
| 11. | Girls have knowledge on gender-based violence (GBV) and understand that it can impact both boys and girls | 71 | 40 |
| 12. | Girls not shy in schools and community | 51 | 39 |

Source: *AGP report, 2019*

The 2019 AGP report reports that by the end of the 2018, five years of program implementation, 40% percent of the girls under the project held a leadership role within their schools, up from 31 percent before joining the program. There are various opportunities for leadership within schools. These roles vary from being a Head Girl, who serves as a role model for positive classroom behaviour, to being a Class Monitor who assists the teacher in

taking attendance and managing the classroom. Each of the roles gives the girls positive attitude to stay in school and they use their newly acquired leadership skills in a greater capacity to positively influence others. The AGP graduates have taken on leadership roles both in formal and non-formal roles in the school environment. The AGP 2019 report quotes a student, Apili Nelly (13 years) who showed leadership in her community and believed that one of the greatest things she learned is counseling her fellow students irrespective of the gender because they were taught that not only girls needed to be advised, but also boys and that both sexes complimented each other.

A significant 95 percent of AGP graduates know their human rights, specifically that every girl in Uganda has a right to an education. This is a positive outcome, considering the program's emphasis on teaching girls about their human rights. The program affirms that girls' rights are necessary to enjoying a life of freedom of dignity and that they have equal rights to boys. Girls also learnt that rights come with responsibilities, including sharing the information they have learned with others. The report notes that once knowledgeable about their rights, the girl demonstrated a passion to not only advocate for themselves, but also for others. This has helped to influence other girls in the communities to stay in schools and as well help in creating favourable environment that enables girls to want to stay in school.

AGP has improved girls confidence and self-esteem to actively get involved in educational activities. Self-esteem and positive self-image are the building blocks for a girl to feel empowered to be a leader. AGP has provided a space for participants to be proud of what makes them girls and what makes them unique as individuals. Program graduates demonstrate a high level of confidence, not only about their skillsets, but also about their bodies. The report noted that in many school settings, girls feel shy and fear speaking up in class as most of indigenous customs shape girls, while the boys are more actively involved. The facilitation of the AGP sessions have ensured that girls have the opportunity and safe space to speak up and share their ideas, feelings, and opinions confidently. Report noted that girls voluntarily come to the front of the class to give their ideas and to present their learnings in skits, songs, and other activities. Thus, the study acknowledged that by equipping girls with the tools to build their self-confidence, AGP was able to combat negative influences that may impact their sense of worth and ability to remain in school.

AGP has increased knowledge on sexual and reproductive health among girls. AGP realised that many girls are not provided with the correct information and knowledge to enhance their capability to make healthy and informed decisions about their bodies and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). Adolescence is a critical period for girls as they experience bodily changes due to puberty and the expectations it brings to a girls' life and choices. In the AGP interventions, girls gain knowledge and acceptance of their menstrual periods. Because of the interventions of this programme, 88% of girls now report that they are capable of making decisions about their bodies, as opposed to 79% pre-program. AGP graduates were able to share their knowledge on SRH with others who did not benefit from the program and this has enabled girls in the community to go through life and increase their self-esteem so that the body changes do not make push girls into making mistakes and they complete primary education.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) has been established as a factor is leading girls to drop out of school. Given the rampant incidence of GBV in communities in Uganda, AGP realised teaching girls how to identify and report cases of GBV was an effective preventative approach. The girls are taught what to do and who to report to in cases of violence and abuse. Participating in the AGP gave girls the ability to say _yes' to good influences and _no' to bad influences. Due to the program interventions, 71% of participants have correct and improved knowledge on GBV and understand that it can impact girls, compared to 60 percent before the program. Similarly, after the AGP, 64% of girls did not believe that a woman should tolerate violence for the sake of her family, up from 55% at the beginning of the program. It is also important to note that 71% of program girls felt entitled to report abuse in all its forms from sexual abuse to physical abuse. The AGP has also equipped girls' with the confidence and skills to lead discussions with adolescent boys on SRH and GBV that allows them to obtain the same knowledge as the girls. This have equipped the girls with skill set to handle bullying from men and boys in homes, at school and in the communities thereby encouraging girls to stay in schools.

# DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH

## 5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. This is done in light of the past studies to establish how the present findings relate to the past findings

## 5.1 Background information of the respondents

The study targeted girls who were between 12 and 18 years old. Although the MoES sets the primary education age to start at 6 years and end at about 13 years, there is no law that exerts specific year of entry and exit. Responses showed that promotion to subsequent classes and ultimate completion of primary level depends on one's ability to pass each class. This was the reason why the researcher put the upper age of respondents at 18 years. Therefore, the decision of this age bracket was to ensure that the researcher collects the views that were a representation of all the girls in the community of Masinya Sub County. This finding is supported by UNESCO (2013) country report which established that the patterns of school attendance of girls in urban and rural areas were different. As confirmed by this study, UNESCO (2013) established that the average age of girls completing primary school in big urban centres was 14 years compared to 16 in rural areas.

For the community members, age, level of education and religion were found to be big influencing factors in the education of girl child. While it was hypothesized by the researcher that the senior members of the community had enough resources to send their girls to school, the study established that young parents who were below the age of 45 years sent their girls to schools more than their senior counterparts. One recent  study by Ziol-Guest, Duncan, & Kalil, (2022) agrees with this finding arguing that young parents in sub-Saharan Africa strive to ensure that their children (irrespective of gender) attend schools in the view that  they regard education to shape the future of their kids positively.

The study also established that 25% of the community members had no formal education while the majority 40% had attended primary. Although it was not on the scope of this study to establish the correlation between education levels of parents and children attending

schools, various studies agree with the opinion of the researcher that the high rates of primary school dropouts in Uganda are associated by low literacy rates of the parents, most particularly in the rural areas. One of the most alarming social trends in the past 40 years is the increasing educational disadvantage of children raised in low-income families. Differences between low- and high-income children in reading and math achievement are much larger now than they were several decades ago, as are differences in college graduation rates. In this regard, UNESCO (2013) noted that girls born of un-educated parents are more likely to drop out of school and less likely to finish primary school than a child from an educated family. Similarly, the same report (UNESCO, 2013) noted that girls in single-parent families are more likely to drop out of school and less likely to finish primary education than two-parent children. Ziol-Guest, et al., (2022) also acknowledged that single-parent families face many challenges that married families do not experience which hinders them from sending their children to school.

About religion, the majority 35% were catholic, 30% were Protestants, 15% were Muslims while Pentecostals and Seventh Day Adventists were at 10% each. Religion was found not to have significant effect on the education of girls in Masinya Sub County. Although the researcher had anticipated to find a negative influence of religion on the girls as had been established in review of literature, Masinya Sub County was found to be a multi-religious community that have evolved from rating education along religious notions to the contemporary life aspects. This finding is in contradiction with the study conducted by Holger Daun (2016). In his study of Christian versus Muslim primary school enrolment, Holger Daun (2016) an expert in educational policy at Stockholm University argues that religion counts as much as economic factors in determining attainment. Supporting his assertion, Platas (2016) an assistant professor of political science at New York University-Abu Dhabi, states that the Christian-Muslim attainment gap particularly in Muslim-majority areas is caused by religious misrepresentation, poverty, and lack of access to schools.

However, there were elements where Muslims prevented their girls from attending Christian-oriented schools in favour of Muslim schools considering Christian schools secular and likely to re-orient girls to wrong perceptions about life. This finding is in line with Platas (2016) who argues that some Muslims believe that secular government schools are Christian-oriented, thus discourage their daughters from attending.

**5.2 Society perceptions to the right to education of the girl child and how they affect the education of girls in Masinya Sub County**

The study established that Masinya Sub County is a patriarchal society where much of the aspects of social life is controlled by men who place limits on female sexuality and reproductive choices. Despite all the social changes in recent decades, traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity were still widespread. Gender inequality and discrimination are rooted in the Masinya culture. Most of the positive changes that have occurred in human society have been inspired by the fundamental concepts and values that inform human rights, the inherent dignity of all human beings of both sexes, all races, ages, capacities, ethnicities, religions and nationalities. However, this has not reflected in Masinya Sub County. Family as a social institution was found to play an influential role in moulding the thought process of a child and general community about life aspects. Socialization through gender norms, values and stereotypes start from home and from the moment a child is born, gender roles are assigned according to the biological sex of the child. Sadly, this also defined how the children receive opportunities including education. This patriarchal society placed men and their power over women in education where the emphasis was placed on the education of boys than girls. The field findings indicated that boys were believed to fit better in the future workforce than girls and this influenced education choices in favour of boys than girls. In the FGDs, most girls seemed to talk about how the girls were not strong for doing the innumerable tasks, while maintaining that boys were stronger because of their physical prowess. That showed that both the schools and society at large had schooled these girls into patriarchy thinking, they will continue to be flag-bearers of this unjust structure. These issues frustrated the efforts by the governments to ensure that girls access education under the UPE programme and predated against the enjoyment of the right to education. The above findings of patriarchal society hindering the education of girls are corroborated in literature. A study by Moghadam (2004) describes how a patriarchal society is characterized by ‒male domination, son preference, restrictive codes of behaviour for women, and the association of family honour with female virtue‖ limited the education of women. Other recent studies like Hyde (2018) and Davison and Kanyuka (2012) concluded that patriarchal norms were a common reason that hindered girls to access school because of the favoured treatment of boys. In Kenya UNESCO (2018) under the Global Partnership for Girls and Women‗s Education reports that patriarchy still dominates in Kenya and financially deprived families

would rather send their sons to school. Similarly, Abuya & Onsomu (2014) concluded that girls in Kenya are always pushed to ‚suppress expressions of their own intelligence' hindering their access to education.

The study established that the cultural practice of charging bride wealth has contributed to child marriages which hinders girls' enjoyment of the right to education. It was revealed that some parents removed girls from school to be married off as young as possible so the families can get bride wealth. It was found out that even when a girl got pregnant and dropped out of school, the parents instead of reporting to law enforcement came in and demanded marriage and bride wealth from man responsible for the pregnancy. The arguments of support from parents were rooted in the past where the tradition of bride-price is believed to have operated beneficially to give formal recognition to marriages and protection to wives against abuse, to stabilise the partnership and to join the two families together. Today, however, the researcher opines that the practice appears to have become commercialised and to have lost much of its traditional value in many instances. While some poor parents were glad to remove their girls from schools to have them married off, some respondents believed that bride wealth appeared to be the ‚buying' of a girl as a commodity, which usually resulted in abuse towards the girl if she did not fulfil her expected responsibilities. Despite the fact that in 2015, the Supreme Court in Uganda ruled that bride price should be optional and in a case of divorce, it is illegal to ask for a refund, support for bride price continues in many Masinya community families. Therefore, the cultural practice of demanding bride wealth for girls in Masinya Sub County has significantly contributed to girls dropping out of schools thereby denying them not only their right to education but also their dignity in case the husband found the woman outside expectations. This study finds agreement in the literature. For instance, Kakuba (2014) highlights the examples in Africa to show how the combination of cultural and economic elements can explain the households' choice of school attendance for their children, such as bride price or social behaviour. Similarly, an earlier study by Tumushabe, *et al.,* (1999) had investigated the causes of low participation, performance and persistence of girls in primary school in Uganda and found that the girls are disadvantaged in some parts of Uganda due to the bride price which instigated early marriages. A study in Nigeria by Bolaji (2007) noted that early marriage had been institutionalized in many parts of Nigeria and this practice prevented girls from attaining meaningful education.

The study further established that the value of the girl child was perceived along the dimensions of family labour and providing labour for the family was prioritised above attending school. Excessive housework was found to be greatly affecting girls' education in the study area. The majority of the girls in the FGDs expressed that they lacked enough time to focus and complete their homework and to study at home. The Masinya society expected girls to do domestic work in the morning before going to school which is not the same for the boys and when they return from school, most have to continue working on the household chores. This affected not only whether girls attended school but also the time and energy they devoted to schoolwork affecting their right to education. A study by Sarker et.al. (2017) on parental attitudes, gender equality and school attainment in Bangladesh discovered that parents focused on raising their daughters to become ideal caretakers of the households, which is of greater importance than receiving education. Similarly, Chisamya et.al. (2011) conducted a study in Bangladesh and Malawi and established that the general opinion derived from traditional attitudes, roles and norms based on gender, was that girls should aim for becoming good wives and not focus on education. Regarding balancing household chores and school Kola (2014) established that the girl child also helps with the household chores and look after the younger ones which must be performed alongside school.

The study established that some parents viewed the provision of education as a sole obligation of the government. The problem among the residents of Masinya Sub County is the problem that is facing the rest of the country. The government lacks either the financial resources or the political will to meet the' educational needs of all children. At the same time, because of poverty and associated problems parents believe that with the introduction of UPE, education became a sole responsibility of government. A significant number of parents perceived the right to girls' education as mere allowing the girls to attend school but not providing the basics they needed for school. This frustrated some girls who eventually drop out due to lack of education basic needs affecting their right to education. This finding is in line with the distributive justice theory which argues that it is the duty of governments to provide services to the marginalised groups of people by coming up with interventions that can ensure equal access to rights, by distribution of resources to protect the least advantaged (Sandel, 1998). Also, this finding is in agreement with Cassen & Kingdon (2017) who established that governments in developing countries face a daunting task of ensuring that universal free education should be provided to students alongside minimum scholastic

requirements to poor children or risk children leaving schools.

## 5.3 Challenges and responses surrounding the right to girl child education in Masinya Sub County

### 5.3.1 Challenges surrounding the right to girl child education

The study established the primary challenge to girls' education in Masinya Sub County as poverty and its related financial challenges. The direct costs of education including school fees, transport, educational materials, and cost of food among other things was not met by parents because of poverty. The observations made by the researcher when interacting with school children as they had been asked to come with their scholastic materials and three quarters did not meet the standard scholastic material requirements. While family poverty is clearly related to dropping out, the researcher believed that the UPE intervention should have mitigated this problem. School PTAs have been entrusted with authority to levy some fees for the development of education in the schools. Families living in poverty often have to choose between sending their girl child to school and providing other basic needs for the family. This study established that UPE schools in Masinya Sub County at the time were charging money ranging from UGX10,000 to UGX 45,000 and interactions with girls revealed that nearly two girls in every FGD claimed that they had been sent home from school due to lack of some sort of fees. The persistence in charging fees had called for President Museveni at the end of 2019 to direct all schools under the UPE programme to immediately suspend all illegal extra fees charged on parents as schools open for the first term, schools defied this order. The subsequent countrywide random survey conducted by Daily Monitor revealed that schools continued to charge parents extra fees ranging from UGX 5,000= to UGX. 100,000 following the opening for the new term on February 3, 2021. This therefore continued to disrupt girls' participation in learning activities hindering their right to education. UNESCO (2013) noted that disruptions in attendance ranged from just a few days to much longer periods and in severe cases can resulted in a child failing to complete the school year. The researcher concluded that inconsistent attendance contributed to girls falling behind in school and eventually dropping out of school.

Although, in line with Distributive Justice Theory, the Government of Uganda (GoU) have made efforts to guarantee access to education by removing school fees, the requirement that students wear uniforms may undercut those efforts. Under the UPE programme, a uniform is

optional, and no pupil is to be turned away from school for failing to wear one. Even so, in practice teachers and school administrators continue to deny learners access to school for not wearing a uniform. The school uniform is a requirement highlighted in the socio-ecological model as organisational factors that could hinder attainment of the right to education. As a result, some parents keep their children at home to avoid the stigma of not being able to afford a uniform. More so, through PTAs, parents are still expected to provide their children with exercise books and pens, personal hygiene materials and schools still raise funds for social, cultural, and sporting activities. Demands from schools for contributions are creeping back in, even when the government has stated that they should not be requested or must be negotiated first with the parents in the PTAs. Both parents and girls revealed in the study that learners especially girls' risk being sent home from school for failing to wear a uniform or more likely, were not admitted during the first days of school term without one. A countrywide random survey conducted by Daily Monitor on February 3, 2021, confirmed these reports, and found that despite the free education policy, schools continue to require pupils to wear uniforms. PTA fees, costs for books and materials, and the uniform requirement have held down attendance rates in Uganda and deny up to one quarter of school-aged children with a high indication of girl learners their right to education.

This finding highlights the potential educational impact of girls wanting to drop out of schools to take on paying jobs. The study established that lack of scholastic and sanitary materials due to poverty demotivated the girls who ended up dropping out school and opting for child labour in urban centres as housemaids. Roughly 30 percent of students who drop out of school between the ages of 11 and 16 are working in a variety of jobs rotating around urban household and retail businesses, according to a study by the GUIU, a non-profit organisation based in Nakawa Kampala. This is against the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which features the right to education prominently stating that ‒Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory…‖ On the other hand, SDG Goal 8.7 also calls for the elimination of all forms of child labour by 2025. Similarly, the principles and rights established in eight ILO core Conventions are also regarded as human rights which all ILO Member States are required to respect, promote and realise. The ‖fundamental principles and rights at work‖ concern freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child

labour, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The four categories of rights are mutually reinforcing: the elimination of child labour will be achieved much more quickly and efficiently when these other rights are also respected.

Worsening the impact, the researcher noted that money earned by the girls is often sent to the parents to support other siblings, especially boys to continue with school. This represents typical exploitation of the girl child in addition to denying her the opportunity to have an education. For poor families, children are most often involved in child labour because their parents or guardians consider it _normal' for children to work, and although it is for their own survival, this study revealed that it was for the survival of their families. Field experience in Masinya revealed that it was common for parents to have control over their children's money as children did not have understanding of how to handle money. Actually, all girls in FDGs who had worked in their lives agreed that in many families, girl labourers were expected to give any money they earned to their parents. This was different with boys. It should be noted however, that these children had been already denied an education and therefore unethical and illegal for parents to take their money as they please without consent and without using the money to benefit the child. Parents argued that although they may lack money to pay for the girls' education, they felt entitled to their children's money because they spent to raise them. Parents are not entitled to take their children's money. It is imperative that where a child has missed an education, the parent protects their children's best interest by guiding them in how to handle their finances.

Poverty has already shown such a girl that the world is cruel, and that it is difficult to get started with no foundation. Teaching children about financial literacy is a vital skill that will set them ahead in life. Thus, the habit of parents using child labour remittances to better the family situation is a direct provocation of the right to a living and livelihood. Various studies have also shown that poverty has remained a serious enemy of girl child education (Kola 2014; Sperling 2005; in Onyeike, & Angela, 2011). Kola (2014) asserted that parents struggling to raise a child, often see poverty as adding extensive stress to the family hence many girls who should be in class have been withdrawn to work for money. This results in child labour. Sperling (2005); in Onyeike, & Angela (2011) indicates that rightly or wrongly impoverished parents often feel they need their girl-child‖ labour for additional income, just to help with the grueling requirements of life.

Another challenge was established as sexual maturation where girls transited into adolescence. The process of growing up is poorly managed by girls and they experienced personal challenges related to flawed interpersonal relations, the confusion engendered by body changes and the problem of menstruation in girls which was expounded by limited hardware facilities for school sanitation (water, latrines, washrooms, etc.). The researcher being female shares the conviction that adolescence is a critical turning point for girls. For adolescent girls, appropriate Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities are a particularly important part of ensuring their safe and healthy participation in school. The researcher believed that WASH facilities have both _push' and _pull' factors for girls' education. Girls can struggle to attend and stay in school if they do not have safe, single-sex and hygienic facilities, which are essential for menstrual hygiene management. Although there is still little evidence, reports have recognised that _the introduction of appropriate water and sanitation facilities has been associated with improved girls' attendance.' In addition, UNESCO (2013) notes that _girls are particularly at risk of sexual violence when using unsafe facilities at school.' Indeed, girls in this study reported feeling fearful in accessing latrines, and UNHCR (2018) notes that _young girls/children and women who walk long distances to water points are at risk of sexual violence.' Conversely, learning about menstrual hygiene and pubertal changes can encourage girls to come to school during their menstruation. WASH facilities in schools and the wider community can also free girls from having to collect water, allowing them to have more time in education.

By not having the social and physical infrastructural support to manage the process of growth and development or having resources to manage their periods, girls miss school and this often leads to a permanent drop-out. The researcher opines that girls' right to education can be affected as they can be excluded from participating in education activities when they lack supporting infrastructure. Embracing inclusive education for girls naturally requires transformation of education systems, and this change process is consistently challenged with several encounters. To ensure equity for girls to an education, transition to adulthood must be addressed broadly, in relation to key sanitary facilities, appropriate information to bridge the knowledge gap and teacher student relations to foster the dignity and self-esteem of learners. This is in line with Lund (2018) who argued that the inevitability of girls' biology means that menstruation can act as an interruption of girls' education and without support, the confusion can interrupt the interpersonal relations among children leading to frictions and loss of

motivation for education. Miiro, et al.2018) argued that in places like Uganda, females miss because of menstruation one to three days of primary school per month while other studies like Hasan, et al., (2021); Grant, Lloyd, & Mensch, (2013); Shamsudeen, et al., (2020) found that the provision of sanitary products is linked to a female stay in school and have proven to be important to the education of females

The study further established teenage pregnancies as another challenge to the right to girl child education. Although teen pregnancy and parenthood are considered outside factors for school disengagement among primary school students, teen pregnancy and early motherhood represent a cost of opportunity for girls, given the lack of adequate conditions, poor understanding and inadequate approach to the problem, resulting in the interruption of formal education or definite dropout by adolescent girls. The researcher understood that teenage pregnancy has varied negative impacts on teenager life, not only on health, but also, among others, on self-esteem and on social all of which affect their educational experience. It was found out that once learners get pregnant, they automatically stop going to school. Even after giving birth, most girls terminated their education for fear of shame, stigmatization, and ridicule from the school and society and being rated as ill-mannered. This finding revealed that although the right to education stressed in Uganda's policies allow pregnant girls to continue with education, they are denied access and even where girls get back into the education processes, the environment makes it difficult for them to stay in school and most of them end up dropping out. While the researcher like most respondents believed girls who got pregnant never wanted to return to school, AGP (2019) stressed that girls who left school due to pregnancy reported that they would have stayed in school if they had received greater support from the adults at school. This notion is shared by UNESCO (2013) which acknowledged that illegal discrimination against these girls by school administrators, teachers, counselors and fellow students is a major contributing factor to their high dropout rates in Uganda. Also, research shows that when schools make an effort to support pregnant girls in their education, they can have a significant impact in lowering their drop-out rates. This finding is corroborated in literature where Sampa, et al. (2018) established those early pregnancies were among the leading causes of school dropouts in Zambia. Similarly, another study by Hallfors done in Kenya in 2012 saw the interventions to reduce pregnancies among schoolgirls proportionally reduce school dropouts.

When pregnancy interferes with the educational process, it poses a clear and undeniable risk to the girls' right to health. Theoretically, the increased risk of medical complications associated with teen pregnancy mainly results from lack of physical maturity. From a socio-cultural perspective, isolation, social stigma, single parenting, and the convergence of the pregnancy with the psychological crisis entailed by adolescence lead to greater risk of physical and mental disorders associated with stress. Several population studies confirm the existence of this risk, consistently demonstrating that pregnancy poses a health risk for teenagers, in the physical as well as the mental and social dimensions. While there is broad evidence to support the risk posed by pregnancy to the physical and mental health of a teenager, clearly the greatest risk is concentrated in the social dimension of health, which includes all the factors related to her well-being and life plan. Regarding mental health, high rates of depressive symptoms have been observed in teenagers during pregnancy and the postpartum period, reaching as high as 57% during the first four years after giving birth (Figueiredo, et al, 2007) two to three times higher than rates for the adult population in general. A study of 125 pregnant Colombian teens found that they suffered twice the rate of depression compared to those who were not pregnant (Bonilla-Sepúlveda, 2010).

The study also established that gender-based violence prohibited girls from enjoying the right to education. Social norms in Masinya Sub County devalued girls and limited their power to act against this violence. Girls are socially expected to be submissive and less assertive in expressing their feelings and often not to discuss personal issues in public. Field interactions with respondents revealed that schools are not isolated from traditions, culture, norms, customary laws and governmental policies that exist in the country and the community, nor from individual experiences of students and staff both outside and inside schools and educational institutions. There were elements which reflect that schools implicitly legitimised and reinforced harmful gender norms and stereotypes against girls. Schools normalised a violent environment both in the classroom and outside it by using authoritarian pedagogy that strengthens the unequal power balance between boys and girls by allowing boys to superimpose their choices over the class and by not properly addressing sexualized bullying.

Thus, the respondents viewed violence in school and along the way to and from school as a deterrent for parents to send their daughters to school, as they feared risks to their safety. Moreover, the norms and principles of non-violence are at the core of all fundamental human rights treaties. According to Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ―States

Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.‖ General Recommendation no. 19 on violence against women of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women states that ‒The Convention in article 1 defines discrimination against women. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. Gender-based violence may breach specific provisions of the Convention, regardless of whether those provisions expressly mention violence‖. This implied that a girl's right to education, physical and emotional wellbeing and prospects are all affected by violence in and around the school. This finding concurs with King and Winthrop (2015) who opined that school-based violence or threats of violence of different forms militated against learning for all students but most especially girls and serves as a deterrent to both school continuation rates and academic performance. Similarly, Prinsloo (2016) concluded that the sexual harassment or abuse of girls by teachers and peers imposes huge physical and psychic costs on parents and students that deter schooling.

On the side of government, the study established that lack of contextualized government support to create an inclusive and quality learning environment for girls. The government has failed to implement interventions like increasing the number of female teachers, provision of sanitation facilities gender-segregated latrines and changing rooms to maintain girls in schools.

This finding is echoed in the international instrument of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women which explains that women's and girls' access to education is dependent upon the availability of adequate infrastructure to meet their needs. GR 36 notes that: Where girls and women lack access to quality education, they ultimately face major difficulties including lack of personal autonomy and choices including; control over their health and sexual and reproductive decisions; lower quality healthcare for themselves and their children; intergenerational poverty; and, lack of power-sharing and participation on an equal basis with boys and men in both the private and public domains (CEDAW, 2017).

Also, the study found that the Uganda primary education curriculum was a challenge towards girl education. A significant part of the school design and curriculum, as well as treatment within the classroom, favours the education and development of boys over girls. The curriculum reinforced the existing traditional gender stereotypes, which prohibited girls from envisioning themselves transcending their traditional cultural roles. The researcher through observations of the textbooks revealed reeks of stereotypical images of women working in beauty parlours, or dressing themselves up, or serving in restaurants. More images of men or boys could be seen in science and mathematics books as compared to girls / women, because of course, it apparently requires a great deal of brains to engage in these subjects, and only boys can do better.

The researcher like many respondents agreed that intentions of NSGE matched numerous other well outlined policies in Uganda. The NSGE priority areas of focus include effective Policy Implementation Framework for Girls' Education; harmonization of Education Sector Programmes on Girls' Education; commitment of requisite Resources to girls' education; and institutionalized/Routine Research in the area of Girls' Education and Capacity enhancement and involvement for all critical actors in Girls' Education. The implementation always remained a challenge affecting the girls' right to education. This finding is supported in the literature, for instance, Blumberg (2007) linked the gender bias in textbooks to a hidden gender bias in formal curricula that leads girls away from school.

Blumberg (2007) further argues that the evidence suggests that insufficient work is occurring in most national educational systems to modify curriculum content, textbooks, and teachers' skills and understanding of gender issues and this was militating against greater gender equity in access to education.


### 5.3.2 Responses to the challenges surrounding the right to girl child education

The study established that the government took a deliberate effort to increase female teachers in primary schools. This has encouraged and motivated girls to stay in schools as they act as role models to girls and unconsciously encourage retention of girls especially among rural and cultural communities like Masinya Sub County. My opinion as a researcher stands that the school quality, measured by the number of trained teachers in the administrative post rather mere teachers has a positive and significant impact on enrolment and retention but it is the gender composition of the teaching staff that is even more important in

determining the household decision to send children to school. Both the simple proportion of teachers who are female, as well as the share of trained female teachers among all teachers are important positive determinants of retention. In various field discussions of this study, it was clear that parents often felt more comfortable sending their children to schools that employ female teachers and administrators because the presence of female teachers created a notion of safety and this can be attributed to the less risk of sexual harassment and violence. For a country like Uganda, and Masinya in particular, women in education have the power to uplift young girls and break gender and norms. Therefore, increasing the number of female teachers can improve gender equality and public health as female teachers have an important role to play in providing girls in school with accurate information about their own bodies and how to look after them. This does not only improve on the girls' right to education but also their right to health since they will be in position to make informed health choices in their lives.

Both the finding and researcher's point of view find support in literature. Research that examines teacher gender and academic performance from developing countries comes from India, Pakistan and Botswana. In India, a study found that girls' test scores were higher in subjects taught by female teachers and that they dropped when male teachers instructed the same students (Aslam & Kingdon, 2017). In Pakistan (Warwick & Jatoi, 1994) interviewed teachers, students and supervisors in over 500 government schools – both single-sex and co-educational schools – controlling for student social class, student gender and teacher characteristics to assess the effects of teacher gender on students' mathematics scores. Female students or more highly trained female teachers in urban schools who employed certain teaching techniques performed the best in mathematics tests. The authors argue that the inability (due to social biases and safety issues) of rural schools to attract and retain female teachers with training in mathematics may be the largest factor influencing rural female students' low mathematics scores. The only available research on this topic from Africa is from Botswana. In one study, researchers in Botswana found a positive relationship between the proportion of female teachers and girls' achievement levels in school (Mwamwenda & Mwamwenda, 1989). Kirk (2016) reported that there is evidence to show a correlation between the number of women teachers and girls' enrollment, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The placement of a female teacher, therefore, can have an immediate impact on access to education by the girls. In a study by Bista (2015), it was

established that the presence of women teachers in schools impacted positively on girls' retention in school and on their achievement. Bista (2015) like in this study noted that a female role model can support and encourage girls to successfully complete their studies.

The study also established that the government has institutionalized the positions of SWT in primary schools to reshape the character and aspirations of girls while at school by offering guidance and counselling to girls. The researcher agrees with the intervention and opines that SWTs play a critical role in promoting learners' emotional, social, and physical well-being. They support young people resolve challenges that accrue from growing up which would ultimately impede the achievement of their education outcomes, and long-term goals. Because of their importance, MoES developed these guidelines to guide on the appointment of Senior Women and Senior Men Teachers in schools and also streamline their roles and responsibilities. The relevance of these SWTs is underscored by the guidelines for the implementation of the roles and responsibilities of the senior women and senior men teachers in Uganda (2020), Gender in Education Sector Policy (2017) and the National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE) in Uganda that emphasizes the important roles that SWTs and play in shaping the destiny of the learners. This is further accentuated by the Teachers professional code of conduct (2012) which imposes a duty of care of children at school in the hands of teachers.

Although the approach of using SWTs in addressing the mentioned challenges girls face in schools has been tested and proven effective, the study found challenges that affected the girls' stay in schools hence affecting their right to education. For instance, the interviewed SWTs and head teachers revealed that before 2020 guidelines for the implementation, SWT responsibilities were not clearly designated and since the release, SWTs have not been educated and trained since some of the responsibilities require technical skills. These respondents also noted various challenges that included: SWTs having heavy workloads because they must also teach a full schedule of classes which leaves little time for interacting with the girls; they get little support from other teachers and the community; SWTs lack facilities, such as an office or room, in which to meet privately with girls; SWTs lack funds to cover materials like sanitary napkins; and SWTs lack support from parents and other teachers.

Views from girls in the FGDs revealed that SWTs roles allowed girls to feel more comfortable coming to school. This finding is supported by Okudi (2016) who established that SWTs advise and support girls, so they overcome their challenges and make important

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decisions that allow them to keep in school and progress to other levels. Similarly, Bista (2015) argued that SWTs can also be there to listen to any problems and provide guidance when necessary. The presence of SWTs may also ensure protection for girls in the minority from unwanted attention from boys or male teachers, and even from sexual abuse and exploitation.

The study established that PTAs aimed at motivating parents, especially in the rural areas to send their children to school. The study also found that PTAs are also tasked to find ways and means to decrease students' dropout ratio and PTAs have been involved in providing personal hygiene facilities which have made the life of girls comfortable. The stand of the researcher concurs with above finding. The involvement of parents in the school affairs is very crucial for the proper upbringing of their children. I can argue that some parents send their children to school without making a follow-up, but PTAs will draw the teachers and parents together which will foster good learning. It can be noted that PTAs can only achieve much if they manage to develop a congenial and harmonious relationship between parents and teachers to avoid bureaucratic rigidity on either side. The educationists at the district level believed that parents were closely involved in the day to day running of the school and would put the school administrators to task and at the end of the day, they believed that this reflected in the performance and general outlook of the school. This finding concurs with Okendo (2012) who established that PTAs provide a means for the parents and teachers to work together to promote discipline and protect learners including girls. Similarly, Onderi & Makori, (2013) reported that PTAs are involved in monitoring the implementation of school programmes, monitoring education services and ensuring that children in the communities' access quality education. UNICEF (2009) notes that PTAs have been involved in providing sanitation facilities.

The study established that schools in Masinya Sub County have institutionalized guidance and counselling and most schools had teachers appointed as counsellors although SWTS took the major lead in providing guidance and counselling. The designation of the SWT is very instrumental in guiding and protecting the girl child from falling into traps that would hinder them from continuing with their education. On top of playing functions such as counsellor, health teacher, role model and life skills teacher, SWTs called for meetings where they taught girls about their rights and encouraged them to stand up against vices such as early marriages, sexual exploitation, early pregnancy, and the need to resist all these temptations and stay in

school. However, the SWTs as well as other Key Informants noted that the office of the SWT was not facilitated to offer impactful services on the lives of girls. They noted that girls face various problems and if the SWTs are to handle them effectively, they need to be facilitated and motivated. They believed that this could improve the status of girls in their enjoyment of the right to education at the primary education level. This finding is corroborated in literature where Kirkpatrick (2014) argues that the school counsellor plays an integral role in empowering adolescent girls to stay in school. Also in an earlier study, Walz & Bleuer (1992) had concluded that providing a safe environment where adolescents know they can talk without being judged and that what they share will remain confidential is vital for solving learner's problems and subsequently improving the learner's outcomes.

## 5.4 The case of Girl Up Initiative Uganda (GUIU) and promotion of the girls' right to education in Butabika Parish, Nakawa Division, Kampala District

The implementation of the Adolescent Girls Program (AGP) project led to a number of effects on the behaviour of school going girls within school and the community at large.

The project empowered girls with leadership aspirations. The AGP (2019) report indicated that 40% percent of the girls under the project held a leadership role within their schools, up from 31 percent before joining the program. The leadership aspirations encourage girls to stay in school. The interventions aimed at making girls learn to lead by actually leading and fully participating in what matters from the ground up. These were opportunities that nudge girls to think critically, speak up, and take up leadership. While evidence about leadership effects on student learning and stay in school can be confusing to interpret, much of the existing research actually underestimates its effects. The total (direct and indirect) effects of leadership on student learning and stay in school account for about a quarter of total school effects (UNHCR, 2018). Especially when we think of leaders in formal administrative roles, the greater the challenge the greater the impact of their actions on learning. While the evidence in literature shows small but significant effects of leadership actions on student behaviour across the spectrum of schools, existing research also shows that demonstrated effects of successful female student leadership are considerably greater in schools that are in more socially developed (Leithwood et al., 2004). Nonetheless, the researcher believed that deliberate interventions that encourage female student leadership enable girls to take advantage of some future possibility, but rather practicing leadership in the present which

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make them have control of their lives in  school which encourages their stay and completion of education level.

Project interventions led to a significant 95 percent of AGP graduates having knowledge of their human rights, specifically that every girl in Uganda has a right to an education. This is a positive outcome as it will stick in girls' heads that they must enjoy their right like their male counterparts. Scanty literature suggests that empowerment comes from not only  girls knowing their rights but also knowing that those in power are aware, duty-bound,  and actively supporting these rights. In the absence of literature to support this finding, the researcher also feels that such interventions to inculcate the knowledge of human rights among the girls provides them as much opportunity as possible to experience the feelings at first hand, and to reflect upon them themselves, and serve the most profound of  all educational ends – to finish education level. The assurance of their own right enables the girls to learn to think for themselves. Leithwood et al., (2004) acknowledge that empowering girls with knowledge of human rights is moral literacy and is a requirement skill to make responsible and rightful judgments regarding the  seeking education. A humane school experience will teach for such skills, while making everything about girls' schooling easier and liked (Leithwood et al., 2004).

AGP has improved girls' confidence and self-esteem to actively get involved in educational activities. Self-esteem and positive self-image are the building blocks for a girl to feel empowered to stay in school. The AGP project opined that healthy sense of self-confidence is necessary for girls to develop social skills, become more resilient, and embrace her full potential in education. The project believed that girls with a healthy sense of self-confidence are able to feel good about themselves and know that they deserve respect from others. In the context of right to education, girls need resilience and GUIU acknowledged that self-confidence enables girls to handle setbacks with ease. Instead of being crippled by structural challenges that lead to lapses of failing, resilient girls get up quickly, learn from the challenges, and try again. The researcher notes that the management of self-esteem is important for early adolescent girls as they grow and develop as the onset of adolescence triggers a shift in expectations regarding a student's functioning in the school environment. Literature notes that possessing a healthy self-esteem has been linked with a  reduced incidence of depression, anxiety, substance use disorder among other comorbidities (Corning & Heibel, 2016). Similarly, UNHCR (2018) acknowledges that helping girls discover their

strengths and providing them opportunities to build confidence in doing things that come naturally to them during the early days of adolescence builds their esteem in the student community and encourages them to stay in school. However, Corning & Heibel (2016) argue that in the efforts to educate girls about self-esteem and self-love, they must be encouraged to take risks and understand the difference between progress and perfection.

AGP has increased knowledge on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) among girls and have correct and improved knowledge on GBV. Adolescent girls lacked information regarding their sexual health, services available, and redress mechanisms for rights violations. GUIU noted that formal sources of information were frequently inaccessible. It not uncommon that family members are sometimes the source of rights violations, and informal methods of redressing rights are often sought as stigma and fear are common features both in healthcare and in the pursuit of formal justice, with duty-bearers habitually breaking confidentiality. Targeted interventions for the realisation of adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights addressed underlying causes and positively shifted attitudes to promote health. Thus, AGP interventions ensured that girls were less exposed to the risky sexual behaviour that would result in occurrences that would hinder their stay in school. Literature shows that many girls are not provided with the correct information and knowledge to enhance their capability to make healthy and informed decisions about their bodies in many schools in Uganda (UNESCO, 2013). The researcher like UNHCR (2018) noted that understanding the knowledge on reproductive health is an important facet in the lives of primary students with a direct implication on completion of primary education studies and progression to other levels.

## CHARPTER SIX

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents conclusions derived from the findings, and the recommendations that could help in improving the community perceptions on inclusive primary education and the girls' right to education in Masinya Sub County, Busia district.

### 6.1 Conclusions

### 6.1.1 Society perceptions to the right to education of the girl child and how they affect the education of girls in Masinya Sub County

The study findings on objective one above led the study to conclude that the families and parents perceived the right to education differently. It was also concluded that these perceptions have over time been shaped by not only the culture of the people of Masinya Sub County, which culture has also over time been shaped by the education and exposure attained by the parents and guardians of the girls. The differences in family/parent perceptions of the right to education have affected the education of girls differently.

### 6.1.2 Challenges surrounding the right to girl child education in Masinya Sub County

The study established that several challenges are surrounding the right to girl child education in Masinya Sub County. However, the study concludes that the poverty and lack of adequate contextualised support from the government to girl child education were the most significant factors that hindered girls from enjoying the right to education. Many parents are hiding under other aspects like culture to marry their daughters, or to send them to work to gain material wealth.

On responses to the challenges, the study findings reveal that several responses have been instituted both at the national (government) society/community and school levels. However, these responses are not fully supported by all the stakeholders and the implementation is of these responses significantly flawed. Therefore, the study concludes that the design and administration and monitoring of the responses are inadequate to protect and promote effective enjoyment of the right to education by girls in Masinya Sub County.

**6.2 Recommendations**

1. From the national level, the government and educational policymakers should resist the creation of gender-segregated educational contexts and instead seek to enhance co-educational schools' promotion of gender-egalitarian attitudes and behaviour in class. The training of teachers needs to be realigned to recognize their own explicit and implicit biases and how these biases affect their classroom behaviours. Additionally, upper primary teachers should receive explicit training in confronting children's biases, so that they reduce peer policing of gender normativity. School education needs to move away from a fact-finding/ cramming tendency. Students need to be shown and made to realise how patriarchy is prevalent around them. Issues of masculinity, customs, and practices rooted in gender bias, media portrayal of women, and unequal opportunities at work, need to be debated within daily classroom topics and themes.

2. In addition, the curriculum designers need to integrate the topics of sexual and reproductive health, family planning and menstrual health as early as Primary Four or Five. Early teaching of children about personal health, puberty and maturation, and sexual reproductive health among others will break the existing limiting cultural taboos and will equip girls to provide life skills to overcome challenging situations that would otherwise hinder their education.

3. The office of the senior woman teacher should be equipped and facilitated to function effectively. The study revealed that the government through National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE), Gender in Education Sector Policy (2017) instituted the office of senior women and senior men teachers. The guidelines for the implementation of the roles and responsibilities of the senior women and senior men teachers in Uganda (2020) clearly stipulated the requirements as well as roles expected of the office. Central to the requirements is the need for SWTs and SMTs to be formally trained in counselling and guiding. Also, SWTs get little support from other teachers and the community, little or no training, no budget for activities or salary for the extra work; their workload is huge, since they are full-time teachers of two subjects in all grades. Therefore, SWTs should go for training and the

government should provide other facilitation like secluded office space where girls feel comfortable to engage SWTs and reduce their classroom work load.

4. There should be deliberate efforts to recruit more female teachers to teach upper primary classes. The study established that female teachers are concentrated in lower and mid-lower classes. Unfortunately, girls start experiencing challenges in upper primary and need more role models and life champions to encourage girls to stay in school.

5. There is a need to improve the enforcement of laws and policies governing education and the life of girls. Primary schools need to be forced to accept girls who get pregnant back to classes. There is also a need to investigate and prosecute underage pregnancies as they are exhibitions of defilement and sexual harassment cases. Especially that Masinya Sub County has a by-law to combat sexual and gender-based violence, contextualised enforcement will save so many girls from related violence challenges.

6. The government needs to ensure that all girls enjoy their right to free primary education. No girl should ever be denied their right to education because of school fees or related costs of education. More so, the governments should promptly investigate cases of children being denied access to school or being expelled from school for inability to pay fees or for school supplies, including uniforms. Ensure that appropriate enforcement authorities sanction schools and school officials that illegally levy school fees or turn away learners.

7. There is a need to sensitize the communities about the dangers of early marriages and bride wealth. Communities need to understand that it is against the law to marry off girls before the maturity age. Parents need to be sensitized about the need to support children irrespective of gender to be in schools. They need to understand that it is also their obligation to provide necessities for children, especially girls. These should include scholastic materials, feeding, clothing and as well as sanitary wear.

8. There is a need to empower PTAs to play a meaningful supervisory role. The study established that the majority of the parents were ignorant about their roles in the PTA

and their participation was very limited. Therefore, there to constitute various committees like the disciplinary and welfare which should regularly meet to deliberate on specific issues affecting the education of children rather than waiting for the annual general PTA meeting.

## 6.3 Areas recommended for further research

1. This study was conducted in public primary schools in Masinya Sub County, Busia District. This means that the findings of this study cannot be used to generalize the situation in all primary schools including private schools in the area. Therefore, this study recommends that a comparative study be conducted to establish whether findings on how different society perceptions to the affected right to education of the girl in public primary schools correlated with those of private primary schools.

2. Another study should be carried out to investigate the school environment practices and how they affect the right to education of girls. This is suggested because the findings of this study indicated that out of school factors significantly contributed to the retention of girls in school. Concentrating on school environment practices could reveal interesting processes in the teaching and learning that affect the right to an education that this study could have missed.

3. Another study should be carried out examining the girl education policies in Uganda and to what extent have they caused the change. This study is suggested because, since the introduction of UPE in 1997, several other policies, strategies and guidelines have been designed and launched and implemented. These include; National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE), Gender in Education Sector Policy (2017) and guidelines for the implementation of the roles and responsibilities of the senior women and senior men teachers in Uganda (2020) among others.

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# APPENDICES

**Appendix I: Key informant interview guide (For district, Sub County and parish officials, head teachers)**

1.  What does the girl's right to education mean to you?
2.  How is the right to education manifested in the communies?
3.  What is the general trend regarding girl children enjoying an education in this sub county?
4.  What are some of measures in place that ensure that girls are in school here in Masinya? *(probe for policy, by-laws or even implementation of national law, treaties or conventions)*
5.  With the introduction of UPE, many girls here and in Busia generally enrolled in school but over time many dropped out and only a few completed. What are driving factors and issues surrounding this trend? *(probe for cross cutting factors in enrolment, retention and completion)*
6.  Are there any socio-cultural practices or trends that impinge the enjoyment of girl's right to education *(probe for elements like cultural norms, traditions or practices directly related to gender or sex)*
7.  How does the community generally regard the girl child and her effort or bid to be at school?
8.  How are families and households supported and encouraged to enhance the well-being of the girl child regarding her right to an education
9.  How does the community (including schools, LCs & others) support girls' being at school?

**Appendix II: In-depth interview guide (For parents, Opinion leaders and SWTs)**

1. What does the girl's right to education mean to you?

2. Is it common for girls in this area to be at school? *(probe for willingness of parents/guardians to have their children at school)*

3. Are there any girls you know of who have been denied or forced out of school for one reason or another *(probe possible reasons)?*

4. What are some of issues or challenges girls experience while trying to attain education? *(probe for how such challenges are overcome)*

5. Have there been times when girls have had to miss being at school because of some responsibilities outside school like at home?

6. How do families support girls being at school *(probe for provision of school dues, food & scholastic materials among others)?*

7. How do schools support girls being at school *(probe for provision of school dues, food & scholastic materials among others)?*

8. In your position, how have you supported the education of girls in this sub county *(probe further for either answer given)?*

**Appendix III: Focus Group Discussion Guide (For girls who are in schools)**

1. Have you ever heard of the right to education *(probe for different meanings to the right to education)?*

2. Do you think that your right to education here is respected? If yes how? If no, why?

3. What is the general trend regarding girl children enjoying an education in this sub-county?

4. What are some of the things that have enabled and also disabled girls like you from being?

5. Have you ever been stopped from going to school or were denied an education because of being a girl?

6. What are some of the thoughts of community members towards girls being at school?

7. Do you think that your current schools or the schools in this sub county have well developed facilities to support the needs and the rights of girls to education?

8. How do you suggest the girls' rights to education can be improved in your sub county?

**Appendix IV: Focus Group Discussion guide (For girls who dropped out of school)**

1. Have you ever heard of the right to education *(probe for different meanings to right to education)?*

2. What made you drop out of school?

3. Why is it that you did not insist and stay in school?

4. What are some of the things that have disabled girls like you from being at school?

5. Were you denied an education because of being a girl?

6. Would you go back to school given a chance?

7. What are some of the thoughts of community members towards girls being at school?

8. Do you think that your school and other primary schools in this sub county are well developed facilities to support the needs and the rights of girls to education?

9. How do you suggest the girls' rights to education can be improved in your sub county?

**Appendix V: Focus Group Discussion guide (For girls who never attended school)**

1. Have you ever heard of the right to education *(probe for different meanings to right to education)?*
2. What made you never attend school?
3. Can you say your not going to school is attributed to being a girl?
4. What does the general society say about girls who do not go to school?
5. Would you have liked to go to school?
6. What are other general factors that stop girls from attending school?
7. How do you suggest the girls' rights to education can be improved in your sub county?

**Appendix VI: Document Review Checklist**

1. Human Rights instruments

2. Girl up Initiative Uganda

**Appendix VII: Links for the AGP reports**

1. https://www.girlupuganda.org/impact/

2. https://www.girlupuganda.org/_files/ugd/f8121f_02f6441f39ef4235aec894c87255d09f.pdf/

**Appendix VIII: Documentary Check List**

| Source of document | Title of document | Reviewed |
|---|---|---|
| Ministry of Education (Government of Uganda) | National Education sector performance Reports | Yes |
| Busia district local government | Busia district Education sector performance Reports | Yes |
| National Planning Authority (Government of Uganda) | National Development Plans I, II & III | Yes |
| Government of Uganda | • The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995)<br>• The National strategy for Girls' Education | Yes |
| | International and regional legal instruments including;<br>• The Universal Declaration of Human Rights<br>• Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women<br>• The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<br>• Convention on the Right of the Child<br>• The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights<br>• The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child<br>• Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo protocol)<br>• African Youth Charter | Yes |
| Girl Up Initiative Uganda | AGP report, 2019 | Yes |
| UNICEF | Educational reports | Yes |

**Appendix IX: Names and / or designation of the study participants**

**A. Girls in school (in no particular order)**

1. Achiengi Sylivia
2. Agutu Caroline
3. Asere Justine
4. Athieno Judith
5. Musana Josphime
6. Nabirye Judith
7. Nambuya Melody
8. Nankya Golden
9. Nabutono Joyce
10. Nambozo Scovia
11. Nabirye Milly
12. Birungi Faith
13. Abangi Gorry
14. Abbo Susan

15. Musana Sumaya
16. Sanyu Madina
17. Nomabozo Jacinta
18. Mirembe Mary
19. Apadet Joliah
20. Katoko Elizabeth
21. Adikinyi Jalia
22. Mayende Ronina
23. Sanya Ssubi Agnes
24. Egessa Edrine mercy
25. Nasirumbi Paulina
26. Akisa Hellen
27. Gusino Jesca

28. Nahayo Pretty
29. Wandera Sandra
30. Babwire Judith
31. Hamala Resty
32. Nekesa Evaline
33. Bahirwa Alison
34. Adikinyi Esther
35. Nabwire Vanessa
36. Nerima Regina
37. Mukisa Zaina
38. Naigaga Bena
39. Mugoya Enid
40. Baribawa Esther

**B. Girls who dropped out of school**

41. Atieno Lucy
42. Mugoya Doreen
43. Nabukye Loyce
44. Nansirumbi Shakira
45. Nankya Emily
46. Akware proscovia
47. Nafuna Josphine

48. Anyokot Clement
49. nandundu Kevina
50. Katoko Winnie
51. Adikinyi Aaidah
52. Baseke Robinah
53. Mirembe Getu
54. Apadet  Alison

55. Hamala Farida
56. AkongoTeresa
57. Bahirwa
58. Ogutu Esther
59. Akidi Vanessa
60. Hamala Resty

## C. Girls never been in school

61. Chadiha Sandra
62. Nalyaki Evasi
63. Ajwanji Mercy
64. Atieno Sister
65. Nyongesa Emilly
66. Makhoka Rosaline
67. Osinya Angella
68. Sanya Tamia
69. Mungeni Olivius
70. Mande Merida

## D. Community members /parents

71. Obale Alex
72. Mayende Emily
73. Anyango Moses
74. Anyait Esther
75. Mageni Midius
76. Auma Eliphaz
77. Oundo Simeon
78. Taaka Geoffrey
79. Osinya Mende
80. Athieno Judith
81. Musana Joan
82. Nabirye Judith
83. Sifuna Maloba
84. Amoit Suzan
85. Wabwiire Jimmy James
86. Auma Jane
87. Okuku Ssebastian
88. Wanyama Derrick
89. Barasa Peter
90. Amoit Samson
91. Okware Samanya
92. Awino Bagume
93. Tibiwa Friday
94. Mboya Tom
95. Kwoba Ephraim
96. Abera Judith
97. Kadogo Amos
98. Tibiwa Martin
99. Magero Tobius
100. Baseke Shadrack
101. Byansi Isma
102. Sikuku Ibrahim
103. Omondo James
104. Wanjala Amos
105. Atyang Mary
106. Akochi Jogo Peter
107. Amase Festo
108. Waiswa Stanley
109. Wangira Godfrey
110. Sanyu Sarah

## E. Local Leaders and Opinion Leaders

111. Masiga Sowedi
112. Taabu Mohamed
113. Bogere Bashir
117. Awori Mukaga
118. Apio Solomon
119. Okalany Peter
123. Wejuli Tom
124. Nerima Kweli
125. Akuku Musa

| 114. Samanya Robert | 120. Adikinyi Solomy | 126. Nyadoi Sande |
| 115. Akware Peter | 121. Nancha Salma | 127. Guloba Samson |
| 116. Apecu Patrick | 122. Anyokot Innocent | 128. Ogutu Simon |

## F. HeadTeachers and SWTs

| 129. Kwena Daniel | 131. Juma Timothy | 133. Onyango Dickens |
| 130. Okumu Roselyne | 132. Odhiambo Mildred | 134. Nanzala Brenda Lucy |

## G. Other Key Informants

|  | Name | Designation | Date | Place of meeting |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 135. | Nangira Gloria | Masinya Sub County CDO | 15/12/2021 | Masinya sub county headquarters |
| 136. | Makhokha Thomas | Parish Chief | 13/12/2021 | Masinya parish office |
| 137. | Oketch Augustine | Parish Chief | 13/12/2021 | Busikho parish office |
| 138. | Wekesa Aggrey | Parish Chief | 14/12/2021 | Bumunji parish office |
| 139. | Mwesigwa Harriet | Busia District Education Officer | 15/12/2021 | Busia District headquarters |
| 140. | Menya Kennedy | Busia District Inspector of Schools | 14/12/2021 | Busia District headquarters |
| 141. | Nabwire Suzanne | Masinya sub county chief | 15/12/2021 | Masinya sub county headquarters |