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## Socio-Cultural Practices Among the Pogoro Community That Hinder Girls' Retention in Public Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Ulanga District-Morogoro Region

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### ABSTRACT

The study identified socio-cultural practices among the pogoro community that hinder girls' retention in public secondary schools in Ulanga District-Morogoro-Tanzania. There was deficiency of information on reviewed studies on exact elements of socio-cultural practices which accelerate dropout of female students in Ulanga District. The study was guided by Ruth Pearson theory based on the framework of gender relations. The study adopted concurrent triangulation research design, which is one of the mixed method approach model. Purposive sampling, simple randomly sampling and stratified sampling were used to establish sample size from the target population for the study. The content validity of instruments was assured while reliability of the data collection tool was ensured by Pearson product moment coefficient of  $r=0.7825$ . The quantitative data was analyzed by using descriptive statistical by the use of statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) software version 25. While qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study revealed that early pregnancy and economic status of the parents were the major factors that hindered girls' retention in secondary school. Other factors included initiation rites, traditional negative attitudes towards girls' education, traditional festival such as sangura, parental lazier fare and frequent family conflicts or breakages. The study recommended that the government should formulate affirmative policy that would protect female students against such discriminative practices, construct of girls' hostel, creating awareness among parents on the rights and benefits of education to female students, provision of sanitary towels to girls as measures to address the lack of retention of girls in secondary schools.

**Key Words:** *Socio-cultural practices, Retention, Community and The girl child*

### INTRODUCTION

Literature has shown that there is the effort of addressing the declining participation of girls' students in education [1] [2] [3]. Education for All (EFA) efforts to eliminate gender disparity in acquiring education in African continent by 2015 found challenges in Tanzania [4]. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) focuses on education and aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This scenario is the concern for the current research study.

The importance of girls' education has been highlighted by [5] [6] whose reports put it that girls' education is rooted in their central roles as women such critical roles include reproduction, economic production, community management and political involvement. In Tanzania the report by Education Sector Performance [7] indicated that although at the registration of students in secondary school, the girls are more by 6% than boys, the completion rate is usually the opposite. Thus, the current study was set to reveal the factors that hinder girls' retention rate in secondary schools in Ulanga District.

According to Onyango [8] Social-cultural practices such as initiation rites, female genital mutilation and early marriage were the most significant factors that contributed negatively towards girls' education in Kenya. Most girls dropped out of school because of early marriage and the outcome of initiation trainings. This implies that parents do not put value to girls' education. Hence, retention of female students in secondary school was not achieved. The current study was set to identify socio-cultural practices that hinder girls' retention in secondary school in Ulanga District of Morogoro Region-Tanzania.

According to Taban [9] regress practices, stereotypes in gender, and poor economic background among the people contributed drop out female students from school in Uganda. Thus, education and awareness among the people should be

done so as to retain female students in secondary school. This was because, most female students dropped out from school due to poor economic status of the parents that leads to lack of basic needs such as school uniform, food and learning materials.

A study by [10] on factors influencing enrolment and retention of Somalia bantu girls in secondary schools in Daadab Refugee Camp found that, language, poor implementation of policies, impropriety in decision making and parental level of education were the most significant factors that hampered or prevented girls from being retained in school. The current study was set to identify socio-cultural practices that hinder girls' retention in Ulanga District.

[11] Studied the influence of socio-cultural factors on girl-child education in secondary schools in Kebbi Central Senatorial District of Kebbi State, Nigeria. The study revealed that early marriage, gender preference, socio-economic status of parents and political factors significantly influenced the girls' education in secondary school. The economic status of the family and negative attitudes towards girl child education paved the way to parents to prioritize boys in education over a girl child. Hence, this leads most of girls to drop out from school [12]. on the barriers to girls' education in South –Central Somalia suggested that establishment of an enabling environment for girls, training of teachers, financial aid to girls' schools, awareness raising on the importance of educating girls, building confidence of girls in school, could help the girls to be retained in school, and not dropping out before the end of the course.

The study of [13] argued that construction of more girls' toilets, recruitment of more female teachers and free provision of stationery, are the possible intervention measures that can help the retention of girls in secondary school in Kenya. This study was carried out in Kenya on school factors that could enhance girls' retention in secondary school, while the current research study was on socio-cultural practices that hinder girls' retention in secondary school in Tanzania. Thus, literature fills in the gap for the current research study.

A related study by [14] reported that introduction of cash payment to support families with girls in school, the government to sensitize the community on the significance of girls' education and awareness to the parents and families, in general, could help the retention of girls to be achieved in Kenya. This shows that most female students failed to meet their basic needs and learning materials due to low income of the parents. Thus, the government and other education stakeholders could support female students as a possible intervention measure for the female student to remain in school until the end of the study program. Furthermore, a girl child has to be monitored on regular school attendance as a follow-up, employing more female teachers in schools, establishing peer mentoring partnership, and involving female learners in policy decisions in order to achieve the higher rate of girls' retention in Kenyan schools.

The reviewed literature has shown different factors that hinder girls' retention in secondary school both in sub-Saharan Africa and the possible intervention measures that can be used to retain female students in secondary schools. It was due to this background that the current study was set to identify socio-cultural practices that hinder girls' retention in secondary school and possible intervention measures that could be used to retain female students in Ulanga District in Morogoro Region of Tanzania.

The government of Tanzania introduced fee free education in 2015 to create access to education for both girls and boys [15]. The policy was followed by the Government public regulation which pronounced that, any girl who dropped out of school due to early pregnancy to be allowed to go back to school after two years [16]. However, studies by [17] [18] [19] have revealed that, girls still lead in dropout rate and thus creating a challenge in retaining them in secondary schools. The current research study intended to identify socio-cultural practices among the pogoro community that hinder girls' retention in public secondary school in Ulanga District-Tanzania.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study employed descriptive research design and mixed method approach (qualitative and quantitative approach). Whereby, the researcher used semi structured questionnaires, interview schedule, documentary review and focus group discussion as tools of data collection. The sample of 161 peoples were used as representative. Consisted female students 128 (79%) as main respondents for this study, teachers 16 (9%), heads of schools 8 (5%), parents 8 (5%) from public secondary school in Ulanga District and the district education officer 1(1%).

## **STUDY FINDINGS**

**Socio-cultural practices that hinder girls' retention in public secondary school include;**

### **Initiation Rites**

The study revealed that, most girls who undergo the initiation rite receive training and cultural value during the healing period prepare them into adulthood and ready for marriage without considering education status. The practices have contributed immensely to early pregnancies, early marriage or forced marriage leading to girls dropping out of school. This finding concurs with the findings of [20] observed that initiation rites emerged as a most factor that

contributed dropout of female students in Kenya. This implies that most girls in Ulanga District dropping out of school due to initiation rites.

### **Traditional festival dances (Sangura)**

Teachers 8 (100%), students 50 (79%) and heads of school 15 (100%) observed that traditional festival dances known as sangura that held overnight contributes drop out of female students in secondary schools in Ulanga District Morogoro-Tanzania. This implies that traditional festival such as sangura adversely affect girls' education. Here means that, most girls engage in sexual relationship with men as a result they have unplanned pregnancies. Thus, they dropped out of school. This finding is in agreement with the findings of [21] argued that weekend funeral-based disco dances, prior to burial ceremonies plays a greater extent in the drop out of female students in school. As one respondents narrated.

*“Our parents allowed us to attend traditional festival dances popularly known as sangura”*

### **Early Marriage/ Pregnancy**

The study revealed that early marriage /pregnancy emerged as most factor that contribute drop out of female students in Ulanga District students 57(84%), teachers 14(93%) and heads of schools 7(87.5) accepted. This implies that most girls in Ulanga District dropping out of school because of early marriage. This finding agreed with the findings of [11] who revealed that early marriage with other factors were considered to influence girls' retention in secondary school in Nigeria. One participant reiterated:

*“Our parents discourage us about education by telling us to get married rather than continuing with the studying that we are wasting our time”*

### **Socio-Economic Status of the Parents**

Level of income of the parents emerged as a most factor among the pogoro community that hinder girls' retention in secondary school. This accepted by the heads of schools 8(100%), students 62(98%) and Teachers 15(100%). This implies that most girls dropped out of school because of inadequate services such as school uniform, food, security contribution and learning materials due to socio-economic status of the parents. This finding agrees with the findings of [22] who revealed that family's economic background affects retention rate of female students in public secondary schools. One respondents explained that:

*“During my menstruation period I don't attend school because of inadequate sanitary towels”.*

### **Remedial measures that could be used to retain female students in school**

#### **Awareness Creation and Accommodation Facilities**

The study revealed that awareness creation among the people of Ulanga District and construction of girls' hostel could be used as remedial measures to retain female students in secondary school. This implies that to provide skills and knowledge among the people of Ulanga District will contribute to alleviate poverty and changing live hood. This finding agrees with the findings of [23] suggested that regular awareness campaigns and seminars should be held especially in rural areas about the significance of girls' child education [24]. Suggested that construction of more boarding schools, it could help girls to be retained in school.

#### **Formulation of Supportive Policies**

The heads of schools 7(87.5%), teachers 15(100%) and students 60(95%) observed that formulation of supportive policies emerged as significant factor that could be used to retain female students in secondary school. This implies that the government should formulate supportive policies to prevent drop out of female students from school. This finding agrees with the findings of [25] who suggested that the Government should enforce laws to deal with perpetrators of early and forced marriage and formulation of supportive policies that address gender imbalance in acquisition of education among the communities. It will help female students to be retained in secondary school.

### **Summary of the Study**

The findings of the research study were that, heads of schools, teachers, and students agreed that socio-economic status of the parents, early marriage/pregnancy, initiation rites, and traditional festival dances known as sangura emerged as the significant factors that hinder girls' retention in secondary school in Ulanga District. However, remedial measures that could be used to retain female students in secondary school include formulation of supportive policy and awareness creation and accommodation facilities.

### **CONCLUSION**

Regarding the socio-cultural practices that contribute drop out of female students from school in Ulanga District-Tanzania. It can be concluding that there are multiplicity factors that contribute drop out of female students from school. These include school environment and disciplinary policy, unsupportive home environment, lack of parental care and level of education of the parents. Therefore, the government and other education stakeholder should put efforts to address

these absurd challenges so as to retain female students in secondary school in Ulanga District. This can be addressed through sensitizing the parents to reduce home chores to their daughters and the teachers to stop giving corporal punishment to girls.

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