

Educational Challenges Facing Female Students in Secondary Schools

A Case of Morogoro Rural District

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the educational challenges which were facing female students in secondary schools in Morogoro Rural District. Specifically, the study aimed at:

- Examining female enrolment status in secondary schools in Morogoro Rural District;
- Assessing problems facing female students in secondary schools in Morogoro Rural
- Evaluating how educational programmes addressed the shortfalls.

The study area was one of the six districts of Morogoro Region which is bordered to the east by the Coast Region, to the south by the Morogoro Urban District and to the west by the Mvomero District. Morogoro Rural District had six administrative divisions which were divided into 25 wards and 132 villages. The selection of this district as a study area was mainly because it was general poor, rural and among the 50% most deprived area in Tanzania.

A cross-sectional research design was used in this study. This design was used because it allowed the collection of data from different groups of respondents at one time. The collected data were used for simple statistical description, interpretation and determination of the relationship among different variables.

A simple random sampling procedure was applied to obtain schools and respondents in this study. Out of the 13 secondary schools in the studied district, the sample consisted of four schools namely: Matombo, Nelson Mandela, Mkuyuni and Kiroka. From this sample, three groups of respondents were drawn-male students, female students, and their teachers. The first two (female and male students) were for comparison purposes, and the third (teachers) were for providing clarification on certain issues. A total of 80 students, 32 teachers and four school administrators (key informants) were interviewed. Names of the selected students and teachers were obtained from school registers. From each school, 20 students (10 girls and 10 boys) and eight teachers (four males and four females) were interviewed.

The study involved several data collection methods. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative data were obtained mainly through interviews, while qualitative data were mainly gathered through discussions with key informants. Quantitative and primary data were gathered using questionnaires, while qualitative data were collected through direct observation and face-to-face interviews. Secondary data, on the other hand, were obtained from existing literature- published and unpublished reports. These included different reports from Morogoro Regional Education Office, REPOA, research reports from various institutions such as the Sokoine National Agricultural Library (SNAL) and nongovernmental organisations dealing with education.

Structured and standardised questionnaires, with both open and close-ended (questions were administered to students and teachers who were in the selected sample. A checklist on the other hand, was administered to key informants (school administrators or representatives). This checklist included questions that were used during the interviews.

Before the actual data collection, pre-testing of the questionnaires was done to test validity and reliability of data collection methods as well as to determine their clarity and relevance to the objectives of the study. The questionnaires for pre-testing were administered to twelve respondents drawn from the schools which were in the study area. These particular respondents had similar characteristics as the actual respondents to be included in the main study. Thereafter, the questionnaires were modified to incorporate lessons drawn from the pre-testing.

Then, the revised version of the questionnaires was translated into Kiswahili. The data were first classified into meaningful categories. In addition, they were assigned to in the analysis. After the analysis, the research findings were put categories based on the research objectives. Presentation was done through the use of tables and figures. The components of verbal discussion with key informants were analysed in detail using the content analysis method.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was used to analyse the collected data. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the sample means for the studied variables. The Independent Sample T-Test was employed to determine if there was a statistical significance or not on distance from school between teachers and students.

Among the outstanding educational challenges for girls, according to this study, was the drop-out level. When asked if school drop-out rate of female students was higher than that of male

students, the majority of teachers (90.6%) and students (87.5%) confirmed that it was the case. This was further supported by teachers when they were asked to indicate who were more likely to drop out between girls and boys. The majority (65.5%) of teachers said girls were more likely than boys.

According to the findings of this study, pregnancy, performance, mismanagement of academic time and truancy were some of the factors which influenced higher drop-out rates among secondary school girls than boys. With regard to marriage and pregnancy before completion of school, 43.8% of teachers and 36.3% of students confirmed that the problem existed in the study area. On performance, the majority (93.8%) of the respondents (teachers) said boys were performing better in class than girls.

Further, the study findings indicated that more girls (90.6%) spent their academic time on non-academic activities when compared to boys (9.4%). According to the study, costs of education to households especially in rural areas affected both the enrolment and drop-out rates for girls. Even when girls were attending school, they were still required to help with household chores. This could hamper their progress in school work, sometimes limiting the possibility of continuing in education.

According to this study, the majority of teachers (62.5%) and students (60%) reported that natural sciences teachers were a very big problem. There were very few such teachers in the surveyed schools. Also, 51.3% of the students (in the sample) and 46.9% of teachers indicated that learning materials (particularly, reference books) were a very big problem. This affected more girls than boys because most of them (girls) in rural areas stayed far from each other and, sometimes, could not be allowed to move out of their residences for group

Further, frequent changes in educational curriculum were cited by 34.4% of teachers and 51.3% of students as a very big problem as well. The implication of this could be not finalising the syllabi, students could lose interest in the changed subject, or teachers could use jobs in the respective subjects. Other educational challenges which were cited by the respondents included: the need of self-confidence (23.2%), avoidance of sexual relationship cultural barriers (21.4%).

Generally, the study findings had shown the effect of demographic factors (such Sub-cultural beliefs), environment and socio-economic statuses of parents and guardians of girls' education secondary schools. There were still beliefs among many parents and guardians that women

were only destined to become wives and mothers. Girls who managed to secure admission into secondary schools, therefore, faced challenges of how to sufficiently spend their time for academics. They mostly engaged in domestic chores soon after classes. This was not usually the case with boys.

Given the above findings, the study recommended that:

- Programmes which promote education to both girls and boys should be introduced since pre-primary school level to enable students appreciate the right to be educated;
- Homework policy should be shared among parents and school administrators especially in day schools. If this is done; parents might know how much time was appropriate to spend on homework; and
- Respect to all parents (husbands and wives) should be insisted since pre-primary school, especially among the Luguru.