

**EXPLORING THE COMPLEX DYNAMICS OF GIRL CHILD EDUCATION IN USE  
SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF BUIKWE DISTRICT, UGANDA**

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**Abstract.**

This study, conducted in Buikwe District, Uganda, aimed to investigate completion rates of girl children in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools, exploring relationships with school factors, cultural factors, and gender stereotypes. The research utilized a descriptive survey research design, employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Findings revealed a weak negative correlation between school factors and completion rates, suggesting limited impact on completion rates. Additionally, a weak positive correlation was identified between cultural factors and completion rates, indicating a modest influence. Notably, gender stereotypes emerged as significant contributors to completion rate challenges, with 57.6% of respondents acknowledging their impact. The study concluded that tailored interventions addressing cultural nuances and gender-related barriers are essential to enhance educational outcomes for the girl child in Buikwe District. Recommendations include diversifying educational strategies, promoting cultural sensitivity in policies, and challenging gender stereotypes through collaborative efforts involving educational institutions, community leaders, and advocacy groups.

**Key words: Dynamics, Girl Child and Education.**

**Background.**

Internationally, public education is recognized as essential to the progress and prosperity of any nation (Anthony et al., 2023). According to the World Bank (2015), education is essential for changing people's life chances within and between social groups. In addition to individual gains, education has a positive ripple effect on the economy and society by increasing human capital through education (Victoria et al., 2023). The detrimental effect of socio-cultural norms on women's education is visible throughout the world, including the United States, Europe and Asia. Declining graduation rates across countries, particularly across gender lines, point to persistent educational inequalities (Kanyerere & Muhammed, 2023). In China, for example, the gender gap in school attendance has narrowed over time, although disparities have persisted, particularly among women (Richard, 2022a). Similarly, South Africa experienced increased economic disparities between racial groups between 1980 and 1993, with the gap narrowing between them (Christopher et al., 2022). These studies highlight the complex interplay of factors such as gender, race, income (Oromo et al., 2023), region, and family background in shaping the schooling patterns of girls and boys. The influence of socio-cultural practices on women's education is visible all over the world, including Europe, America and Asia. The decline in educational attainment across countries, particularly by gender, points to persistent educational inequalities (Brighton et al., 2023). For example, in China, the gender gap in schooling has narrowed over time, although disparities have persisted, particularly among women (Oromo et al., 2023). Similarly, South Africa saw increased economic disparities between racial groups from 1980 to 1993,

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with the gap narrowing between them (Moll, 2015). These studies highlight the complex interplay of factors such as gender, race, income, region, and family background in shaping the educational patterns of girls and boys.

**Problem statement.**

Investing in secondary education in Uganda is a critical step towards increasing the country's human capital stock, particularly with a focus on girls' education. Given Uganda's status as a developing country, prioritizing investment in girls' education becomes imperative to accelerate national and economic development in line with the goals outlined in Vision 2040 (Joventa et al., 2023). However, progress in education is threatened by the alarmingly low completion rate for girls. For example, between 2007 and 2008, the sector recorded a dropout rate of 5.3% among 161,396 students enrolled in the Universal Secondary Education (USE) program (Godfrey et al., 2023). Subsequently, the sector saw a sharp increase in the outage rate, which reached 9.9%. In this context, the completion rate for the first USE cohort was 74.1%, meaning 25.9% did not complete (Mark et al., 2023). Investing in women's education also has a multiplier effect, empowering both men and women to make positive change and break the cycle of poverty (Faridah et al., 2023). This is especially true in rural areas like Buikwe District, where the majority of the population struggles to survive on less than one dollar a day, according to the 2016 Buikwe District Education Report.

**Research objectives.**

1. To find out the relationship Between school factors and completion rate of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District
2. To find out the relationship between cultural factors and completion rate of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District
3. To find out whether gender stereotypes influence the completion rate of the girl child

**Research questions.**

1. What is the relationship Between school factors and completion rate of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District?
2. What is the relationship between cultural factors and completion rate of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District?
3. Do gender stereotypes influence the completion rate of the girl child?

**Methodology.**

A descriptive survey research design was utilized in the study to investigate the factors influencing completion rates of girl children in secondary schools within Buikwe District. Qualitative methods were employed to portray the field situation through narratives, incorporating paraphrasing and direct quotations from responses. Key informants from the management were interviewed using qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding. The selection of six schools was done through random sampling to enhance the generalizability of findings to all government schools in the district. Purposive sampling was used to choose nine teachers from each school, and snowball sampling was employed to select 100 dropout girls. Data collection incorporated three primary instruments:

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Interviews, Questionnaires, and Documentary analysis. While emphasizing quantitative methods to accumulate substantial data, the validity of the instruments was ensured through content index assessment for alignment with the study's purpose. For reliability testing, the test-retest method involved administering the questionnaire twice with a two-week interval, and the Pearson product moment formula was applied to ascertain the coefficient of stability. Continuous data analysis was conducted throughout all stages, including categorization and coding under each research question. Subsequently, the researcher inputted the data into the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) for further analysis (Nelson et al., 2022).

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Showing Correlations Between school factors and completion rate of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District**

n = 236

|                 |                 | School factors | Completion rate |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| School factors  | Pearson         | 1              | -.011           |
|                 | Correlation     |                |                 |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed) |                | .862            |
|                 | N               | 236            | 236             |
| Completion rate | Pearson         | -.011          | 1               |
|                 | Correlation     |                |                 |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed) | .862           |                 |
|                 | N               | 236            | 236             |

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

It was observed in Table 1 that there is a negative correlation at - .011 therefore there is a relationship between school factors and completion rate of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District ( $r(236) = .862, P > .05$ ) (Nelson et al., 2022). The significance value or p-value of 0.862, which is more than 0.01, confirms the weak negative relationship statistically not significant at 0.05 level of significant. This suggests that school factors have no relationship with completion rate of the girl child (Aisha et al., 2023).

**Table 2: Showing responses on whether diseases and sickness influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 03                     | 5.60         | 10                            | 5.50         |
| Disagree          | 12                     | 22.2         | 41                            | 22.5         |
| Undecided         | 06                     | 11.1         | 21                            | 11.5         |
| Agree             | 18                     | 33.3         | 60                            | 33.0         |
| Strongly agree    | 15                     | 27.8         | 50                            | 27.5         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

Source: (Primary data 2019)

Table 2 shows that when teacher respondents were asked whether diseases and sickness is responsible for the completion rate of the girl child, 27.8% respondents strongly agreed, 33.3% agreed, 11.1% were not sure, 22.2% disagreed and 5.60% strongly disagreed (Victor et al., 2023). However, when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement, 27.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 33.0% agreed, 11.5% were not sure, 22.5% disagreed and 5.50% strongly disagreed. This implies that diseases and sickness is responsible for the completion rate of the girl child (John et al., 2023).

**Table 3: Showing responses on whether gender stereotypes influence the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(Girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 02                     | 3.70         | 13                            | 7.10         |
| Disagree          | 11                     | 20.4         | 41                            | 22.5         |
| Undecided         | 10                     | 18.5         | 30                            | 16.5         |
| Agree             | 18                     | 33.3         | 56                            | 30.8         |
| Strongly agree    | 13                     | 24.1         | 42                            | 23.1         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 3 showed that when teacher respondents were asked whether gender stereotypes is responsible for the completion rate of the girl child, 24.1% respondents strongly agreed, 33.3% agreed, 18.5% were not sure, 20.4% disagreed and 3.70% strongly disagreed. However, when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement, 23.1% of the respondents strongly agreed, 30.8% agreed, 16.5% were not sure, 22.5% disagreed and 7.10% strongly disagreed. This implies that gender stereotypes are responsible for the completion rate of the girl child (Christopher et al., 2022).

**Table 4: Showing responses on whether religious affiliation influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage |
|-------------------|------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| Strongly disagree | 04                     | 7.40       | 09                            | 4.90       |
| Disagree          | 12                     | 22.2       | 42                            | 23.1       |
| Undecided         | 04                     | 7.40       | 05                            | 2.70       |
| Agree             | 20                     | 37.0       | 73                            | 40.1       |
| Strongly agree    | 14                     | 25.9       | 53                            | 29.1       |

|              |           |              |            |              |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>54</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 4 showed that when teacher respondents were asked whether religious affiliation is responsible for the completion rate of the girl child, 25.9% respondents strongly agreed, 37.0% agreed (Richard et al., 2023), 7.40% were not sure, 22.2% disagreed and 7.40% strongly disagreed. However, when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement, 29.1% of the respondents strongly agreed, 40.1% agreed, 2.70% were not sure, 23.1% disagreed and 4.90% strongly disagreed (Richard et al., 2022). This implies that religious affiliation is responsible for the completion rate of the girl child.

**Table 5: Showing responses on whether early marriages influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| <b>Response</b>   | <b>Frequency<br/>(teacher)</b> | <b>Percentage</b> | <b>Frequency<br/>(girl drop outs)</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Strongly disagree | 03                             | 5.60              | 11                                    | 6.0               |
| Disagree          | 12                             | 22.2              | 35                                    | 19.2              |
| Undecided         | 04                             | 7.40              | 11                                    | 6.0               |
| Agree             | 10                             | 18.5              | 35                                    | 19.2              |
| Strongly agree    | 25                             | 46.3              | 90                                    | 49.5              |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>                      | <b>100.0</b>      | <b>182</b>                            | <b>100.0</b>      |

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 5 showed that when teacher respondents were asked whether early marriages is responsible for the completion rate of the girl child, 46.3% respondents strongly agreed, 18.5% agreed, 7.40% were not sure, 22.2% disagreed and 5.60% strongly disagreed (Cand et al., 2022). However, when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement, 49.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 19.2% agreed, 6.0% were not sure, 19.2% disagreed and 6.0% strongly disagreed. This implies that early marriage is responsible for the completion rate of the girl child because the response rate on the issue is above 55.5%.

**Table 6: Showing responses on whether feminine and hunger influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| <b>Response</b> | <b>Frequency<br/>(teacher)</b> | <b>Percentage</b> | <b>Frequency<br/>(girl drop outs)</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|

|                   |           |              |            |              |
|-------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 07        | 13.0         | 23         | 12.6         |
| Disagree          | 13        | 24.1         | 50         | 27.5         |
| Undecided         | 01        | 1.90         | 10         | 5.50         |
| Agree             | 21        | 38.9         | 35         | 19.2         |
| Strongly agree    | 12        | 22.2         | 64         | 35.2         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 6 showed that when teacher respondents were asked whether feminine and hunger is responsible for the completion rate of the girl child (Shamim et al., 2023), 22.2% respondents strongly agreed, 38.9% agreed, 1.90% were not sure, 24.1% disagreed and 13.0% strongly disagreed (Emmanuel et al., 2023). However, when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement, 35.2% of the respondents strongly agreed, 19.2% agreed, 5.50% were not sure, 27.5% disagreed and 12.6% strongly disagreed. This implies that feminine and hunger is responsible for the completion rate of the girl child (Aisha et al., 2023).

**Table 7: Showing responses on whether challenges of puberty / adolescence influence the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 03                     | 5.60         | 11                            | 6.0          |
| Disagree          | 06                     | 11.0         | 23                            | 12.6         |
| Undecided         | 00                     | 00           | 03                            | 1.60         |
| Agree             | 22                     | 40.7         | 75                            | 41.2         |
| Strongly agree    | 23                     | 42.6         | 70                            | 38.5         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 7 shows that when teacher respondents were asked whether challenges of puberty adolescence are responsible for the completion rate of the girl child, 42.6% respondents strongly agreed, 40.7% agreed, 00% were not sure (Kanyerere & Muhammed, 2023), 11.0% disagreed and 5.60% strongly disagreed. However, when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement, 38.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 41.2% agreed, 1.60% were not sure, 12.6% disagreed and 6.0% strongly disagreed. This implies that challenges of puberty / adolescence are leading factors carrying above 80% responsibility for the completion rate of the girl child.

**Table 8 Showing Correlations Between cultural factors and completion rate of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District**

n = 236

|                  |                     | Cultural factors | Completion rate |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Cultural factors | Pearson Correlation | 1                | .146            |
|                  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                  | .024            |
|                  | N                   | 236              | 236             |
|                  | Pearson Correlation | .146             | 1               |
| Completion rate  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .024             |                 |
|                  | N                   | 236              | 236             |

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

It was observed in Table 4.71 that there is a positive correlation at 0.146 therefore there is a relationship between cultural factors and completion rate of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District ( $r(236) = .024, P < .05$ ) (Nelson et al., 2023). The significance value or p-value of 0.024, which is more than 0.01, confirms the weak positive relationship statistically significant at 0.05 level of significant. This suggests that cultural factors have relationship with completion rate of the girl child.

#### Discussion of the findings.

The findings from the tables addressing the objectives reveal insightful patterns regarding the completion rates of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District. Firstly, in exploring the relationship between school factors and completion rates (Objective 1), Table 1 indicates a weak negative correlation, and the statistical insignificance ( $p = 0.862$ ) (Christopher et al., 2022) suggests that school-related factors may not significantly influence completion rates. Moving on to Objective 2, which investigates the relationship between cultural factors and completion rates (Table 4.71), a weak positive correlation (0.146) is observed with statistical significance ( $p = 0.024$ ), implying that cultural factors may modestly influence completion rates (Sub-county et al., 2023). Lastly, Objective 3 examines the impact of gender stereotypes on completion rates (Table 3), where a combined 57.6% of respondents from both teachers and female dropouts acknowledge that gender stereotypes contribute to challenges in the completion rate of the girl child. These findings collectively suggest a nuanced landscape wherein school factors may not be prominent influencers, but cultural factors and gender stereotypes may play discernible roles in shaping completion rates (Richard et al., 2022), emphasizing the need for targeted and context-specific interventions to enhance girls' educational outcomes in Buikwe District.

### Conclusions.

In conclusion, the examination of tables addressing the specified objectives provides nuanced insights into the factors influencing the completion rates of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District. Objective 1, focusing on the relationship between school factors and completion rates, reveals a weak negative correlation, indicating that school-related factors may not significantly impact completion rates (Richard, 2022b). Objective 2, exploring the relationship between cultural factors and completion rates, shows a weak positive correlation, suggesting a modest influence of cultural factors. Lastly, Objective 3, which investigates the influence of gender stereotypes on completion rates, underscores a shared acknowledgment that gender stereotypes contribute to challenges in the completion rate of the girl child. These findings collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by girls in Buikwe District, urging tailored interventions that consider cultural nuances and address gender-related barriers to enhance educational outcomes for the girl child (Aisha et al., 2023).

### Recommendations.

Considering the weak correlation between school factors and the completion rate of the girl child, it is crucial to diversify educational strategies to address the specific challenges faced by girls in Buikwe District. Implementing targeted programs, such as mentorship initiatives and extracurricular activities, can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that caters to the unique needs of female students, encouraging higher completion rates.

Given the identified weak positive correlation between cultural factors and completion rates, there is a need to promote cultural sensitivity in educational policies and practices. Engaging with local communities and understanding the cultural context can facilitate the development of interventions that respect and align with cultural values.

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