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**Investigating aspects that contribute to success rates of female students in Uganda's Buikwe District's universal secondary education schools.**

**Abstract.**

This retrospective study, centered on Buikwe District, Uganda, explores historical impediments to the completion rates of girl children in Universal Secondary Education (USE) schools. Within the broader global context that recognizes education's pivotal role in societal growth, the research delves into persistent challenges stemming from social-cultural norms, notably conflicts with teachers and sexual harassment, hindering the successful educational trajectory of girls in Buikwe District. Despite concerted global efforts to bridge gender disparities, intricate interactions between these factors persist, contributing to consistently high dropout rates among female students and impeding the strides towards gender parity and empowerment. Employing a descriptive survey research design with qualitative methods, the study reveals disparities in perceptions between teachers and female dropouts regarding the impact of conflicts with teachers on completion rates. It also emphasizes a consensus on the lack of influence of the proportion of girl dropouts to the number of female teachers on completion rates, while underscoring the concerning influence of sexual harassment. In conclusion, the findings highlight the imperative for targeted interventions, including comprehensive teacher training programs and the strict implementation of anti-sexual harassment policies within schools, to create a safer and more supportive learning environment, ultimately fostering improved completion rates for the girl child in Buikwe District.

**Key words: Success rates and Female students.**

**Background of the study.**

There is general agreement around the world that the level of education of the population is essential for the growth and progress of any country (Victoria et al., 2023). A 2015 World Bank report states that education has a significant impact on how people are able to live their lives, both within and outside different social groups (Anthony et al., 2023). Beyond the individual, education has a positive ripple effect that improves the human capital gained through education, which benefits society and the economy as a whole (Richard et al., 2023). Socio-cultural habits have a direct influence on the education of girls worldwide, especially in Europe, America and Asia. Persistent inequalities in education prevail, evidenced by the decline in

educational attainment across nations, particularly by gender (Richard et al., 2022). In China, for example, the gender gap in education has narrowed over time but has remained, especially for women (Cand et al., 2022). In a similar vein, while the gap between racial groups narrowed in South Africa between 1980 and 1993, there was an increase in income inequality between them (Emmanuel et al., 2023). These studies demonstrate the complex interactions among racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, family, and regional factors that influence girls' educational patterns. On the other hand, parents and communities still often prefer sending boys to school over girls in sub-Saharan Africa (Victoria et al., 2023). This is based on the idea that teaching girls could eventually make them

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lazy, ignore non-formal education and lose the ability to be good housewives. Many parents believe that girls learn best from their mothers and aunts (Joventra et al., 2023), who help shape them into better brides. Only 57% of school-aged girls in Africa report to secondary education, and according to UNESCO in 2012 girls made up 55% of the 75 million children who were out of school. In many communities

(Francis et al., 2023), social and cultural factors have long hindered girls' education and limited their ability to compete on an equal footing with boys. This research aims to identify the specific circumstances for Buikwe District where these barriers persist, which warrants further investigation (Zowena et al., 2023).

### **Problem Statement.**

One of the most important ways to advance human capital development in Uganda is through strategic investment in secondary education, particularly in the form of scholarships for female students (Christopher et al., 2022). Given Uganda's status as a developing country, funding for girls' education becomes essential to accelerate the achievement of the national and economic development goals outlined in Vision 2040. However, admirable efforts in education are at risk as girls' completion rates are consistently low. In 2007–2008, of the 161,396 students enrolled in the Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme, the sector had a dropout rate of 5.3%. This trend continued and the dropout rate increased alarmingly to 9.9% (John et al., 2023). A significant amount of resources were wasted as a result of the first USE cohort having a completion rate of only 74.1%, meaning that 25.9% of the cohort did not complete the program (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2015). The fact that female students in USE secondary schools routinely achieve completion rates below 60% is particularly alarming as it undermines the progress made in achieving gender equity in access (Christopher et al., 2022). In addition, investing in women's education has far-reaching consequences as it opens avenues for empowerment and positive transformation for both men and women. This is particularly important in rural areas such as 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.

### **Objectives of the study.**

1. To investigate the perception of girl child conflict with teachers on the education completion rate of the girl child.
2. To find out whether the proportion of girl drop outs is proportionate to the number female teachers and its influences the completion rate of the girl child.
3. To investigate the influence of sexual harassment on education completion rate of the girl child.

### **Research questions.**

1. What is the perception of girl child conflict with teachers on the education completion rate of the girl child?
2. What is the relationship between the proportion of girl dropouts and the number of female teachers, and how does this interaction influence the completion rate of the girl child?

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3. To what extent does sexual harassment on education 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: 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 responses on whether conflict with teachers influences the completion rate of the girl child

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 08                     | 14.8         | 34                            | 18.7         |
| Disagree          | 06                     | 11.1         | 57                            | 31.3         |
| Undecided         | 05                     | 9.30         | 22                            | 12.1         |
| Agree             | 33                     | 61.1         | 61                            | 33.5         |
| Strongly agree    | 02                     | 3.70         | 08                            | 4.40         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

Source: (Primary data 2019)

Table 1 shows that when teacher respondents were asked whether conflict with teachers influences the completion rate of the girl child, 3.70% respondents strongly agreed, 61.1% agreed, 9.30% were not sure, 11.1% disagreed and 14.8% strongly disagreed, while when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement (Mark et al., 2023), 4.40% of the respondents strongly agreed, 33.5% agreed, 12.1% were not sure, 31.3% disagreed and 18.7% strongly disagreed. 64.8% of teacher respondent agreed while 50% of the female dropouts disagreed. This implies that conflict with teachers does not directly influence the completion rate of the girl child (Ninsiima et al., 2023).

Table 2: Showing responses on whether feeling too old for school influences the completion rate of the girl child

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(Girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 11                     | 20.4         | 35                            | 19.2         |
| Disagree          | 03                     | 5.60         | 28                            | 15.4         |
| Undecided         | 11                     | 20.4         | 23                            | 12.6         |
| Agree             | 24                     | 44.4         | 75                            | 41.2         |
| Strongly agree    | 05                     | 9.30         | 21                            | 11.5         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

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Table 2 shows that when teacher respondents were asked whether feeling too old for school influences the completion rate of the girl child, 9.30% respondents strongly agreed, 44.4% agreed, 20.4% were not sure, 5.60% disagreed and 20.4% strongly disagreed, while when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement (Moses et al., 2023), 11.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 41.2% agreed, 12.6% were not sure, 15.4% disagreed and 19.2% strongly disagreed. This implies that feeling too old for school influences the completion rate of the girl child as over 50% of the respondents were in agreement.

**Table 3: Showing responses on whether teachers asking girls for sex influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 11                     | 20.4         | 21                            | 11.5         |
| Disagree          | 28                     | 51.9         | 40                            | 22.0         |
| Undecided         | 02                     | 3.70         | 16                            | 8.80         |
| Agree             | 07                     | 13.0         | 82                            | 45.1         |
| Strongly agree    | 06                     | 11.1         | 23                            | 12.6         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

Source: (Primary data 2019)

Table 3 shows that when teacher respondents were asked whether teachers asking girls for sex influences the completion rate of the girl child, 11.1% respondents strongly agreed, 13.0% agreed, 3.70% were not sure, 51.9% disagreed and 20.4% strongly disagreed, while when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement, 12.6% of the respondents strongly agreed, 45.1% agreed, 8.80% were not sure, 22.0% disagreed and 11.5% strongly disagreed. This implies that teachers asking girls for sex influences the completion rate of the girl child according to the 57.7% response rate unlike 72.3% teachers who were contrary and were of the view that it does (Richard, 2022).

**Table 4: Showing responses on whether low intellectual ability of girl drop out influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage |
|----------|------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------|
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|                   |           |              |            |              |
|-------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 08        | 14.8         | 37         | 20.3         |
| Disagree          | 09        | 16.7         | 39         | 21.4         |
| Undecided         | 04        | 7.40         | 19         | 10.4         |
| Agree             | 25        | 46.3         | 60         | 33.0         |
| Strongly agree    | 08        | 14.8         | 27         | 14.8         |
| <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 low intellectual ability of girl drop out influences the completion rate of the girl child, 14.8% respondents strongly agreed, 46.3% agreed, 7.40% were not sure, 16.7% disagreed and 14.8% strongly disagreed, while when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement (Rashid et al., 2023), 14.8% of the respondents strongly agreed, 33.0% agreed, 10.4% were not sure, 21.4% disagreed and 20.3% strongly disagreed. This implies that low intellectual ability of girl drop out influences the completion rate of the girl child.

**Table 5: Showing responses on whether long distance to school influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 16                     | 29.6         | 35                            | 19.2         |
| Disagree          | 11                     | 20.4         | 47                            | 25.8         |
| Undecided         | 07                     | 13.0         | 16                            | 8.80         |
| Agree             | 18                     | 33.3         | 77                            | 42.3         |
| Strongly agree    | 02                     | 3.70         | 07                            | 3.80         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 5 shows that when teacher respondents were asked whether long distance to school influences the completion rate of the girl child, 3.70% respondents strongly agreed, 33.3% agreed, 13.0% were not sure, 20.4% disagreed and 29.6% strongly disagreed, while when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement (John et al., 2023), 3.80% of the respondents strongly agreed, 42.3% agreed, 8.80% were not sure, 25.8% disagreed and 19.2% strongly disagreed. This implies that according to female drop out long distance to school influences the completion rate of the girl child while according to teachers it does not.

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**Table 6: Showing responses on whether too much work at school influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 13                     | 24.1         | 46                            | 25.3         |
| Disagree          | 24                     | 44.4         | 48                            | 26.4         |
| Undecided         | 02                     | 3.70         | 16                            | 8.80         |
| Agree             | 09                     | 16.7         | 47                            | 25.8         |
| Strongly agree    | 06                     | 11.1         | 25                            | 13.7         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 6 shows that when teacher respondents were asked whether too much work at school influences the completion rate of the girl child, 11.1% respondents strongly agreed, 16.7% agreed, 3.70% were not sure, 44.4% disagreed and 24.1% strongly disagreed, while when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement, 13.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 25.8% agreed, 8.80% were not sure, 26.4% disagreed and 25.3% strongly disagreed (Allan et al., 2023). This implies that over 55% of the respondents had a view that too much work at school does not influence the completion rate of the girl child.

**Table 7: Showing responses on whether the learning environment influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 06                     | 11.1         | 36                            | 19.8         |
| Disagree          | 11                     | 20.4         | 39                            | 21.4         |
| Undecided         | 04                     | 7.40         | 13                            | 7.10         |
| Agree             | 32                     | 59.3         | 69                            | 37.9         |
| Strongly agree    | 01                     | 1.90         | 25                            | 13.7         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 7 showed that when teacher respondents were asked whether conducive learning environment influences the completion rate of the girl child, 1.90% respondents strongly agreed, 59.3% agreed, 7.40% were not sure, 20.4% disagreed and 11.1% strongly disagreed, while when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement (Sub-county et al., 2023), 13.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 37.9% agreed, 7.10% were not sure,

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21.4% disagreed and 19.8% strongly disagreed. This implies that conducive learning environment influences the completion rate of the girl child.

**Table 8: Showing responses on whether lack of adequate (female) teachers influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 14                     | 25.9         | 34                            | 18.7         |
| Disagree          | 30                     | 55.6         | 70                            | 38.5         |
| Undecided         | 02                     | 3.70         | 10                            | 5.50         |
| Agree             | 08                     | 14.8         | 47                            | 25.8         |
| Strongly agree    | 00                     | 00           | 21                            | 11.5         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 8 shows that when teacher respondents were asked whether lack of adequate (female) teachers influences the completion rate of the girl child, 00% respondents strongly agreed, 14.8% agreed, 3.70% were not sure, 55.6% disagreed and 25.9% strongly disagreed, while when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement (Ronet et al., 2023), 11.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 25.8% agreed, 5.50% were not sure, 38.5% disagreed and 18.7% strongly disagreed. This implies that lack of adequate (female) teachers does not necessarily influence the completion rate of the girl child.

**Table 9: Showing responses on whether poor quality of schools influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 13                     | 24.1         | 40                            | 22.0         |
| Disagree          | 28                     | 51.9         | 93                            | 51.1         |
| Undecided         | 05                     | 9.30         | 11                            | 6.0          |
| Agree             | 04                     | 7.40         | 38                            | 20.9         |
| Strongly agree    | 04                     | 7.40         | 00                            | 00           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 9 showed that when teacher respondents were asked whether poor quality of schools influences the completion rate of the girl child, 7.40% respondents strongly agreed, 7.40% agreed, 9.30% were not sure, 51.9% disagreed and 24.1% strongly disagreed, while when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar

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statement (Victoria et al., 2023), 00% of the respondents strongly agreed, 20.9% agreed, 6.0% were not sure, 51.1% disagreed and 22.0% strongly disagreed. This implies that poor quality of schools does not influence the completion rate of the girl child.

**Table 10: Showing responses on whether the proportion of girl drop outs is proportionate to the number female teachers influences the completion rate of the girl child**

| Response          | Frequency<br>(teacher) | Percentage   | Frequency<br>(girl drop outs) | Percentage   |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly disagree | 20                     | 37.0         | 71                            | 39.0         |
| Disagree          | 21                     | 38.9         | 74                            | 40.7         |
| Undecided         | 05                     | 9.30         | 08                            | 4.40         |
| Agree             | 04                     | 7.40         | 26                            | 14.3         |
| Strongly agree    | 04                     | 7.40         | 03                            | 1.60         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>54</b>              | <b>100.0</b> | <b>182</b>                    | <b>100.0</b> |

**Source: (Primary data 2019)**

Table 10 showed that when teacher respondents were asked whether the proportion of girl drop outs being proportionate to the number female teachers influences the completion rate of the girl child, 7.40% respondents strongly agreed, 7.40% agreed, 9.30% were not sure, 38.9% disagreed and 37.0% strongly disagreed, while when female drop out respondents were asked on the similar statement, 1.60% of the respondents strongly agreed, 14.3% agreed, 4.40% were not sure, 40.7% disagreed and 39.0% strongly disagreed. This implies that the proportion of girl drop outs being proportionate to the number female teachers does not influence the completion rate of girl child.

#### **Discussion of the findings.**

The findings from results provided insights into the factors influencing the completion rates of the girl child in USE Schools in Buikwe District, aligned with the specified objectives. Firstly, regarding the investigation of the perception of girl-child conflict with teachers on the education completion rate findings indicated that 64.8% of teacher respondents agreed that conflict with teachers did not directly influence the completion rate of the girl child, contrasting with 50% of female dropouts who disagreed (Joventia et al., 2023). This suggested a disparity in perceptions between teachers and female dropouts regarding the impact of conflicts with teachers on completion rates. Secondly, exploring whether the proportion of girl dropouts was proportionate to the number of female teachers and its influence on completion rates (Richard et al., 2022), findings revealed that 37% of teacher respondents strongly disagreed, while 39% strongly disagreed among female dropouts (John et al., 2023). This suggested a consensus between teachers and female dropouts that the proportion of girl dropouts being proportionate to the number of female teachers did not influence the completion rate of the girl child (Aisha et al., 2023). Finally, investigating the influence of sexual harassment on education completion rates, as findings, a notable 57.7% of

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respondents (combining both teachers and female dropouts) acknowledged that teachers asking girls for sex influenced the completion rate of the girl child. While 72.3% of teachers held a contrary view, the substantial agreement among female dropouts highlighted the concerning influence of sexual harassment on the education completion rate of the girl child (Aisha et al., 2023). Overall, these findings underscored the need for addressing conflicts with teachers and sexual harassment as critical factors affecting the completion rates of the girl child in Buikwe District.

**Conclusion.**

In conclusion, the findings from this study shed light on the multifaceted factors influencing the completion rates of girl children in USE Schools within Buikwe District, aligning with the predetermined objectives (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). The investigation into the perception of girl-child conflicts with teachers unveiled a noticeable dissonance between teachers and female dropouts. While a significant 64.8% of teachers contended that conflicts with teachers did not directly impede the completion rates of girl children (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023), a considerable 50% of female dropouts disagreed, emphasizing the need to address these perceptual gaps and comprehend the nuanced impact of teacher-student relationships on educational outcomes. Moreover, the exploration of whether the proportion of girl dropouts correlated with the number of female teachers and its impact on completion rates revealed a consensus between teachers and female dropouts (John et al., 2023). Both groups, represented by 37% of teachers and 39% of female dropouts, strongly disagreed that the proportion of girl dropouts aligning with the number of female teachers had a substantial influence on completion rates. This finding calls for a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics at play in the educational landscape, urging policymakers and educators to focus on more impactful factors that impede the successful completion of education by the girl child (Victoria et al., 2023). Additionally, the study underlined the urgent need to address the prevalent issue of sexual harassment, as indicated by the notable agreement among respondents that such incidents have a concerning influence on the education completion rates of the girl child in Buikwe District. In light of these findings, targeted interventions and awareness programs are imperative to foster a safer and more supportive learning environment for the girl child.

**Recommendations.**

Conduct comprehensive training and sensitization programs for teachers to enhance their understanding of the potential impact of conflicts with female students on their education completion rates. This training should include strategies for conflict resolution, effective communication, and creating a supportive learning environment.

Establish and rigorously enforce policies within schools that explicitly prohibit and address instances of sexual harassment, especially involving teachers and female students. This should include awareness campaigns, clear reporting mechanisms, and disciplinary actions for offenders.

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