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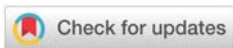
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## Research Article

# The factors contributing to low schools enrollment of females in South Sudan

## Abstract

This aimed to describe the factors contributed to low enrollments of female in school in South Sudan; these factors are either political reason, cultural reasons.

The literature reviewed were from the related information from the prior researchers, their findings has significant to the females' enrollments, but the failure of their researches was that, they recommended to the government only on the issues on how to reduced poverty. Poverty is not affecting only females, it affect both genders, and cannot be the main factor that cause low enrollment of female. As a result this paper has found it out that, the two mains factors that affect female enrollments was the negative behaviors of the people toward female education and lack of awareness of the South Sudanese communities about the government policies of encouraging females' education.

The recommendations were directed to the government of South Sudan to initiate an awareness campaigns to be conducted annually in the former ten states of the republic of South Sudan and also forms policy implementing group at local level of the government including villages, household, schools, stakeholders including chiefs and the parents, to understand the importance of female education, through this process, the communities can gradually change their behaviors toward female education.

## Introduction

The progress made by any community can be judge by the factors which has to do with the gender disparities in in that particular community, disparities in educational participation must be equal between boys and girls in order to achieve a national development. According to sustainable development goal, 2030 agenda, it advocated on the equal participation of every child in education, regardless of gender and economic status. Participation of females in education in South Sudan is very low compared to males, yet females are the majority, according to the 5<sup>th</sup> Sudan population and housing census 2008 results, 60% of the South Sudanese population account for female and 93% of female are illiterate.

A good number of literatures show females' enrollments school at low far behind males' students, the annual school census 2016 indicated the percentages of the female enrollments in both primary and secondary school was at 44.4% in 2017, MoGEI [1]. This has raised the concern of the academician, and one can asked him/herself as to why the enrollments for female students in the schools are low while the government and international education partners are working hard to

bring female to participate in education?. Boboya J [2], argued that South Sudan is facing the difficulties in gender equality in education this was a result of cultural marginalization on the female by men. The paper aims to analyses the following issues:

1. The reasons that cause the low schools enrolments of female in South Sudan
2. To suggest some possible solution to the policymakers about female education

## Literature Review

According to Mercy T. and Lucia F, (Ed) [3], stated that gender equality in education is an international challenge, UNESCO [4], "the whole world is working toward the Education 2030 framework for action, with an aim to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for female. Despite the efforts made by the educational partners worldwide, still, there are around sixteen million girls who are out of school, SDGs (2017). Success in female education was seen in Arab World, a report published online, March 2018 by the Beggruen Institute," showed that Qatar was the leading country in female education.

Qatar is an oil-rich Arab peninsula jutting off Saudi Arabia in to the Persian Gulf, their females' enrollments were almost seven times as many females as males enrolled in education, this was the leading record made by World Bank in 2013, although they were leading in female literacy, majority of them were unemployed because of their cultures, Muslim attitudes and sharia laws restricts females to work and deny their appearance in the public. Majority of them declined work opportunities offered to them as a collective decision from them and their families; they thought that the vocational job opportunities were not convenience for women. While in Jordan, a female just graduates and prepare to marry an educated man with a good job which can support them both, this can still make their education meaningless.

Difficulties look almost similar in the third world countries but they differed depending on the country's policies, the percentages for female attending the schools in South Sudan, MoGEI [5], during 2016 South Sudan school report, were only 39.3% while 60.7% account for the male student. Julia A. (1997), Julie was among the earlier researchers on gender, she grouped the factors influencing women participation in education into four, that is ; female personal and social factors, females economic situation, institutional factors and she referred it to availability and relevancy of the educational policies to the females and political instability in the country

Monica A [6], suggested early marriage practice in the South Sudanese societies denied girl child participate in education because they are married off at their younger age, this is always not easy for them to go back again to education because being a mother makes you more busy with the household affairs and find no chances of going back to formal education, also gendered division of labor among the societies has affected women, and if so, then it is a social problem and any problem need to be solved. In this regard, the aim of this research studies was to look into the reasons that led to low enrollments of female in the schools in South Sudan.

### Difficulties faced by female in participating in education

The difficulties faced by female to participate in education are severe in South Sudan. Charity G [7] and Dr. Catherine H [8], stated that females are not getting the education because of long-held cultural traditions regarding marriage in exchange for dowry, parents married off their daughters earlier if they are in poverty. Though primary education is free and compulsory, yet there are a lot of costs associated with sending children to school in urban or semi-urban areas, the prices of school uniforms, textbooks or transport cannot be easily afforded by poor families, more often, parents choose to keep their girls at home and send the boys to school instead, conflict and unqualified numbers of teaching staff are also contributing to the challenges affecting their participation, Habiba M [9]. The challenges are straightforward not only in South Sudan or Africa but also in the Middle East and South Asia. Education for Development Report July 2015. In South Asia, the education school enrollment in 2015 for girls was almost the same with that of the boys in primary school, reflecting a good attendance at primary level toward gender equality, but

in secondary school, the average was 14.5 percent behind the boys' enrollment.

Female education in Africa and in South Sudan, in particular, has for a long time been plagued by a pedagogy of differences, by way of education that stresses on the differences and not the similarities between females and male. By doing so, it has placed the male-child on the highest platform higher than that of the female-child, Alice M [10]. female problems in education starts right at the family level, in the family female children, are educated in a unique way from boys, because parents, family members, and even the neighbors perceive females to be radically different from males, females themselves believe that males were created more intelligent, more capable, more responsible and therefore more important to the society than girls. Even if the female child and male child are brought up together at home, and the same society the females are educated to grow up differently through these oppressive manners. Female and male are not given the same opportunities to prove their abilities, this has led female to grow up believing that they are inferior to males just because they are female. As gender disparities conquered in the society female-child education continued to suffer social discrimination. Tischels (1986) cited by Alice M [10], defined term "gender as the socially learned pattern of behavior and psychological or emotional expressions of attitudes that distinguishes male and female in the society. Such behaviors are learned through socialization in society and in school. This socialization has affected the female in terms of access to education, completion, and achievement. The females are made to feel inferior to boys and less important than boys in the society, therefore, female will not be willing to go for those things that are believed to be for males. They will not strive to outshine the boys in anything including education in case they get ex-communicated in the society because of going against the norms. Those girls who don't behave according to the custom and traditions are laughed at in the community and this makes them shy and therefore restricted them from competing equally with males in any way. Previous research in the field of education has made the revelation to the effect that for many years the female-child has been deprived of her right to adequate education through gender socialization.

Catherine H [8], parents usually claimed if they send their daughters to school, there will be no one to help them in household work such as herding animals, fetching firewood, collecting water, cleaning the environment and cooking food? Also, they claim girls may lose connection with their cultures or may be subjected to bad influences or got spoil, and start involving herself in some crimes such as prostitution in the city. Alice M [10], stressed that negative attitudes of the parents and teachers toward female have led to a dropout of female in school, female students feel less valued and later think of producing children than wasting her time in unsupported studies, also gendered divisions of labor has tasked female with a lot of duties, which pinned them down from participating in communal affairs let alone education, Monica A [6], this most of the time led to early marriages because little girl feel no reason for staying with the parents doing the same duties she can do in her own house as a wife.

These cultures and traditional norms or customs has made them all the time the most vulnerable in society, only 10% of female knows to read and write these were those brought up in urban. The long civil wars in the then united Sudan from 1955- 1972 and again from May 16<sup>th</sup> 1983- 9<sup>th</sup> January 2005, the comprehensive peace agreement was signed between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) under Dr. John Garang de Mabior, and the Khartoum government under President Omar El Bashir, but currently South Sudan has made the matter worse by again broke into another civil war from 15<sup>th</sup> December 2013 and again in 2016.

Charity G [7], in her research, stated that marriages happening among our societies for three reasons, either for economic gain, social status gain or for a religious reason. Among the third world countries, marriage at young ages is common. More specifically on young ladies who wed at their early ages, by doing so, most young men have a say in when and who they will marry, therefore young ladies don't find any chance to make their own choices. Early marriage is one of the leading factor leading withdrawals of young ladies from their studies throughout the country; it is not simple for young ladies who see their life chances lessened by early marriage. 52% of girls are married before the age of 18 and less than 38.9% girls are enrolled in primary enrolment level while 31.9% secondary enrolment level, Charity G [7], those girls who become pregnant are always not allowed to attend the school because of the fear of being bullied by their age mate.

Poverty and lack of government funding greatly limit the work to which the education can be developed. Around half of the South Sudanese population lives below the poverty line, Boboya J [2]. This was worsened by the deteriorating economic situation today in the country when poverty level is high; there is also a high number of students' dropout especially female students due to the high cost of school fees, and other school requirements. Some parents feel that the girls need "protection" from unwanted pregnancy while in school. The financial conditions lead to the prioritization of boys over girls when the family needs to select which child will go to school, at household and community level poverty is the main factor undermining girls right to education, lack of the school requirements has reinforced the gender gap in the country. When poor families cannot afford to educate all their children it is always the daughter who has to stay home until they get married. Children's Health is a big concern, especially if those facing poverty, MoGEI [1], when there's not enough food or sufficient clean water to keep girls nourished and healthy, they may not be well enough to attend school.

The leading difficult thing affecting South Sudan and in the international education partners is female illiteracy, around 90% of women in South Sudan are illiterate, World Bank has estimated the ratios for girls against boys at 7:10 respectively can attend primary education, and 5:10 respectively enrolled in secondary education. Alice M [10], the gendered division of labor puts heavy burden on females' shoulders and further contributes to the marginalization of women and girls in politics and public life and kept them away from getting the

government policies on gender equity. South Sudan founding father Dr. John Garang acknowledged how the gendered division of labor places more burden on women's lives. In his speech during the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, he said, *"women in Sudan are the marginalized community whose suffering goes beyond description. The Sudanese rural woman wakeup at five O'clock in the morning and walked at five kilometers, to bring five gallons of water after five hours walk, therefore, later spent some hours working in the farm, and five more hours making the family meal"*.

This was in accordance with the customary laws in South Sudan; they have no favor on the female. South Sudanese customary laws make more difficult for women to bypass the burden of domestic roles which held them to the status of second class citizens. This was evident in South Sudanese customary law they valued women as respected mothers, and the daughters are cherished and expected to bring wealth to the family upon marriage. Women are also regarded as an example of culture and traditions and are charged to transfer cultural values to the younger generation; this thought of respect is not usually supplemented by many aspects of customary laws pertaining to women's lives.

## Methodology

The qualitative research method was used to carry out this study, because in qualitative research method, a research design depends on the way a researcher arrange his/her work. This qualitative research used 15 participants which included; the government officials from the national Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI), Juba and Head-teachers, Teachers, and female students in two schools in Juba (Dr. Garang secondary school and Supiri primary school). The researcher was targeting female students from primary six to primary eight (P.6 – p.8) at the age of 15 and above. During the data collection, the researcher carryout face to face interviews with five Directors these include Director of Gender Equity and Inclusive Education, Director of Alternative Learning Programs (ALP), Director of Primary and Secondary Studies and Director of Curriculum Implementation at the national Ministry of education in Juba, The researcher also made a phone call to the Director of Education, Jonglei State after the interviews at Juba, to inquire about the situation of girls' enrollments at the State and Counties at the rural areas and also interviewed Two Head-teachers, three Teachers and five female students from Dr. Garang Secondary School and Supiri primary School in Juba.

The sources for this research were mainly from primary data and secondary information, the researcher review policy documents on female education and the view of other researchers, also the Directors were interviewed in the ministry of general education purposely to get a direct answer on the difficulties facing them in encouraging female education, the researcher made them purposely because this was where the required information was available on the ground, qualitative research method was used in carrying out this study because Stake, (1995), defined qualitative research as a form of a systematic empirical inquiry into the meaning,



qualitative research method always involved interpretation and naturalistic approaches, meaning that qualitative research study things in their natural selection and setting, and interpret human phenomena according to the way and meaning the people brought them, therefore, this method rhymed with the researcher study, because the purpose of this study was to find out the reasons of low enrollments for females in the school.

### Factors contributing to low enrollment of girls in the schools

#### Negative attitudes of the people toward females' education:

The communities have negative attitudes toward female education, people view school as a place for prostitution and unholy practices Alice M [10], in her research findings on the factors causing dropout of female students in Kenya emphasis on the parents and teachers attitudes on female students as the number one factor leading to drop out of students in Turkana district, this also the same factor in South Sudan.

This was against the Sustainable development Goals SDGs 4 because children have equal rights in attaining educational and lifelong learning opportunities for all, from early childhood this was to ensure equity, inclusion and gender equality and effective learning to fulfill the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies, GCE [11].

Some of the people do not see why they waste their money on educating girls and later married to educated men, so they chose to put a male child in education. Also vulnerable group which include children with physical and mental disorders, orphans, street children, those left with chronic illness and person leaving with HIV/AIDS, these groups often face isolation stigma, and they also faced additional barriers to access education, those children with disabilities find it difficult to travel to and from the school, because they consider disability as inability.

#### Early marriages

Early marriages among the communities in South Sudan as the leading factor affecting the government and international education partners to achieve full participation of female in education, Monica A [6], indicated in her findings that there were numerous challenges faced by female starting from the household to the community level, these challenges are directly or indirectly faced by female especially girls, the researcher has agreed with her, because feminism theory indicated that any practice that denied a girl or women participation or considered inferior is against feminist, therefore, this societal practices such as gendered division of labor leave female with the heavy task of household work such as cooking, washing the family cloths, taking care of the young ones can lead to a student dropout. Oguta G [12], the researcher agreed with his finding that early marriages either as a result of pregnancy or force marriage known by the parent, has led in most cases either the girl remained under the responsibility of their parents or the boy who impregnated her, took her to his home. Also as a society in some part of South Sudan, some topic in school like reproductive health, sexual education and puberty adolescent are much considered as taboo and it gives most of the parent

to look at school as one the institutions that encourage prostitution, because talking about reproductive organs is considered unethical among most of the communities in South Sudan, MoGEI [1]. And most importantly the virginity of the girl during her marriage ceremony has let some parent keeps their daughters at home with them leading to low enrolments in the schools, the loss of virginity before marriage is also one of the things that worried both parents and female students.

Culturally, virginity was one of the most celebrated things among the communities in South Sudan, during the wedding, virginity is witnessed officially by ladies, and if it is not there, then it is a big shame to both the parents of the bride and herself, therefore, it has to be protected because it adds more value to the bride and led to an increase of the dowries

#### Political instability

The Findings according to Charity G [7], a large number of South Sudanese pupils and teachers have fled the country to the neighboring countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia, or are displaced internally, in searching for the better life in the camps where they are provided with the basic needs such as food, shelters, and opportunities for primary schooling, foreign teachers who were teaching in South Sudan went back to their countries after the July 2016 crisis leaving some students without subject-specific teacher. This was especially in the most affected areas of the greater Upper Nile region. During the crises the pastoralist communities migrated deeper into the countryside, either in the deep swampy areas in the Sudd or deep in the thick natural forests of the Badingilo Game Reserve, this migration has cause low enrollments in the schools.

The conflict also has caused rural-urban migration, (UNMISS 2016, the United Nation Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) estimated that, more than 200,000 Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) were being sheltered in the UNIMISS in the six major protection Sites of Civilian (PoC) the across the country, people migrate to towns for protection, this has made Juba a most crowded city in South Sudan, this increase in population in the towns has led to the scarcity of schools and school materials, facilities, teachers and classroom overcrowding, in Jubek State, the average ratio of teacher-pupil was 1:145, MoGEI [5], this has led to a high dropout rate in schools.

Most of the schools in the Upper Nile region were destructed by the war in 2013, and some were being used as a military barracks for the rebel since the beginning the conflict. This has caused doubt to the international education partners who help the government in constructing schools. As a result, the parents whose their children were in those school decided to send their children to other towns or decided to let them stay at home, in this case, girls were the victims because they do not like always to separate with their parents.

#### Lack of community Awareness on the Government Policies

This issue has been the most common problem, policies like the ministerial order number 22/2017, issued by the national

Minister of general education and instruction Hon. Deng Hoc Yai, on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017, on the general administration of the primary and secondary school, and on the girls, child education, the community in the rural areas are not aware of these order. According to the majority of the respondents, some said it clearly, and others show it through their response, like the village women who were interview and she said, " we don't know about the policies, and if there are, they are known by men," this is because the government and the educational partners do not use an integrated communication policies that can foster positive community engagement in the policy of girl child education.

### Schools distances

The distance of the schools also has contributed to the low attendance of female students, female consider themselves a weak gender, they can easily be out powered by any force, like rapping, kidnapping, and many other sorts of inhuman activities, Oguta G [12], Oguto in the literature review was taking of the school distance as a factor affecting female attendance in school it was still better during those days, because the villages were still staying closer with the schools until war broke out in Juba City on December 15th, 2013 and again on July 8th, 2016 causing people to leave their villages. Some of the school remains in the out sketch of the villages as the results of internal displacement of the people from South Sudan to other safe places in the country like urban centers, other crossed to the neighboring states Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Central Africa Republic, Sudan and Egypt [13-15]. As a result, the few remaining inhabitants group themselves in small places, leaving some of the schools in a distant at the out sketch of the residential areas (Figure 1).

It is well showed in the framework that the students' outcome is related to a range of factors of low enrollment of females in school. Most of the literatures talked about the females' enrollment in the school, therefore, the researcher made the above framework to illustrate how a range of factors can affect females' enrollments outcome which produced female low enrollments in schools in South Sudan.

### Conclusion

In summary, the negative behaviors of the people toward female education and the lack of communities' awareness are the lead factors that contributed much to the low enrollment of female students from the school in South Sudan. Parents valued much the dowries that they will get from marrying off their daughters than to what they may get from girls education in the future.

Political instability also impacted both gender negatively but it is greater on females, because they considered themselves as weak gender, and any situation can affect them most, majority of the people in the camps either at internal displaced camps or refugee camps, are the females, most of the males students are within the territory of South Sudan, and are in school.

### Recommendation to the government

Basing on the above factors causing low enrollments of females in school, the researcher recommended to the government about them, these recommendations include:

- ❖ Female education policies should be reviewed to take full account and the participation of all the stakeholders about female education in the country.

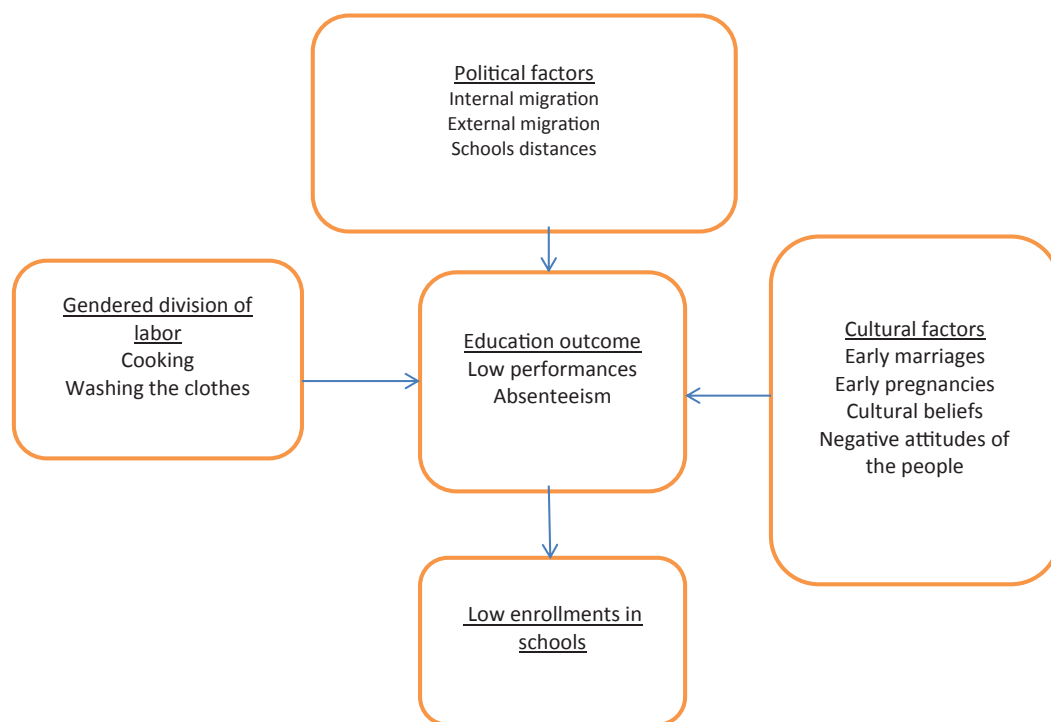


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for females' low enrollments in school in South Sudan.

- ❖ The government should create awareness group at all level of the government and among the societies, household, schools, stakeholders including chiefs and the parents, to understand the importance of female education, this awareness should be conducted at least ones annually, in all the states of South Sudan.
- ❖ There should be cooperation among the Ministry of general education, education partners, teachers, and the parents, especially chief who are the local authorities, because MoGEI [1], show that there was a lack of coordination between the government and the education stakeholders this cooperation can make monitoring and evaluation of the policies more efficient.
- ❖ There should be some mentors for girls to be employed in every school and supported by the ministry of general education; she should act as an example and showing the importance of female education. These mentors should be highly motivated in any teaching benefits including financial and professional development to avoid them deserting their career and go, looking for better pay in private sectors.
- ❖ The government should continue improving her bilateral relationships with the countries where female education is equal with the male, for example, China, to support in training of the teachers, particularly female teachers. These teachers can import the knowledge that can help in the government plans for female education.
- ❖ The government and international education partners should build school closer to residential areas to avoid these long distances covered by both the students and teachers going to school in the morning and coming back in the evening. This will avoid the fear of rape and insecurity on the way and around the schools, people put the blame the warring parties that reconstruction efforts have suffered in the face of fragile peace and an unstable condition of the country economy. But with the revitalized peace agreement signed in the Sudanese capital Khartoum, has provided a peaceful movement which can be used by the government to increase classrooms or build schools closer to the residential areas.

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