



Gender Disparity in Extracurricular Participation: Assessing Impact of Cultural Norms/Practices on Girls' Participation in Extracurricular Activities of Secondary Schools in Korogwe District, Tanzania

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Education studies admitted that extracurricular activities have played a key role in academic performance and overall education development. Extracurricular involvement among students has been shown to enhance academic performance and increase motivation for further study (Kravchenko and Nygård, 2022). Students who participate in after-school programs at their

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respective schools are able to apply the skills they learn to other disciplines and to their everyday life (Hayes, 2014). However, gender and education studies asserted that there is gender disparity in participation in extracurricular school activities girls indicated to have poor status compared to boys (Lundh, 2022; (Jägerbrink et al, 2022).

This study therefore assessed influence of cultural norms/practices on girls' participation in extracurricular school activities. Specifically the study was guided by the following objectives: to identify types of cultural norms/practices that hinder girls' participation in extracurricular activities, assess influence of pointed out cultural norms/practices on girls' participation in extracurricular school activities and examine effect of limited girls' participation in extracurricular activities.

This study used concurrent mixed methods research design to allow collection of qualitative and quantitative data at the same time.

The study used simple random and purposive sampling techniques to obtain a sample size of 120 respondents for quantitative and qualitative data. Data analysis involved thematic analysis for qualitative data and descriptive statistics for quantitative findings. Findings from this study noted that there is gender disparity in extracurricular activities participation whereas girls maintain poor status of participation. The observed gender gap was highly contributed by some of cultural norms/practices, gendered division of domestic roles being the leading factor. Result from this study further indicated that limited participation in extracurricular school deprives girl students an opportunity to grow academically and develop their career.

Keywords: Girls' education; cultural norms/practices; extracurricular school activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Several education studies indicated that extracurricular activities offer important opportunities for academic excellence for both girls and boys (Christison, 2013; Ginosyan et al, 2020; Kravchenko and Nygård, 2022). Participating in extracurricular activities encourage development of study skills, personal interest and control of emotional/ psychological related problems among adolescents hence improve academic performance and career development (Christison, 2013). Students who participate in extracurricular tend to improve their academic performance and raise their aspiration for further studies (Kravchenko and Nygård, 2022). Organized school extracurricular activities instill students with communication skills as some of activities such as debate enhance students speaking, writing, reading and presentation skills (Christison, 2013; Ginosyan et al, 2020; Buckley and Lee, 2021). Involvement of students in school-based extracurricular activities enables students to transfer gained skills to other areas of their subjects and the general lives (Hayes, 2014). Participation of extracurricular activities found to improve school attendance among students who are frequently absconding from school and those who are at risk of leaving school (Metsäpelto and Pulkkinen, 2014). Participation in extracurricular activities encourage development team work spirit, leadership, self-discipline and patience skills all of which are important attributes of attainment of

educational goals (Snellman et al, 2015). Generally, participation in extra-curricular school activities help students to develop greater aspirations and commitment to their study, build self-confidence and communication skills all of which enable them to effectively participate in class room learning.

Despite the importance of participating in extracurricular activities among students there is slight difference in the rate and frequency of participation among students because of number of factors including family income, parental education and ethnicity (Metsäpelto and Pulkkinen (2014). There is relationship association between lower-income family background and children' participation in extracurricular activities because participation in extracurricular activities often carries significant costs (Hjalmarsson, 2023). Students from lower socio economic backgrounds face financial constraints that limit them to afford cost incurred in buying equipment and uniforms required for a particular extracurricular activity (Careemdeen, 2023). Parents' level of education also indicated as one among factors influencing students' participation in extracurricular school activities due to the fact parents with high education backgrounds are aware of the importance of engaging in extracurricular activities thus they are highly support and encourage their children to participate in after classes organized activities compared to parents who have lower education level (Cheng et al, 2023). Students' participation

in extracurricular activities also affected by ethnicity or race of students in which black race students are more important disadvantaged in participation in extracurricular activities compared to white race. Study by indicated that non-Hispanic black youth has lower levels of participation in extracurricular activities profiles compared to Hispanic and other white racial groups (Meier et al, 2018). There is no society in the world which is free from stratification however modern stratification differs from traditional stratification of societies (Kamau, 2014). Urban - rural social stratification for example demonstrates a considerable variation in participation in extracurricular school activities between students in urban and rural schools (Jubair 2024).

1.1 Statement of Study

Despite the highlighted importance of students' participation in extracurricular school organized activities, education and gender studies noted that there is significant gender based disparity in participation in extracurricular activities girls lagging behind boys (Colabianchi et al, 2016; Jubair, 2024). However, little has been known on factors contributing to gender disparity in extracurricular activities participation. This study therefore set itself in assessment of impact of cultural norms and practices on girls' participation in an organized school based extracurricular activities.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine influence of cultural norms and practices on girls' participation in extracurricular school activities. Specifically this study aimed at:

- Identifying types of cultural norms/practices and state the extent in which the pointed out cultural norms/practices affect girls' education
- Examining the influence of pointed out cultural norms/practices on girls' participation in extracurricular school activities.
- Assessing effects of limited girls' participation in extracurricular activities on girls' education development .

1.3 Research Questions

- i. Which are cultural norms and practices that affect girls' participation in extracurricular activities?

- ii. To what extent do identified cultural norms and practices affect girls' education?
- iii. How do the pointed cultural norms and practices affect girls' participation in extracurricular activities?
- iv. What are the effects of limited girls' participation in extracurricular activities on overall development of girls' education?

1.4 Review of Related Literature

Extracurricular activities defined as those activities which are not part of components included in the academic curriculum but are an important part in achieving educational goals (Anjum, 2021). Study by Penjor and Dorji (2022) confirmed that there is positive relationship between students' participation in extracurricular school activities and improvement of academic performance because it helps to improve students' concentration during classroom learning and actively engage in the assigned classroom activities. Participation in extracurricular activities is significant in development of personality among students because it provide an opportunity to engage and try different kind of aspects of their personality (Mbada, 2022). Assigning students with different roles in extracurricular activities enhance self-confidence and develop team work sprit that could offer a wide range of problem-solving skills (Buckley and Lee, 2021). Engaging in extracurricular activities provide students with chance to develop friendships and fellowships all of which are important skills in their future life (Lawhorn, 2008). Participating in extracurricular activities help adolescents' students to release pressure related to psychological/ emotional stress and fatigue (Ginosyan et al, 2020). Engaging students in extracurricular activities is considered to be more potential to development of self-esteem formation of social networks and adolescents' adjustment. Study by Kim et al, (2023) confirmed that there is significant relationship between extracurricular activities and development of leadership skills whereas students who maintained leadership position in their respective school clubs/ sports/games groups indicated to excel in their community or national leadership posts.

Despite all of these benefits of participating in extracurricular school activities, education studies indicated that there is variation in extent in which girls and boys participating in organized extracurricular school activities, social cultural

factors pointed out as main reasons for the observed variation. Traditionally domestic chores are primarily considered as duty of women and girls whereas they spent much of their time in cooking, cleaning and caring for household members (UN Women, (2016). Study by Mburu and Nyagah, (2012) discovered that there was a disproportionate number of women/girls doing household chores like cooking, cleaning, and childrearing while men/boys are highly engaging in salaried occupations/pursue their study. In absence of housemaid, burden of domestic chores reported to have a substantial effect on education of women/girls (Msoffe, 2016). School girls as assistant of their mothers are required to perform all household chores including preparing meals, gathering firewood, fetching water, cleaning compound yards, taking care of younger siblings and other care giving duties all of which deprive them time to participate in extracurricular school activities (King and Winthrop, 2015; Mburu and Nyagah, 2012). Thus, girls' participation in extracurricular school activities has been shown to be negatively impacted by gendered distribution of domestic roles as girls are expected to return back home early after schooling so that to help their mother to prepare dinner and other household duties (Lundh, 2022). Study by Jägerbrink et al, (2022) further revealed that school girls have poor attitudes towards engagement in extracurricular school activities due to lack of hygienic facilities in the school environment the situation that make them unable to freely engage in sports and games. In general, male students are more likely participate in extracurricular school activities than female students because girls consider participation in extracurricular activities as insignificant to their general life and carrier development (Al-Ansari et al, 2016).

2. METHODOLOGY

The research employed the mixed research method in which survey questionnaire and focus group discussion tools were used to collect data. The sample size of the study was drawn from five community secondary schools selected in

the study area making a total of 100 respondents for survey questionnaire. The study also involved 20 female students randomly selected from each of selected school to participate in focus group discussion thus making a total of 120 sample size for this study. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis whereas quantitative analysis involved numerical data and qualitative analysis was concerned with descriptive data. Analysis and presentation of study findings included quantitative and qualitative methods whereas findings obtained from questionnaires were processed using SPSS.16th version programme while qualitative findings were analyzed by using thematic analysis.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Influence of Cultural Norms/Practices on Gender Disparity in Education

Education studies indicated that some of traditional norms and practices are negatively affect education of girls compared to boys (Juma and Simatwa, 2015; Msoffe, 2016; Kirima, 2019) Findings from this study revealed the same that girls' education is negatively impacted by bad cultural norms and practices. Table 1 shows the results.

The responses from Table 1 show that 85% of respondents said cultural norms/practices are highly contributing to gender disparities in education compared to 15% of those who declared that cultural norms/practices are not among factors influencing gender disparities in education. This finding correspond with study by Askari, et al, (2023) in Pakistan that revealed that cultural norms are among barriers to women's/girl's education where they habitually expected to prioritize domestic roles and child-bearing over education. Quantitative analysis further shows the extent in which cultural norms/ practices contribute to gender disparities in education. Table 2 indicates the results.

Table 1. Influence of cultural norms/practices on gender disparities in education

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	85	85
No	15	15
Total	100	100

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 2. Extent in which cultural norms/ practice influence gender disparity in education

Variable	Frequency	Percent
High extent	51	51
Moderate	31	31
Low extent	18	18
Total	100	100

Source: Field data, 2023

Result from Table 2 above show that majority of respondents admitted that there is high extent (51%) in which cultural norms/practices contribute to gender disparity in education. Whereas 31% of respondents said cultural norms/practices have moderate influence, with 18% asserted that there is low extent in which cultural norms/ practices contribute to gender disparities in education. This finding suggests that cultural norms and practices are highly contributing to gender disparity in education. Participants in survey questionnaire were further asked to point out some of cultural norms and practices that are negatively influencing gender disparity in secondary education. Table 3 show the results.

Result from Table 3 shows that gendered division of domestic roles (76%) is a leading cultural practice that contributes to gender disparities in education followed by initiation ceremonies (63%), female genital mutilation (59%) and early/forced marriage (47%). This finding suggests that gendered division of domestic roles is the main influencing factor of gender disparity in secondary education. This finding concurs with study by Msoffe, (2016) that pointed gender role as the main challenge to women/girls who pursuing their study through open and distance learning.

3.2 Effects of Gender Roles on Girls' Education

Generally, gendered social norms assign larger proportion of domestic chores to girls than boys the situation that eventually become major

obstacle for girls to enjoy their rights to education (Juma and Simatwa, 2015; Msoffe, 2016). Participants in focus group discussion were asked to explain which gender is normally assisted his/her mother to perform domestic chores. Nearly, all participants in focus group discussion pointed out that girls are assistants of their mothers in discharging domestic chores. Two participants demonstrated. P.1 in school F gave justification:

“Normally my brother was assigned very light, simple and few duties than me.”

P.4 in school B claimed that engaging in domestic chores before and after schooling affect girls' classroom learning.

“I usually engage in domestic chores before and after schooling. So I normally become tired and exhausted and hence sleep during classroom learning.”

Study by Plan International UK, (2017) indicated that unexpected family emergency like mothers' sickness or travel was normally sorted out by asking girls to abscond from school so as to take charge on mothers' responsibilities. Similarly findings from this study noted that school girls were usually absconded from school to take family responsibilities when their mother travel or become sick. P.1 in school B explained:

“Sometimes I was asked to stay at home to take care of my young siblings when my mother travelled or became sick. All these family responsibilities affect my study”

Table 3. Socio-cultural norms/practices influencing gender disparity in secondary education

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Female Genital Mutilation	59	24.1
Early/Forced Marriages	47	19.2
Gender Based Domestic Roles	76	31
Initiation Ceremonies	63	25.7
Total	245	100

Source: Field data, 2023

Study findings further noted that parents' separation was significantly increases burden of domestic chores among girls than boys. Participants in focus group discussion admitted that parents' separation tend to increase burden of domestic roles to girls. P.3 in school C exemplified:

"My parents were separated, so I was supposed to take over all responsibilities of my mother including taking care of my siblings, cooking food and performing all other domestic chores"

P.4 in school E further explained the extent in which increase in burden of domestic roles is significantly affects her study:

"My parents are separated, so when I return back from school I was supposed to take over of all of my mother's responsibilities including washing utensils, cooking dinner, fetching water and clean the house. So after finishing all these chores it was already night, with lack of electricity I failed to do assignments/ private studies. So, I went to sleep and wake up in the morning going to school without reviewing the taught lessons. Thus, I just concentrate in writing notes without doing revision. This is real challenge to my study".

This finding concurs with study by Mpyangu et al, (2014) that indicated that girl students who come from divorced parents are normally have poor records of school attendance and have poor status of academic performance because of increased burden of domestic chores. P.2 in school C further compared effects of burden of domestic roles on academic performance among girls and boys.

"Domestic roles deprive us time to study compared to boys who have enough time to engage in their study. As a result we perform poorly in examinations and hence considered academically incapable".

Additionally, qualitative findings indicated that domestic roles coupled with long school distance have greatly affect girls' school attendance and classroom learning. P.1 in school A reported that gendered allocation of domestic roles and long school distance makes them unable to manage and follow school time table:

"We are usually report at school late because of engaging in domestic chores at home, so we are always punished for coming late at school. Sometimes we decided not to go to school if we are out of reporting time and decided to go back home rather than going to school where we know for sure that we shall be punished. But when we think about the burden of domestic chores at home we become more confused and hence decided to abscond and or drop out from school."

This finding concurs with study by Tafere et al, (2022) in Ethiopia that observed that school girls are highly challenged with burden of domestic roles but also are heavily punished at school because of reporting at school late thus they normally abscond from the school. Generally, gender based allocation of domestic roles favour boys' education but undermines girls' education and career development.

3.3 Effect of Gender Roles on Girls' Participation in Extracurricular School Activities

Extracurricular activities are crucial part of overall students' academic progress and career development because they provide them with chance to explore their interests, learn valuable life skills and form a strong sense of community. Analysis from review of related literature depicted that students' participation in extracurricular activities is significantly important in improvement of academic performance and career development Christison (2013; Kravchenko and Nygård, 2022). However, there is gender based variation in extracurricular activities participation depending on type of organized school activities but also limiting social cultural factors. Male students are active in athletic while female participated in artistic (Olsen et al 2021). School girls have poor attitudes towards engagement in extracurricular school activities due to lack of hygienic facilities in the school environment (Jägerbrink et al, 2022). Likewise, findings from this study noted that there is gender based variation in extracurricular school activities' participation whereas boys are more active than girls. Table 4 indicates the results.

The responses from Table 4 show that 72% of respondents pointed out male as gender that is highly participating in school extracurricular activities compared to 28% of those who mentioned female as a leading gender in

Table 4. Gender with high rate in participation of extracurricular school activities

	Frequency	Percent
Male	72	72
Female	28	28
Total	100	100

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for girls' participation in extracurricular activities

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Normally boys have high rate of participation in extracurricular activities than girls	100	1.00	4.00	2.0600	1.05237
Girls' position in participation in extracurricular is very low compared to boys	100	1.00	4.00	2.0300	.89279
Girls have limited time to participate in extracurricular school activities compared to boys	100	1.00	4.00	1.8100	.69187
Lack of special toilet/ sanitary pads prohibit girls from participating in extracurricular school activities	100	1.00	4.00	2.2400	.92245
Parents' fear about security of their daughters is higher than their sons	100	1.00	4.00	2.1300	1.03138
Girls return back early from school so that to assist their mother in domestic chores	100	1.00	4.00	2.0700	.85582
Burden of domestic roles deprive girls' opportunity to participate in extracurricular school activities.	100	1.00	4.00	2.1500	.98857
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Source: Field data, 2023

participation of extracurricular school activities. Quantitative analysis further revealed situations that suggest poor status of girls' participation in extracurricular activities and reasons for the observed status. Table 5 below illustrates.

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores) were computed for girls' participation in extracurricular activities scale (Table 5). The results show that lack of special toilets/sanitary pads scored highest (M = 2.2400, S.D. = .92245) followed by burden of domestic roles deprive girls' opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities (M = 2.1500, SD = .98857) and parents' fear about security of their daughters is higher than their sons (M= 2.1300, SD=1.03138). The least factors contributing to girls' participation in extracurricular activities were: girls have limited time to participate in extracurricular activities compared to boys (M = 1.8100, SD = .69187) followed by girls' position in participation in

extracurricular is very low compared to boys (M = 2.0300, SD = .89279).

This finding suggests that there are different situations and factors that influencing gender disparity in students' participation in extracurricular school activities female students having poor status of participation compared to male. Contrary to this study, finding by Careemdeen, (2023) in Sir Lanka noted that female students in secondary schools demonstrating significantly higher involvement in extracurricular school activities compared to their male counterparts. Qualitative results further indicated that burden of domestic roles is the main influencing factor for girls' poor participation in extracurricular activities. P.2 in school C commented:

“Logically girls are assistants of their mothers in performing domestic chores such as cooking, fetching water, cleaning utensils,

cleaning the house etc. Thus we normally perform these domestic chores before going to school and after school as a result we do not have enough time to engage in our study and participate in extracurricular school activities”

Correspondingly study by Ferrant et al, (2014) revealed that unequal allocation of domestic roles and marital responsibilities as main contributing factor for gender disparity in extracurricular school activities participation. Similarly study by Shivakumar and Pujar, (2016) noted that school girls play a greater role in domestic and caring responsibilities compared to their counterpart boys as result they were deprived time to effectively engage in an organized extracurricular activities. Generally, gendered division of domestic roles pointed out as main contributing factor for the observed gender gap in extracurricular school activities participation.

3.4 Effects of Limited Participation in Extracurricular School Activities

Academic and developmental impact of extracurricular activities depends on the nature, type and extent in which the concerned students engage in the organized extracurricular school activities. Students who have high frequency of participation are expected to significantly gain more benefits of extracurricular activities compared to those who have limited time to participate (Meadows, 2019). Participants in survey questionnaire were asked to explain how limited participation in extracurricular activities affect their study and the overall career development. Table 6 illustrates:

Finding from Table 6 indicates that 22.2% of respondents said that limited participation in extracurricular school activities encourage poor

learning and poor academic performance among girls while 18.2% of respondents reported that limited extracurricular activities participation hinder development of leadership skills. Followed by 17.7% of respondents who declared that poor participation of extracurricular school activities discourage formation of peer group and develop team work spirit all of are essential attributes for academic progress and career development. Other participants (13.7%) said limited participation of extracurricular school activities encourage poor classroom learning and poor academic performance among girls while 13.1% admitted that students who do not engage in extracurricular school activities are normally have poor development of self esteem and personality as a result become psychologically affected. Qualitative findings further provided detailed account on effects of limited participation in extracurricular activities among girls. P.2 in school C narrated:

“Limited participation in extracurricular school activities make us perform poorly in our examinations hence considered academically incompetent the situation that conflicting with our ambition for further studies”

Likewise study by Hayes, (2014) asserted that limited participation in an organized school extracurricular activities prohibit students from transfer of study skills to their study subjects and the general lives. P.4 in school D further commented on challenges of limited participation in extracurricular school activities:

“We have limited time to engage in organized school extracurricular activities so we are at risk of facing emotional imbalance problem that will encourage us to engage in criminal behaviour like drug abuse and sexual activity all of which will lead to school dropout”.

Table 6. Effect of limited participation in extracurricular activities on girls’ education and career development

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Encourage poor learning and poor academic performance	207	13.7
Discourage formation of social networks and peer groups	268	17.7
Encourage adolescents’ emotional and stress to last longer	342	22.2
Hinder development of leadership skills	275	18.2
Discourage formation of peer group and develop team work spirit	223	14.7
Limits development of self esteem and personality among girls	199	13.1
Total	1514	100

Source: Field Data, 2023

This finding concur with studies by (Christison, 2013; Ginosyan et al, 2020; Kravchenko and Nygård, 2022, Jägerbrink, et al. 2022, Kirima 2019, Kroll & Neri 2009, UN Women 2016, URT 2016) that declared that limited participation in extracurricular activities among students resulted into poor development of self-esteem and self-discipline all of which lead to poor academic performance and school dropout. Generally findings from this study suggest that there is gender disparity in participation in extracurricular school activities girls being a gender with minimal rate of participation compared to boys. Traditional practice of gender based allocation of domestic roles pointed out as contributing factor for limited girls' participation in extracurricular school activities.

4. CONCLUSION

The study examined influence of cultural norms/practices on girls' education focusing on extracurricular school activities participation. Study findings admitted that there is gender disparity in extracurricular school activities participation, girls' maintained lower status. Results from this study further concluded that traditional practice of gendered allocation of domestic roles is the main influencing factor for the observed gender gap in extracurricular activities participation. Generally, findings from this study disclose that girls' limited time to participate in extracurricular school activities deprive them an opportunity to develop potential study skills that could consequently hinder their career development and the general life.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on study findings, this study therefore, recommends to the policymakers and the entire community on the following so as to enhance overall development of girls' education and achievement of full gender parity in secondary education:

- Policy makers and the entire community should consider revisit some of cultural norms such as gendered division of domestic roles so as release girls from pressure of domestic chores and hence provide them with enough time to engage in their study.
- Shifting social norms that dictate against women and girls as far as division of domestic roles is concerned and

encouraging more equitable distribution of household chores.

- Encourage families to reduce burden of domestic roles by investing in technologies and improve kitchen infrastructure by using piped water, use gas/electricity cook stoves and use kitchen electricity equipments to easier food preparation.
- To close the observed gender gap in extracurricular school activities participation and the entire secondary education there was a need to address problem of lack of school hostels by involving all education stakeholders including public and private sectors so as to merge their efforts in building enough girls hostels.
- Thus, unless this awful traditional norm being addressed, girls cannot fully participate in their educational endeavors and hence gender disparities in secondary education will continue to persist.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

CONSENT

As per international standards or university standards, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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