

Citation: Muyaka, J & Sitati, H. (2021). Societal Structures and their Influence on Boys' Participation in Education in Public Primary Schools in Busia and Kirinyaga Counties in Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*. 5(10), 44 – 62.

Societal Structures and their Influence on Boys' Participation in Education in Public Primary Schools in Busia and Kirinyaga Counties in Kenya

By

1. Dr. Jafred Muyaka, PhD

Lecturer, University of Eldoret, P. O BOX 1125-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

Corresponding Author: Email: jmuyaka@uoeld.ac.ke/muyakamwira@gmail.com

Contact: +254724838295

ORCID No: 0000-0001-9398-3453

2. Mr. Hannington Sitati

Lecturer Chuka University

Email: hs.sitati@gmail.com

Contact: +254721263276

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to assess the influence of societal structures on boys' participation in education in public primary schools in Kenya, using Busia and Kirinyaga counties as case studies. In Kenya, most policy, practice, and research on gender and education have focused on girls and women challenges with limited work if any on boys. Recently, there has been a concern that boys' have fallen behind as they struggle to keep pace with girls' participation in education. Despite these gender concerns, there is little examination of boys' schooling and where attempts are made, boys' disadvantages are advanced as a function of school related factors. Interrogation of community factors as either inhibitors or facilitators of gender inequality for boys are little known. Therefore, the current paper examines the contribution of societal structures to the poor state of boys' education in Kirinyaga and Busia counties in Kenya. The study involved 480 pupils in 12 primary schools, 180 households, and the County Director of Education and sub-County Director of Education. The findings showed some community structures such as bursaries, role models and general community environment were not conducive for education of boys. We recommend the need for the country to re-engineer the prevailing structures in the country to ensure support for boys' education.

Key Words: Gender, Boys education, under-participation, education, child labour

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Introduction

Investment in education improves the economic and social standings of societies and ultimately contributes to poverty reduction and foster technological progress. Therefore, supporting children' education delivers tangible returns, not just for the individuals but also for the society at large. Human capital studies have linked education to smooth access to future employment (Sharma, 2016). The 21st century competitive labour market has seen people without education struggle to achieve gainful employment and even when they do find jobs, they earn less than their educated counterparts. This is what has made schooling an important arena for analyzing gender and development. What even makes gender relations analysis more critical is the understanding that the glaring differentials in skills, education and later earnings sometimes is a function of existing discrimination and structures that work against one gender. In many societies, particularly in Africa, there is a reported preference to support boys' education with a perception that educating boys promises more economic returns (Kingdon, 2002). The focus of gender gaps at lower levels of education in this study was informed by the fact that they translate to, and sustain, a high proportion of the gender gaps that occur in later lives of children (Freeman, 2004).

Until recently, the discourse on gender and development focused on girls and women challenges. As pointed out by Weaver-Heater (2003), schooling has worked over time as a source of gender inequality and therefore forms one key platform that can help the society to bring about gender equity. At the beginning of the 1990s, gender research became enthusiastic about schooling experiences of boys. Perhaps this was informed by the changing statistics particularly on access and attendance, which showed that boys had started falling behind in education. Boys' underperformance has been reported at basic education levels in different countries, a trend that was uncommon a decade ago (Jha et al., 2017).

Utilizing Net Enrolment Rate (NER), Jha et al., (2017) demonstrated that for the Commonwealth countries, between 2002 and 2013, the gender gap in primary schools turned in favour of girls in countries such as India, Bangladesh, South Asia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia. Contributing to the changing fortunes of boys in education, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2015 reported that young men are significantly less engaged with schooling and were more represented in lower achievers than girls in OECD countries.

The decline in boys' participation in education is not only restricted in OECD countries. In the United States of America, in 2018, a meta-analysis of more than 200 mostly US studies of teacher-assigned grades revealed that girls had significantly higher grades in elementary school through college than boys, including higher grades in the subjects of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Jargon, 2020). In countries where girls are disadvantaged in terms of access, gender differences in achievement were generally small or insignificant, implying that girls do not usually underperform even when they are under-participating (Bertrand & Pan, 2013). Weaver-Hightower aptly captures the need to examine boys' schooling when the researcher argues:

They (boys) are increasingly behind girls in literacy measures, "engagement" in school, and college enrolment, and they outnumber girls in suspensions and expulsions, dropout rates, special education placements, and diagnoses of attention deficit disorder (Weaver-Hightower, 2003: 473).

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Gender is an important factor in schooling and through interplay of several social and inherent biological traits; boys and girls are positioned in ways that can produce cumulative challenges to their schooling. In the communities, as boys and girls grow, gender messages are shaped through peer interactions, community activities such as games, household chores, and prescribed community expectations on behaviour among other demands. Therefore, the existing community structures become the society's most powerful socializing forces that foster and support societal stereotypes for gender behavior.

In Kenya, most policy, practice, and research on gender and education have focused on girls and women challenges with limited work if any on boys (Ouma, 2016). This is generally justified given that women in the country, as a group relative to men, are disadvantaged socially, culturally, politically, and economically. As is the case in many societies, social institutions such as schools, family units, religious institutions, media and government structures form important avenues of facilitating or fighting inequality for women and men and thus become crucial allies if we have to dismantle the entrenched gender inequalities. For instance, at family level, Wamahu (1992) argued that gender conditioning and sex stereotyping messages in Kenya were reinforced through distinguishable allocation of roles. The focus in this paper is how the different societal issues affect boys' participation in education.

Recently, studies in Kenya have emerged showing that while girls are stabilizing in many aspects of schooling, boys are falling behind (Muyaka, Eloit, & Malenya, 2021; Chege & Malenya, 2015; Chang'ach, 2012). As the concerns of gender equity in the country change, researchers have been bothered with what is suddenly causing boys' under participation in education, which if not well documented, might result in the level of disadvantage that girls have faced in the history. In understanding gender education in Kenya, studies informed by the prevailing patriarchal society, have projected boys and men as beneficiaries of the unequal society that have worked over time to oppress women and girls. Therefore, literature has focused on models that emphasize girls' education as part of the corrective measures to the patriarchal society that women and girls find themselves in. While the focus is justified, it has been blamed for the neglect that boys have faced in the society. Consequently, the society demands boys to man up and contribute to the wellbeing of the society through child labour and sometimes projected as 'the problem' in schooling (Chege, 2001). In the community, while girls have role models in their ever-present mothers who teach them life skills, fathers have limited time at home and hardly interact with their sons, denying them role models.

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, there is the growing perception that boys are falling behind girls in education. Analysis of data from the Ministry of Education (MoE) disaggregated by regions points to a declining trend in boys' participation in education. The enrolment, candidature at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), completion rates among other key education indicators depict either gender parity or boys slightly behind girls. Despite these gender statistics, there is little examination of boys' schooling and where attempts are made, boys' disadvantages are advanced as a function of school related factors. Interrogation of community factors as either inhibitors or facilitators of gender inequality for boys are little known. Therefore, the current paper examines the contribution of societal structures to the poor state of boys' education in Kirinyaga and Busia counties in Kenya.

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Objectives of the study

The paper fulfils two objectives namely:

1. To identify the aspects of community culture that adversely affect participation of boys in education in public primary schools in Busia and Kirinyaga Counties in Kenya.
2. To interrogate the ways in which the identified aspects of community culture affect boys' participation in education in public primary schools in Busia and Kirinyaga Counties in Kenya.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods design where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

Research Sites

The study was conducted in Kirinyaga and Busia Counties in Kenya. The two counties were identified through purposive sampling guided by the Ministry of Education (MoE) statistics that identified the two as among the counties where boys' participation in education was lower or stood at near parity when compared to girls (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

Sampling Strategy

In each of the two counties, the sub-counties were selected guided by the schools' performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Examinations (KCPE) for the year 2017 using stratified sampling. The sub-counties were categorized into three strata: high performing sub-counties, average performing sub-counties and low performing sub-counties. From each of the stratum, two schools were selected through purposive sampling where one had boys underperforming girls while the other where girls were underperforming boys. This added up to a total of 12 primary schools. Therefore, the sample size consisted of 40 pupils from each of the selected schools (consisting of 10 pupils from class 5 to class 8 where 5 were girls and 5 boys) giving a total of 480 pupils (240 girls and 240 boys). For each of the counties, the County Director of Education (CDE) and the Sub-county Directors of Education (SCDE) from each of the three selected sub-counties participated in an individual interview, which solicited information on enrolment trends, wastages, performance and community attitudes towards boys' education. In addition, the study sampled 180 households (15 from each school community) from within the communities in which the selected schools were located.

Data Analysis

The study utilized both the questionnaire and interview guide to solicit data from the respondents. Accordingly, data collected was in two data sets; quantitative and qualitative data. For quantitative data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse data from the household questionnaire and pupil questionnaire. This analysis predominantly made use of descriptive statistics and in particular, use of frequencies to determine and illustrate boys' engagement in education. On the other hand, the qualitative data set was analysed thematically using thematic codes to generate themes that guided the analysis and the subsequent interpretation of the results. Both quantitative and qualitative data

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complemented one another in bringing about a more comprehensive picture of how societal factors influenced boys' schooling in the sampled schools in Kenya.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic Data

This section provides the demographic characteristics of the study area and participants. Some of the aspects discussed include household size, language spoken at home, availability of school going age children, gender of the household head, relationship between the learners and the heads of households and the main occupation of the household heads.

Household size: The study determined the number of people per household. It is a key household characteristic, which points at dependency ratio and gives an indication on the ability of households to meet the educational needs of children. The overall average household size was six (6); five (5) for Kirinyaga County and six (6) for Busia County. This implies that across the households, there were more people in a household in Busia as compared to Kirinyaga County implying higher educational demands in Busia County.

Language Spoken at Home: The language used for communication at home has a strong influence on how pupils learn. According to Smits et al., (2008), differences in the language of instruction and what learners use while at home may negatively affect learners' education outcomes. At the household level, the current study established that in Busia County, there were three main languages in use at home, namely Swahili, Luhya and Teso while Kirinyaga County had Swahili and Kikuyu as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Main Language Spoken at Home

County		Swahili	Luhya	Kikuyu	Teso	Other
Busia	Boy	54 (48.2%)	26 (23.2%)	0(0%)	32 (28.6%)	0 (0.0%)
	Girl	51 (39.5%)	28 (21.7%)	0(0%)	47 (36.4%)	3 (2.3%)
	Total	105 (43.6%)	54 (22.4%)	0(0%)	79 (32.8%)	3 (1.2%)
Kirinyaga	Boy	2 (1.7%)	0(0%)	114 (98.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
	Girl	2 (1.6%)	0(0%)	121 (98.4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
	Total	4 (1.7%)	0(0%)	235 (98.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

In Busia County, there were three languages used at home, with 43.6% of the learners (boys-48.2% and girls-39.5%) reporting use of Swahili; 32.8% using Teso (boys-28.6% and girls-36.4%) while 22.4% reported use of Luhya language (boys-23.3% and girls-21.7%). In Kirinyaga County, 98.3% of the learners used Kikuyu at home (boys-98.3% and girls-98.4%) and only 1.7% (boys-1.7% and girls-1.6%) used Swahili. Kirinyaga County had the largest proportion of the households in which the language spoken at home was different from the language of instruction at school.

Availability of Primary School Going Age Children

The study established whether the two communities had primary school going-age children aged between 6 and 14 years. Majority of the households (96%) reported having school going age boys and girls. The absolute numbers were as shown in Table 2.

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Table 2: Total Boys and Girls aged 6-14 in sampled households

	Busia	Kirinyaga	Total
Boys	128	114	242 (63.9%)
Girls	102	35	137(36.1%)
Total	230	149	379

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

There were more boys (63.9%) than girls (36.1%) aged between 6-14 years in the sampled households in the selected school communities.

Gender of the Household Head

The study investigated the gender of the household head to establish its effects on boys' participation and performance in school. In both counties, the male were the majority (Kirinyaga-84.1% and Busia - 69.8%) as shown in Table 3. There were more female-headed households in Busia County (30.2%) than in Kirinyaga County (15.9%).

Table 3: Gender of the Head of Household

County	Gender	
	Male	Female
Kirinyaga	74 (84.1%)	14 (15.9%)
Busia	60 (69.8%)	26 (30.2%)
Total	134 (77.0%)	40 (23.0%)

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

Education Attainment of Head of Household

Education is a key determinant of the lifestyle and status an individual enjoys in a society. Murithi (2015) indicated that educated parents are more involved with their children's academic performance and often offer academic guidance to their children while Khan (2015) established a significant positive correlation between parents' education level and academic achievements of students. Educational qualifications for the Heads of Households (HoH) in this study revealed that most (Busia County – 20.2% and Kirinyaga County– 36.4%) had completed primary education. Busia County was leading in HoH with minimal to no education at all at 37.1% while Kirinyaga had 13.6%. There were very few household heads with professional training at college or university level (Busia -9.0% and Kirinyaga -13.6%) as shown in Table 4. The established low level of educational attainment among the HoH means boys struggled to get mentors and role models at family level which ultimately may impact negatively on their education.

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Table 4: Educational Qualifications for HoH

County	Busia	Kirinyaga
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
No schooling	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Some primary	33 (37.1%)	12 (13.6%)
Completed primary	18 (20.2%)	32 (36.4%)
Some secondary	6 (6.7%)	7 (8.0%)
Completed secondary	9 (10.1%)	19 (21.6%)
College/University	8 (9.0%)	12 (13.6%)
Not Known	14 (15.7%)	6 (6.8%)

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

There exists literature on educational performance, which endorses parents' level of formal education as an important variable in the determination of children's academic performance. In Burkina Faso and Mali where over 70% of the adults had no education at all, over half of primary and secondary school going age children were not enrolled in schools (Smits et al., 2008). Using ANOVA, (Gooding 2001) established a significant difference ($p < .05$) between the American College Testing (ACT) scores for students whose parents have less than or equal to a high school diploma and scores for students whose parents are college graduates confirming that the higher the parental educational level, the higher the educational performance. In addition, Kainuwa and Yusuf (2013) asserted that parents' educational level influenced the education of their children.

Main Occupation of Head of Household

The main occupation of the household heads in both counties was farming (Kirinyaga County 64.8% and Busia County 68.6%) as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Main Occupation

County	Kirinyaga	Busia	Total
Medical officer	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)
Teacher	2 (2.3%)	6 (7.0%)	8 (4.6%)
Religious/community leader	2 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.1%)
Army/police/security officer	2 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.1%)
Farmer	57 (64.8%)	59 (68.6%)	116 (66.7%)
Others	24 (27.3%)	21 (24.4%)	45 (25.9%)

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

Akinsanya, Ajayi, and Salomi (2014) investigated the relative effects of parents' occupation, education and academic motivation of HoH on students' achievements in senior secondary school Mathematics in Ogun State, Nigeria using multiple regression the result reveal that parents' education has the highest significant influence on the academic achievement of students in Mathematics followed by occupation. They concluded that students whose parents

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belong to the high-ranking occupational status might have a better grade in Mathematics than their counterparts whose parents belong to the low-ranking occupational status.

Relationship of the Children and Head of Household

Majority of the learners lived with their parents (Busia County -83.5% and Kirinyaga County – 96.7%) as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Relationship of the child aged 6-14 years and head of household

County		Child	Other relative	Not related
Busia	Boys	101 (81.5%)	20 (16.1%)	3 (2.4%)
	Girls	81 (86.2%)	11 (11.7%)	2 (2.1%)
	Total	182 (83.5%)	31 (14.2%)	5 (2.3%)
Kirinyaga	Boys	63 (96.9%)	2 (3.1%)	0 (0.0%)
	Girls	24 (96.0%)	1 (4.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Total	87 (96.7%)	3 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	Boys	164 (86.8%)	22 (11.6%)	3 (1.6%)
	Girls	105 (88.2%)	12 (10.1%)	2 (1.7%)
	Total	269 (87.3%)	34 (11.0%)	5 (1.6%)

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

The importance of families is highlighted to have a great impact on the educational success of children (Jha, Menon, and Chatterjee 2017). There were children who lived with other relatives and were more in Busia County at 14.2% (boys -16.1% and girls -11.7%) than Kirinyaga County at 3.3% (boys -3.1% and girls -4.0%). In Busia County, an estimated 2.3% of the children reported to live with non-relatives.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Community Activities and Educational Structures

The community plays a crucial role in the formation of gender differences in experiences, values, beliefs and achievement. This is made possible through the interplay of the traditions, educational structures, recreational and cultural activities that may have an influence in schooling of boys and girls. Therefore, the current study examined the existing structures in the community and how they enhanced or deterred education of boys.

Education Support and Financing: Investment in children' education helps societies fight poverty and foster technological advancement. This explains the existence of multiple sources of funding in communities to support education of boys and girls. In light of education support and financing, the study investigated bursaries and other sponsorship that boys and girls accessed in their communities. Overall, only 10.9% of the pupils reported having benefited from support and financing. In terms of counties, Busia County reported more beneficiaries (16.7%) than Kirinyaga County (5.0%) as shown in Table 7.

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Table 7: Benefited from Bursary and or Sponsorship

County		Yes		No		Total
Busia	Boy	14	12.6%	97	87.4%	111
	Girl	26	20.2%	103	79.8%	129
	Total	40	16.7%	200	83.3%	240
Kirinyaga	Boy	8	6.9%	108	93.1%	116
	Girl	4	3.3%	119	96.7%	123
	Total	12	5.0%	227	95.0%	239
Total	Boy	22	9.7%	205	90.3%	227
	Girl	30	11.9%	222	88.1%	252
	Total	52	10.9%	427	89.1%	479

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

The small proportion of pupils reporting availability of education support is an indication of a weak educational support mechanism in the two communities. However, when disaggregated by gender, households reported that more girls (11.9%) than boys (9.7%) received financial support in the community. When analysed per County, fewer boys (12.6%) compared to girls (20.6%) in Busia County accessed financial support towards their education. In Kirinyaga County, whereas access to education support in the community favored boys (6.9%) than girls (3.3%), the difference was not huge as was the case in Busia County.

Education support was limited yet 25.2% and 17.9% of the households indicated to have difficulties in sustaining girls and boys in schools respectively as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Household's ability to afford to take and sustain Boys and Girls in School

	Kirinyaga		Busia		Total	
Difficult to afford for boys aged 6-14 to go to school	4	4.7%	27	31.0%	31	17.9%
Difficult to afford for girls aged 6-14 to go to school	3	4.3%	34	44.2%	37	25.2%

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

In Kenya, scholarships and bursaries are known structures used to support the education of girls and boys from poor households. The study asked the households if they had benefited from bursaries and scholarships in the past two years. In Busia County, 29.9% of the households answered in affirmative. However, none of the households in Kirinyaga County indicated accessing any form of education scholarship or bursary as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Children who Received Scholarship or Bursary over the Past 2 years

		Yes	No	Don't Know
County	Kirinyaga	0 (0.0%)	86 (97.7%)	2 (2.3%)
	Busia	26 (29.9%)	58 (66.7%)	3 (3.4%)
Total		26 (14.9%)	144 (82.3%)	5 (2.9%)

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

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For the households in Busia County who had received education support, the study examined the gender of the beneficiaries and the sources of the support as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Beneficiaries of education support and support organizations

Beneficiaries by gender			Organizations		
Boy	Girl	Boy and Girl	CDF	County Gov't	FBO/CBO/NGO
4 (15.4%)	11 (42.3%)	11 (42.3%)	1 (4.0%)	1 (4.0%)	23 (92.0%)

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

Of the sources, the majority of the support (92%) came from Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs), Faith Based Organization (FBOs) and Community Based Organization (CBOs). The national government and local county governments advanced minimal support towards scholarship and bursaries with an estimated 8% of the households reporting to have accessed education support from the national (Constituency Development Fund) and county governments. In terms of gender, girls were three times more likely to access scholarships and bursaries than boys in Busia County-Kenya.

Pupils data corroborated with the households' data with more girls (39.6% in Busia County and 22.8% in Kirinyaga County) than boys (16.7% in Busia County and 14.4% in Kirinyaga County) confirming to have benefitted from scholarships and bursaries as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Pupils who had received Education support from Organizations

		Yes		No		Total
Busia	Boy	17	16.7%	85	83.3%	102
	Girl	42	39.6%	64	60.4%	106
	Total	59	28.4%	149	71.6%	208
Kirinyaga	Boy	13	14.4%	77	85.6%	90
	Girl	23	22.8%	78	77.2%	101
	Total	36	18.8%	155	81.2%	191

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

Role models in the Community: The study asked boys and girls whether they have access to role models in the community. The overall findings showed that more girls (85%) than boys (83.7%) accessed role models in the community. However, when data was analysed per county, Kirinyaga County had 20.9% of boys compared to 17.1% of girls who could not access role models in the community. The trend was reversed in Busia County where more girls (13.2%) compared to boys (4.5%) reported lack of role models as shown in Table 12.

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Table 12: Presence of Role Models in the Community

		Yes		No		Don't Know		Total
Busia	Boy	105	93.8%	5	4.5%	2	1.8%	112
	Girl	109	84.5%	17	13.2%	3	2.3%	129
	Total	214	88.8%	22	9.1%	5	2.1%	241
Kirinyaga	Boy	91	79.1%	24	20.9%	0	0	115
	Girl	102	82.9%	21	17.1%	0	0	123
	Total	193	81.1%	45	18.9%	0	0	238
Total	Boy	196	86.3%	29	12.8%	2	0.9%	227
	Girl	211	83.7%	38	15.1%	3	1.2%	252
	Total	407	85.0%	67	14.0%	5	1.0%	479

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

Gender Preference and Access to Education Opportunities: The differences in access to education and by extension skills and later earnings sometimes is a function of existing discrimination and structures that work against one gender. The current study investigated if there was a gender preference in provision of education to children in Kirinyaga and Busia counties. In general, the majority of the households (68.4%) felt that both boys and girls should be given an equal chance to access education. However, Kirinyaga County had more households (82.6%) than Busia (54.5%) that called for gender parity in access to education as shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Gender Preference in access to education

	Girls	Boys	Both	Don't know
Kirinyaga	5 (5.8%)	9 (10.5%)	71 (82.6%)	1 (1.2%)
Busia	32 (36.4%)	8 (9.1%)	48 (54.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	37 (21.3%)	17 (9.8%)	119 (68.4%)	1 (0.6%)

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

When a comparison of boys and girls was conducted, there were more households (21.3%) preferring educating their girls than boys (9.8%). This trend was profound in Busia County with 36.4% of the households preferring girls to 9.1% who identified boys. These findings on gender preference in education goes against the common assumption based on the historical development of gender and education that many societies particularly in Africa prefer education of boys with a perception that educating boys promise more economic returns (Kingdon, 2002). This is worrying given research has shown that when communities treat boys and girls equally, boys' performance in school is better (Geisler & Pardiwalla, 2010).

Child Labour as a Factors Promoting Absenteeism among Pupils: Availability of economic activities in the communities that promise monetary returns drive pupils out of schools as they scramble to make money. The current study investigated the activities that keep children out of school in the two counties. Accordingly, fishing, herding, hawking, working in the farm for wages, family business and working as house-helpers were reported to keep pupils out of school as shown in Table 14.

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Table 14: Reasons for children aged 6-14 to miss school

	Kirinyaga						Busia						Total					
	Boy			Girl			Boy			Girl			Boy			Girl		
	n	%	N	n	%	N	n	%	N	n	%	N	n	%	N	n	%	N
Fishing	1	1.1%	8	0	0.0%	2	0	0.0%	7	0	0.0%	4	1	0.6%	5	0	0.0%	6
Herding	8	9.1%	8	0	0.0%	2	8	9.8%	8	0	0.0%	3	6	9.4%	17	0	0.0%	12
Hawking	1	1.1%	8	2	3.2%	2	1	1.3%	7	0	0.0%	2	2	1.2%	16	2	1.6%	12
Working in farm for wages	0	0.0%	7	1	2.0%	5	7	9.3%	7	4	6.5%	6	7	4.6%	15	5	4.4%	11
Family business	6	7.0%	8	5	9.3%	5	1	1.3%	7	0	0.0%	5	7	4.3%	16	5	4.5%	11
House-help	1	1.2%	8	5	9.1%	5	2	2.6%	7	6	10.0%	6	3	1.9%	15	1	9.6%	11

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

When asked on reasons why boys aged 6-14 years miss school, the sampled households identified herding (9.4%), working in farms for wages (4.6%) and family business (4.3%) as posing a greater threat to boys' regular attendance to schools. Other reasons mentioned were working as house-helps (1.9%), hawking (1.2%) and fishing (0.6%). For girls, the major impediments to regular school attendance was working as house-helps (9.6%), working in family business (4.5%), working in farms for wages (4.4%) and hawking (1.6%).

There was a direct pressure on boys to join the labor force at an early age and accordingly more temptations to miss school as they participated in informal income generating activities. For instance, none of the households reported girls participating in fishing and herding. The findings where more boys than girls participate in short-term activities that ignores academics as a desirable and viable, long-term life option have been reported in several Asian and African countries (RTI International, 2016).

The involvement of boys in herding, working in farms for wages, family business, working as house-helps, hawking and fishing disrupts their schooling. Already countries where boys and men are more commonly engaged in traditional occupations such as herding, cattle grazing, hunting, and agriculture have also reported early withdrawal of boys from schooling (RTI International, 2016). In Kenya, Ngatiari (2011) in a study conducted in Meru South District found out that the academic achievement of secondary school pupils was affected by student's engagement in petty trading, street hawking, farming and babysitting during school hours.

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Household Chores: When not carefully done, allocation of chores in families intentionally or otherwise communicates gender ideals and expectations for boys and girls in families. This affects boys at two levels, first, picking wrong sex stereotyping messages that restrict their potential and secondly, being overwhelmed with house chores at the expense of their schooling. The study considered three household chores, namely; caring for younger or older family members, housework and fetching water while at home. The target was to establish the amount of time taken doing household chores on a normal school day. Overall, 11.6% of boys spent between 1 to 2 hours taking care for younger or older family members as shown in Figure 1.

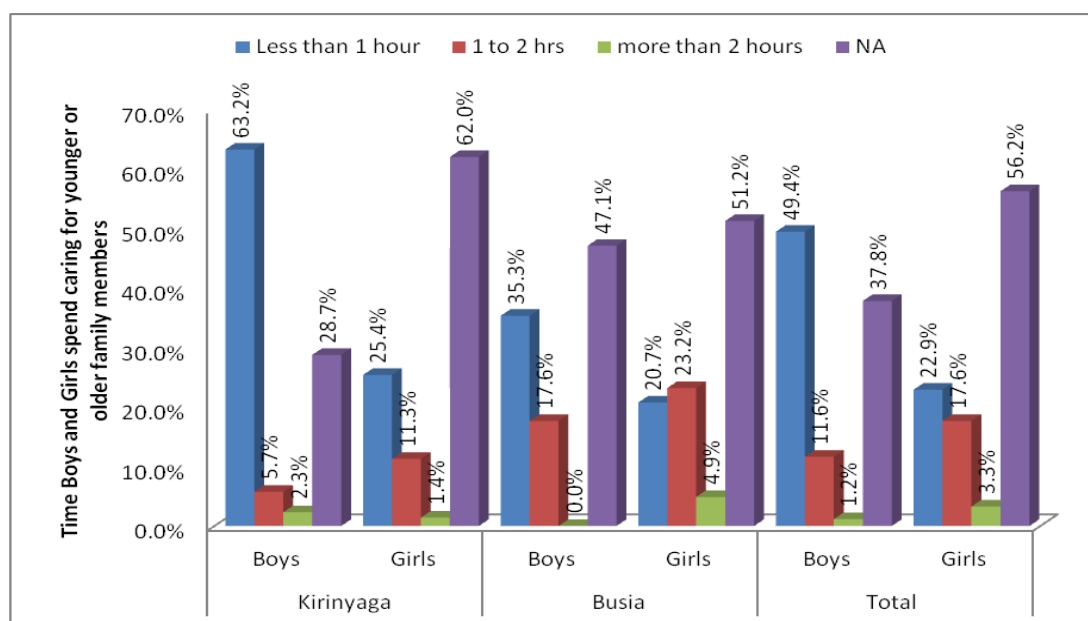


Figure 1: Time boys and girls spend caring for younger or older family members on a normal school day

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

The second household chore was housework. Overall, 8.7% of the boys worked between 1 and 2 hours as shown in Figure 2.

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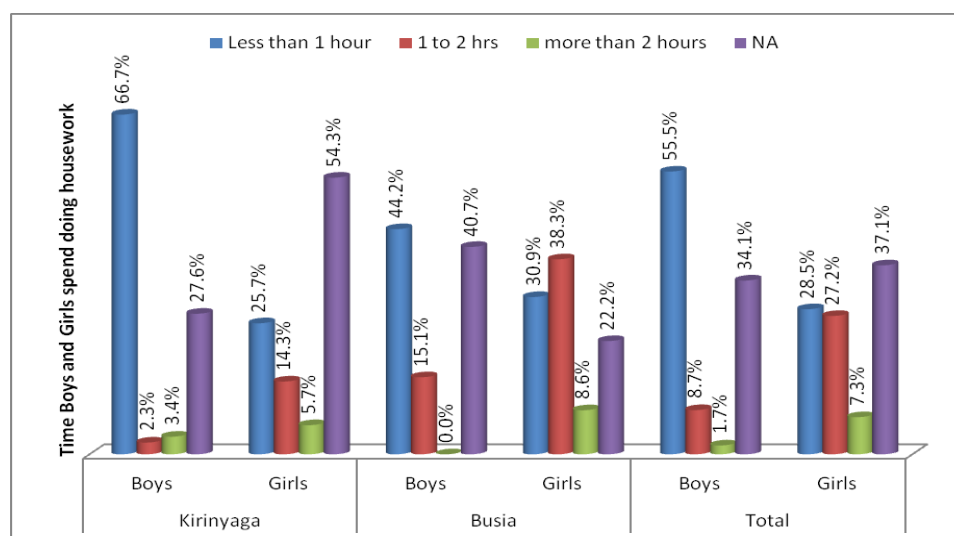


Figure 2: Time boys and girls spend doing housework on a normal school day
Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

The last household chore considered was fetching water. Overall, both boys and girls recorded high percentages for less than an hour (72.8% and 59.2%) respectively but boys were the majority; a scenario that cuts across the two counties (Figure 3).

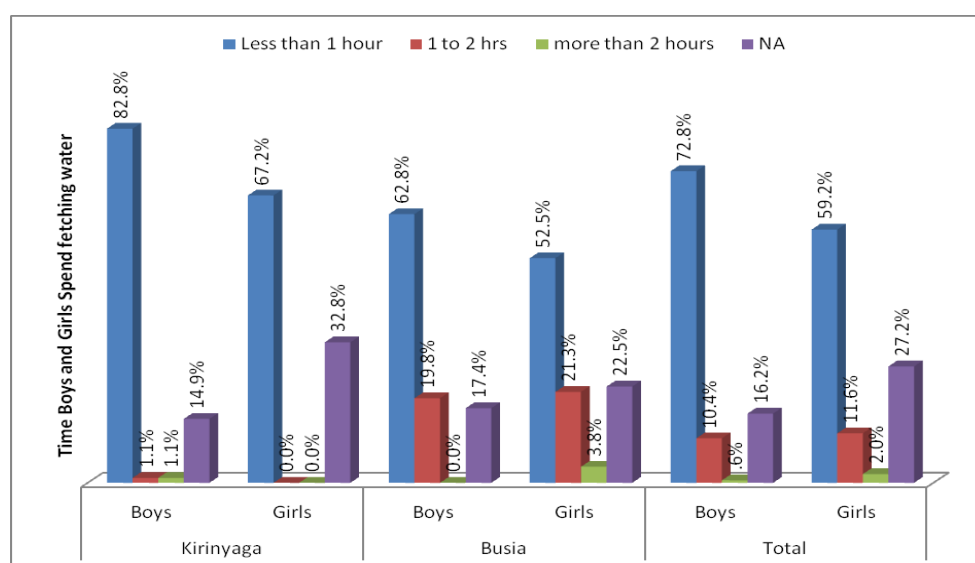


Figure 3: Time boys and girls spend fetching water on a normal school day
Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

To vividly account for the time spent fetching water, the study did a cross tabulation between the source of water and time taken to fetch. In Kirinyaga county most households had water piped into their dwelling or compound and majority of both boys (84.1%) and girls (63.6%) used less than one hour to fetch water. A considerable number (boys -15.9% and girls – 36.4%) did not spend any time fetching water because it was always flowing on the taps. The other present source of water in Kirinyaga was households in rented or informal settlements where water was piped into the dwelling or compound.

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On the contrary, Busia had the majority of households obtaining their water from a public outdoor tap or borehole, well with a cover and well without a cover/rain water. Majority in took less than one hour but there was a handful that took between one and two hours to fetch water from these sources.

Safety and Security of the Community: The study assessed the safety and security of the community by examining the pupils' experiences as they travel to and from school. In Kirinyaga County, more boys (19%) than girls (13.8%) reported that the journey to and from schools in the community was unsafe. However, in Busia County, the trend was reversed with more girls (24.8%) than boys (18.2%) indicating that the journey to and from school was unsafe as shown in Table 15.

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Table 15: Pupil's safety travelling to and from school

County	Gender	Yes		No		Don't Know		Total
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Busia	Boy	90	81.8%	19	17.3%	1	0.9%	110
	Girl	97	75.2%	32	24.8%	0	0.0%	129
	Total	187	78.2%	51	21.3%	1	0.4%	239
Kirinyaga	Boy	94	81.0%	22	19.0%			116
	Girl	106	86.2%	17	13.8%			123
	Total	200	83.7%	39	16.3%			239
Total	Boy	184	81.4%	41	18.1%	1	0%	226
	Girl	203	80.6%	49	19.4%	0	0%	252
	Total	387	81.0%	90	18.8%	1	0%	478

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

The study also checked on the safety of the communities of boys based on bad experiences and harassment as they moved around the communities. The findings revealed that 13.8% and 12.3% of the boys reported harassment and bad experiences travelling around the community.

Feeling Lonely at Home: Home environment particularly family structure and parental education are key variables in determining the gender environment created in families. This environment can either facilitate or inhibit boys' access to schooling. In recognition of this, the study examined the learning environment in the sampled households. Pupils were asked if the home environment left them lonely. Accordingly, the home environment pointed to a poor set up for boys participation in schooling with the majority of the boys (77.1% in Busia County and 63.7% in Kirinyaga County) indicating loneliness while at home. When compared to girls, more boys (77.1%) strongly agreed than girls (72.5%) in Busia County while in Kirinyaga County, more girls (63.7%) strongly agreed to the fact that they felt lonely at home than boys (58%) as shown in Figure 4.

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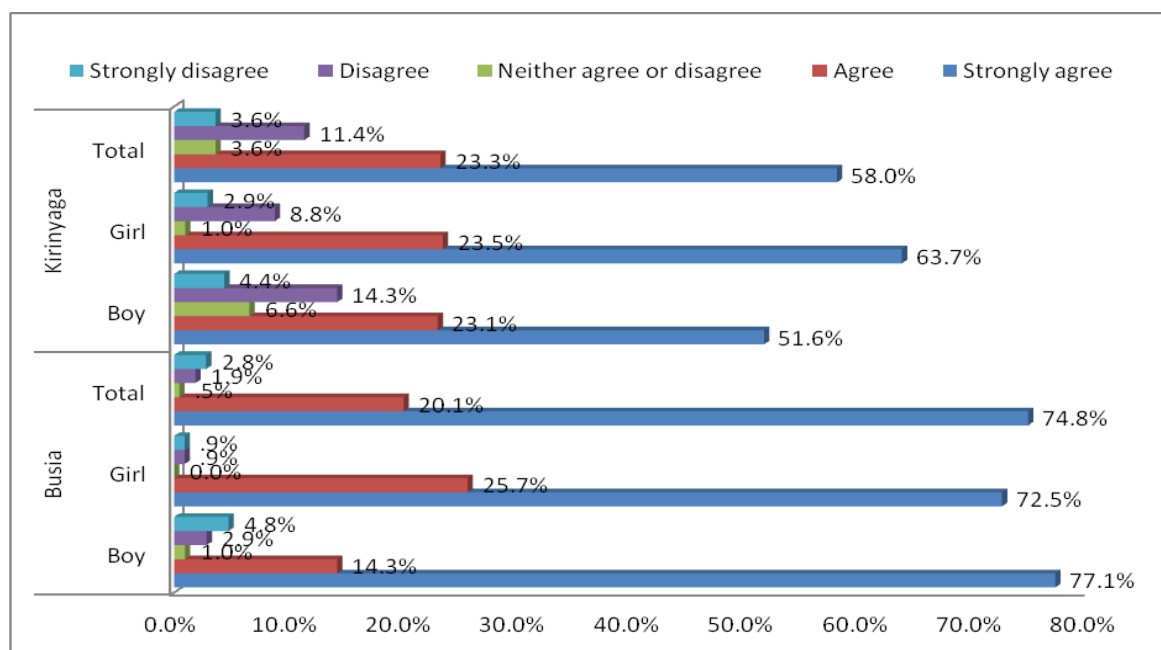


Figure 4: Feeling lonely at Home

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

Involvement of Boys in Decision making Process: The study investigated the decision-making process especially touching on education of boys and girls. It sought to understand whether the views of boys were listened to or not when making decisions about their education. Results in Table 16 indicate that in the majority of the households (57%), decisions were made by adults and communicated to children. In Busia County, children were less involved with 62.5% reporting decisions as a preserve of the adults compared to Kirinyaga County where 51.2% of the households reported not engaging children in the decision-making process.

Table 16: Decisions about boys' Education

	Decisions are made by adults only		Listen to children		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Kirinyaga	43	51.2%	41	48.8%	84
Busia	55	62.5%	33	37.5%	88
Total	98	57.0%	74	43.0%	172

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

Infrastructure: The communities have set up various infrastructures to support boys' learning. For instance, the study examined lighting that would facilitate boys' learning particularly when it comes to homework. The study found out that more households in Busia County (75.6%) had no electricity connection than in Kirinyaga County (14.9%).

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Table 17: Availability of Electricity

	Electricity supply (from grid)		Electricity from generator		other source of electricity		No electricity		Total
Kirinyaga	64	73.6%	0	0.0%	10	11.5%	13	14.9%	87
Busia	15	17.4%	1	1.2%	5	5.8%	65	75.6%	86
Total	79	45.7%	1	.6%	15	8.7%	78	45.1%	173

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

Table 17 shows that where electricity was available, it was not reliable in all the counties with the majority of the households (57%) in Busia County and 26% in Kirinyaga County indicating that it was not reliable as shown in Table 18).

Table 18: Reliability of Electricity

	Yes		No		Total
Kirinyaga	54	74.0%	19	26.0%	73
Busia	9	42.9%	12	57.1%	21
Total	63	67.0%	31	33.0%	94

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

The other infrastructure the study focused on within the household was availability of space to facilitate studying at home. The study established that the home environment for boys compromised their learning. For instance, they lacked study space, writing material (notepad, pen), the learning environment was noisy, full of interruptions; coupled with lack of academic help or support from family members. In Kirinyaga County, lack of working space (21.6%), interruptions by family members (25%) and noise (23.9%) were the three main home factors that severely affected boys' studying at home. In Busia County, lack of motivation (32.6%), lack of academic support (31.5%), lack of writing materials (28.1%) and interruptions by family members (20.2%) were the main inhibitors to learning at home as shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Household Infrastructure to Facilitate Learning

	Kirinyaga		Busia		Total	
Lack of space to work in the house	19	21.6%	12	13.5%	31	17.5%
Lack of writing material (notepad, pen)	6	6.8%	25	28.1%	31	17.5%
Noise	21	23.9%	2	2.2%	23	13.0%
Interruptions by family members	22	25.0%	18	20.2%	40	22.6%
Lack of motivation	10	11.4%	29	32.6%	39	22.0%
Lack of help or support	7	8.0%	28	31.5%	35	19.8%

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

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Distance to School: The distance that pupils take to access school is known to influence their learning. For instance, it affects the concentration of pupils in class because longer distances mean pupils reach school when they are exhausted. After covering long distances, their propensity to sleep in class as well as chances to forgo lunch to avoid missing classes is high. In the two counties, 6.3% of the boys used over 1 hour to access school as shown in Table 20.

Table 20: Time taken to get to school

		0-15 min		16-30 min		31-59 min		1-2 hrs		More than 3 hrs		Don't Know		Total
Busia	Boy	63	56.2 %	28	25.0 %	9	8.0%	3	2.7 %	6	5.4 %	3	2.7 %	112
	Girl	55	43.3 %	33	26.0 %	2	18.8 %	1	8.7 %	3	2.4 %	1	0.8 %	127
	Total	118	49.4 %	61	25.5 %	33	13.8 %	4	5.9 %	9	3.8 %	4	1.6 %	239
Kirinyaga	Boy	61	54.0 %	35	31.0 %	1	9.7%	5	4.4 %			1	0.9 %	113
	Girl	65	52.8 %	44	35.8 %	1	9.8%	2	1.6 %			0	0.0 %	123
	Total	126	53.4 %	79	33.5 %	2	9.7%	7	3.0 %			1	0.4 %	236
Total	Boy	124	55.1 %	63	28.0 %	2	8.8%	8	3.6 %	6	2.7 %	4	1.8 %	225
	Girl	120	48.0 %	77	30.8 %	3	14.4 %	1	5.2 %	3	1.2 %	1	0.4 %	250
	Total	244	51.3 %	140	29.5 %	5	11.8 %	2	4.4 %	9	1.9 %	5	1.1 %	475

Source: Household Survey Data, 2019

Table 20 shows that a majority of the boys (55.1%) and girls (48.0%) used between 0 to 15 minutes and 28% of boys and 30.8% of girls used between 16 and 30 minutes to reach school. However, there were no gender differences in the pupils (boys-6.3% and girls -6.4%) using 1 hour and more to access schools.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion that we reach from the findings is that some structures in the Kenyan society disadvantage boys' access to education. However, the position is rather more complex as factors that are keeping boys' out of education vary from society to society and even within a society. This calls for a larger study that examines different socio-economic contexts in various facets of Kenya's society to determine the actual disadvantage that boys are facing.

Recommendations

1. This small-scale study is limited in scope, with only 12 schools in the sample. However, the findings point to further areas for further research, which will call for a

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larger sample that examines different socio-economic contexts in various facets of Kenyan society to determine the actual disadvantage that boys are facing

2. The study found out that investment in boys' education in the community was minimal and therefore recommends for appropriate mechanism both at national and county levels that prioritises education of boys.
3. The community still puts a lot of pressure on boys that was found to affect their education. For instance, there was easy access to economic activities as child labourers and involvement in household chores leading to high absenteeism. There is the need to create awareness in the community on the rights of the children including involvement of local administration in enforcing the law.

Acknowledgement

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