

The Effect of the Adequacy of Sanitary Facilities on Girls' Participation in Primary Schools of Nakuru Municipality, Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract

The adequacy of sanitary facilities is a critical issue in a girl's life. Studies have shown that most aspects of a girl's life are affected by lack of sanitary facilities thus lowering the girl's esteem and confidence. The study sought to determine how the adequacy of sanitary facilities affects girls' participation in primary education in Nakuru Municipality, Nakuru County, Kenya. A descriptive survey design was used as the preferred research design. The study targeted the 59 public primary schools in Nakuru Municipality comprising of 1100 girls, 59 Head teachers and 271 female teachers. Simple random sampling was used to select the 18 Schools and purposive sampling to get a sample size of 428 respondents comprising of 330 girls and 80 female Teachers. The Main research instruments used in this study were questionnaires, interview schedules and an observation check list. The findings would be useful in establishing the effects of sanitary facilities for girls' participation in Education. The study found out that adequacy of sanitary facilities has affected girls' participation and performance. This is mainly because girls thrive well in clean environment and they are sensitive to embarrassments, diseases and issues that create trauma on them. The study recommended that there is need to develop sanitation programs. The challenge should be tackled right from the root rather than attempting to manage the resultant unpleasant consequences. Offering incentives and rewards to pupils, teachers and head teachers for keeping good sanitation will also help in maintaining high standard of adequacy.

Keywords: Adequacy, Girls' Participation, Municipality, Nakuru County

Effects of Availability of Sanitary Facilities on Girls in Primary Schools

Sexual maturation process has been identified to have a negative impact on the education of both boys and girls. One of the strategies to enhance and retain girls in school is the provision of sanitary towels to needy girls especially in public primary schools, towards ensuring girls retention and effective participation in education

Sanitary Towels/Pads

According to Durban Climate Talk (2010), girls in Africa miss school and stay at home because of menstruation. Lack of affordable sanitary products and facilities for girls and women keeps them at a disadvantage in terms of education when they are young and prevent their mobility and productivity as women. Ghana B.S.O confirmed that post pubescent girls were missing as many as five days of school per month due to lack of sanitary pads. With the intervention of pads and education on menstruation management and hygiene, the rate of absenteeism and hygiene, the rate of absenteeism was cut by slightly more than half from about 21% of school days to about 9%.

Change makers realized that by providing poor and marginalized girls with sanitary towels, undergarments and hygiene education they are able to see academic performance on girls going high which means better life. Girls from poor families in places such as Bangladesh and Kenya resort to using dirty rags while menstruating, putting them at a risk for infection and disease UNESCO (2009).

Toilets/ Latrines

A learning environment should have separate toilets for males and females. In some schools students and teachers are forced either to use nearby land or bushes or to wait until they are out of school to attend to their call of nature or change their sanitary towels. Puberty and adolescence can be difficult times for young people especially the onset of menstruation poses particular danger or challenges, not least this lack of adequate latrines to comfortably change sanitary pads or other materials and wash themselves in privacy.

According to UNESCO (2009), lack of clean and healthy sanitation like toilets and latrines means that girls often do not have anywhere to change or dispose off pads safely and privately. Most girls drop out at around 11-12 years old or miss school because of fear of being teased by their classmates if they show stains from their periods and their needs for safe and clean facilities is not prioritized.

Effects of Adequacy of Sanitary Facilities on Girls' Participation in Education

The research also investigated the effects of adequacy of sanitary facilities on the girl's participation in primary education. From the questionnaire and interview schedule administered, the respondents cited various effects.

Table

Effects of Adequacy of Sanitary Facilities

Effect	SA	A	D	SD	Totals
Poor school Performance	51%	33%	9%	27%	410
Trouble with health officers	4%	22%	44%	30%	410
Embarrassments	63%	29%	5%	3%	410
Absenteeism	51%	24%	10%	5%	410
Psychological Trauma	44%	22%	30%	4%	410
Diseases/ Bad health	24%	51%	2%	3%	410
Drop out	17%	29%	49%	5%	410

Source: Research data (2013)

As analysed in table 4.8 above, there are various effects of adequacy of sanitary facilities. On the effects in school performance, 51% of the respondents strongly agreed, 33% agreed 9% disagreed while 27% strongly disagreed. Most schools that performed well were found to have adequate sanitary facilities hence confirming this effect. When interviewed, the head teachers attested to poor performance of girls compared to boys because of constant discomfort in class hence lack of class work participation. Regular absence from school negatively impact on a girl's participation. These findings are in agreement with Fitzgerald, (2002). Regular absence from school for several days a month can- even in the short term - have a negative impact on a girl's learning and therefore on her academic performance in school. Interrupted attendance, insufficient learning and therefore poor results in the long term can contribute to eventual drop out.

Apparently, 44 % and 30% disagreed that adequacy led to trouble with health officer. This meant that the schools are inspected. Only 22% and 4% agreed that they do. Some school administrators have been charged for running schools against the laid down health legislations on sanitations. This distracts the normal flow of school activities and pupil's participation. This is in agreement with SSHE (2006) that inspection in school programmes on water and sanitation are initiated and supported by governments and international agencies as part of the effort for universal primary education as well as universal sanitation where the school is seen as a point of outreach to the household for improving sanitation.

The highest majority of the respondents, 63%, felt that major effect on girls is embarrassment. This happens when the girls are unable to change sanitary towels or lack at all resulting to leakages and exposure hence great embarrassments. This is due to teasing by boys and other pupils within the schools leading to poor self esteem which is a prerequisite for good learning. This agrees with (Janda, 2004). In conversations on the subject of menstruation in southern Sudan, girls explained that they have to ensure that they are very clean before they get back to school otherwise boys will tease them publicly, bully, and say nasty things about them. It is so unfortunate that we avoid the embarrassment by staying away from school'

On absenteeism another majority of 51% and 24% respectively said that lack of adequate sanitary facilities led to absenteeism of pupils from school, especially during menses. 10% and 5% disagreed to this effect. Lack of affordable sanitary products and facilities for girls and women keeps them at a disadvantage in terms of education when they are young and prevent their mobility and productivity as women. A check on the class register indicated that some girls were absent during particular days in the month sighting medical issue. This affects participation in school learning activities in the municipality. According to Durban Climate Talk (2010), girls in Africa miss school and stay at home because of menstruation

Significantly, 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that adequacy may also lead to psychological trauma, 22% agreed, 30% disagreed while a mere 4% strongly disagreed. Inability of girls to remain comfortably in class during their menstrual cycle and lack of menstrual knowledge is quite traumatising to the young girl. This was also observed in Kirk (2005). A troubled mind cannot accommodate new instructions.

The respondents were also asked on the effects on health. 24% strongly agreed, 51% agreed and only 2% and 3% disagreed with this effect. Adoption of poor sanitation and hygiene practices like drinking of unsafe water would lead to contracting typhoid fever. There were claims of skin rash, diarrhoea, scabies and some isolated cases of eye infections/diseases mentioned. Pupils generally seemed knowledgeable of the dangers of poor sanitation and

hygiene practices. Lack of proper sanitary care on girls lead to a myriad of diseases and fungal infections like Vaginitis and Urinary-Tract Infections. Doctors have observed that normal menstrual blood is not infected and it is not dirty. But when it gets contaminated by these dirty clothes, organisms start growing and there is the risk of infection. This finding was also seen in Esrey (2004) where it was found that poor sanitation, hygiene and inadequate water supply are also related to the spread of other diseases, including tropical diseases such as schistosomiasis (sometime called Bilharzias) rank second in terms of socio-economic and public health importance in tropical and subtropical areas (Esrey, 2004)

Finally the respondent's response on school dropout showed that the majority 49% disagreed, 29% agreed 17% strongly agreed while the remaining 5% strongly disagreed to this effect. Few schools have any emergency sanitary supplies for girls, and communal toilet facilities are generally very unsuitable for changing sanitary pads given a lack of water, and of sanitary material disposal systems. Though not significantly mentioned, some girls in the municipality have dropped out of school due to poverty and inability to buy proper sanitary facilities for their care in school. This agrees with UNICEF (2005) findings that estimated about 1 in 10 school-age African girls do not attend school during menstruation, or drop out at puberty because of the lack of clean and private sanitation facilities in schools. FAWE (2009) also revealed that lack of sanitary pads coupled with other factors like absence of water or separate toilets facilities is responsible for girls' dropout rate in Uganda.

Summary

Effects of the Adequacy of Sanitary Facilities and Girl's Participation in Education

The third objective was to determine the adequacy of sanitary facilities affects girls' participation in education. The study found out specific effects like poor performance, lack of participation in classroom activities and absenteeism. Lack of adequate sanitary facilities also causes trouble with Health inspectors, psychological trauma and bad health to girls. This shows that when the girls are affected this way due to inadequate sanitary facilities, they cannot participate well in education.

Conclusion

Objective three was to determine the effect of adequacy of sanitary facilities on girls' participation in primary schools. Most of the girls still do not attend school or participate in school activities during their menses, since there is no adequate toilets, water and washrooms, sanitary towels in most of the schools which leads to embarrassment and psychological trauma for the girls who prefer to stay away from school until their menses are over. According to the findings of the study, it is concluded that when girls are affected in this way they cannot participate well in education thus poor performance. Sometimes they even stay at home because of the diseases brought about by inadequate sanitary facilities

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