



Examining the Gendered Norms and Practices Affecting Girls Education the Northern Region of Ghana

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This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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Dedication

To my future husband and unborn children, that I had to put you all on hold to pursue this.

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My 'adventure' to ISS is one of the many miracles the Almighty God performs in my life every day. I am deeply overwhelmed with His many blessings and the great opportunity to study at this great institution. I thank Him for the Grace, Mercy and Favour that has brought me this far and all the wonderful people who came my way, who I consider blessings every day. My greatest fear as I write this is that I may not be able to mention each and every one who has helped me one way or another throughout this journey, if that happens know that I deeply appreciate you all and that I will be forgiven.

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Finally, my fear has come to pass, since there are so many more people I needed to mention, but cannot so for lack of space and I hope and pray you those not mentioned will forgive me and to also know that I will always be grateful.

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List of Acronyms

EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
GES	Ghana Education Service
GEU	Girls Education Unit
JHS	Junior High School
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PHC	Population and Housing Census
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Abstract

Girl's education has emerged as a key intervention area for governments, NGOs and all concerned stakeholders. Despite these concerns and attention given to ensure equality in education, more needs to be done to completely get all girls of school going age in-to school and retain them. In Ghana, there has been efforts by government and other stakeholders to ensure that all children get education especially the girl-child. However, in the face of these interventions, regional inequalities in the country in terms of re-sources has left some parts poorer than others and this has led to in into inequalities in education as well, considering the impact that poverty has on education. In the face these, it is also recognised that as girls grow older and progress, it be-comes extremely difficult for them to stay in school and complete. This research attempts to make visible reasons that prevents girls from staying in school in order to complete at least their basic education in the northern region of Ghana. This was done by exploring the nuances in the social structure by particularly interrogating the family as a unit that may hinder or advance the efforts of girls retention, this research brings to the fore how gender relations inter-acts with deep rooted and entrenched social norms and practices coupled with male dominated decision making and how it affects the retention of girls in school. The research findings points out how gendered social norms and practices in the form of ascribed roles coupled with long standing male dominated decision making in sharing of children's responsibilities. This leads girls on 'precarious' journey called kayayo to support their education and its effects on their retention in school.

Relevance to Development Studies

Educating the girl-child has been a global concern given the trick-le-down effect it has on reducing poverty especially in developing countries and also because it is a fundamental right. This has led to international and national stakeholders to formulate policies and programmes to endure that girls have access in order to bridge the nagging gender inequalities in education. This study was con-ducted in the context of Ghana's contribution to the issue.

Keywords

Girl-child, education, poverty, gender, family, norms, practices, patriarchy

Chapter 1

Introduction and Framing the Research Question

1.1 Introduction

“.....there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls” (Kofi Annan 2003)

Education for all children has been emphasised at both the international and national levels. This is because education is the single most important investment a state can make in its people. Nevertheless, there continue to be constraints in the efforts to fully ensure girls participation in education. In interrogating this issue further (Bellew et al. 1992: 55) have argued that “the constraints in female education is that even where education is effectively free, the parents usually decide which of their children will go to school and for how long especially in developing countries”, and that for poor families with large family size it becomes difficult to send all children to school especially girls because girls are often seen as house helps”.

1.2. Contextual Background

The importance of education is globally acknowledged by two of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000. These focuses on education (Senadza 2011: 725). The “first is to achieve universal basic education by 2015 and second, is to achieve gender equality at all levels of education by 2015” (*Ibid* 2011). These MDGs have prompted many developing countries to strive for universal basic education and are pursuing policies to improve their educational systems, particularly to create improved access for girls. It is has widely been acknowledged by stakeholders of the significance of educating the girl child. According to a *World Bank and The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Report* (Tembon 2008: xvii), girls education is essential to economic development and that research conducted in some countries has evidently established the fact that educating girls is one of the most worthwhile ways of stimulating development. The report further states that educating the female generates pronounced poverty-reducing results and produces vast intergenerational improvements, which is positively interconnected with increased economic productivity, strong labour markets, higher earnings and improved societal health and well-being. Again Tanye (2008:168) has also emphasized the impact of educating the girl child on social, economic and political well-being of a country and that according to a Preston Education Fund for Girls report in 1995, “failing to invest in the education of girls and women has long term consequences for health, population growth and environmental security”.

The role of education in improving welfare and alleviating poverty in Ghana has long been recognised and many of the nation’s development plans have emphasized the importance of education. Despite this recognition and formulating policies to support and improve education, there is still more to be done especially in terms of regional and gender dimensions. The regional inequalities

persisting in the country has had implications on education as well, as the most poorest regions (Northern, Upper West and East regions) in Ghana have equally have the lowest educational attainment and illiteracy levels in the country and also in terms gender disparities (Bob Millar 2007).

The northern region of Ghana has been known for low access to education for girls for a while, right from the basic level to the tertiary level. Education sets the basis for human development and is also linked with firm social and economic benefits; not least reduced family size and better-quality health and welfare (Akyeampong et al 2012: 1). Since basic education is the start of the educational process greater attention needs to be paid to ensure that all children are able to complete this process. According to Akyeampong et al (2007: ix) the current basic education structure and curriculum has its roots in Ghana's colonial past. The earliest schools in pre-colonial period in the Gold Coast were started to educate the mixed race children of European traders (Bob-Millar 2007). Much later the colonial government provided education to sustain the machinery of colonial rule, but the major effort to expand education was the work of Christian missions who regarded education as necessary for missionary activity (*Ibid* 2007). Later, some aspects of pre-independence education were characterized by attempts to create incentives for all children to attend school (*Ibid* 2007). The colonial system of education was discriminatory, since it focused on the southern and resource endowed areas of the country and this has created inequalities at regional levels (Bob-Millar 2007).

The northern regions of Ghana were practically left out of the education consideration; so on attainment of independence in 1957, a special scholarship scheme was set up to close the gap between the North and South of Ghana (Bob-Millar 2007). Even though this scholarship helped to improve access, Northern region continues to experience low levels of educational performance. Disparities in access between the North and the South persist despite many years of political commitment to their reduction. Casely-Hayford and Akabzaa (2009: 2) acknowledge that the persistent poverty combined with poor quality education continue to restrain access to education in Ghana and that out of school, access, retention, completion and transition follow the same pattern as the poverty profile in Ghana (the Northern, Upper East and West being the poorest in the country).

There is notable regional dimension of inequality and this is quite significant (Higgins 2009:2). The Poverty in the north between 52% and 88% compared to 12-31% in the south (Ghana Statistical Service 2008) is much reduced in Accra and around the rural forest area but is still very widespread in the northern regions (Coulombe and Wodon 2007: 4). The developmental North-South divide found in Ghana arises from a combination of circumstances and policies, including the geographical concentration of agricultural resources and activities (such as cocoa, minerals and forest resources) in the Southern regions (Higgins 2009:2). This is linked with the British colonial legacy of investing more heavily in regions where exploitable resources, such as diamonds, gold, timber and cocoa, were available and cheap to produce and export (*ibid*). These activities were facilitated by the transfer of labour from the northern regions and this led to lack of educational investment from the northern region where labour was sourced and post-colonial investment patterns and development strategies (*ibid*).

Governments in recent times have introduced policies to ensure access to education for all children. The Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy was introduced in Ghana in 1996 (Akyeampong et al 2012:4) the policy set out to make schooling from primary 1 to 6 through JHS 1 to 3 free and compulsory for all school-age children by the year 2005 and it is also aimed at addressing long established deficiencies of quality. The intention of the policy was to eliminate school fees more decisively than had been achieved in earlier reforms (*ibid* 2012). Additionally, it provided a full sectorial framework for improvement in the basic education sector and required substantial decentralization, intended at community participation; combined with seeking to improve the co-ordination of donor provision (*Ibid* 2012). Again, in 2004, the Government of Ghana introduced a capitation grant scheme for school operating budgets for primary schools as part of the strategy to decentralize education provision; it was originally introduced in 40 districts and later extended to 53 districts designated as deprived(*ibid* 2012). In 2005, the scheme was extended nationwide. These policies and programmes coupled with NGO interventions are geared towards improvement of education for all children.

In an effort to improve gender equity in education and because the girl-child was lagging behind, Girls Education Unit (GEU) was established in 1997 (Akyeampong et al 2012:4). This unit has been set up in all district education offices with the sole aim of ensuring that equity in education is achieved.

Available statistics indicate that in the northern region, over 65% of girls over the age of 15 have received no formal education compared with a national average of 21% (Ghana Statistical Service 2008). Only 30% of women aged 15-24 are literate in the northern region as the number doubles for the Central Region (65%) (*Ibid*).

Also, in the northern region 60% of children of primary school age attend school compared with 88% in the central region and the percentage drops at secondary level, with only 25% of children enrolled in the northern region compared with 52% in the central region (Ghana Statistical Service 2008).

Drawing from the above, this research is an attempt to highlight the factors that hinder access to education for girls in the northern region of Ghana with particular focus on retention in school. The research was conducted using the family as a unit that may impede or advance their access. The research explores factors at the family¹ level and how these factors interact to influence the education of girls. The empirical evidence for the study is drawn from interviews with parents, teachers and focus group discussions with school girls and boys. The inclusion of boys in the research was necessitated to compare how these factors affected them differently.

1.3. Framing the Research Problem

Girls' education has been the focus of attention for governments, NGOs and the international community and it has been the focus of intervention area for programmes and policies in Ghana especially in the northern re-

¹ The term family used in this paper refers to nuclear family unit whether monogamous or polygamous.

gion. This massive support for girls' education has arisen due to the enormous importance and the trickledown effect of educating girls. In order to improve access to education for girls and to reap the full benefits that comes with, enrolment, attendance, retention and completion needs to be critically followed as well as monitored to ensure that progress is being made.

The government of Ghana has implemented policies such as the capitation grant, free compulsory basic education and the school feeding (discussed above) with the aim of improving access for children including girls not only to be enrolled but stay in school, attend regularly and eventually complete at least the basic level throughout the whole country.

According to information available at the Ghana Education Service, the World Bank in 2011 conducted a nationwide survey on young people in Ghana and it revealed that "81.1% of girls start primary school against 90.7% of boys. And that 86.5% of those girls completed primary school compared with 92.7 of boys GES 2012). Again it came out that transition rates from primary to junior high school was lower for girls (91.5%) than for boys (96.7%), although among those who started junior high school girls had a higher likelihood of completing 89.4% than boys 88%" (*ibid* 2012). Even though these percentages has good prospects for girls' education, it needs to be made clear that the situation has geographic differences, with some regions doing well in terms of girls' education than others (*ibid* 2012).

The northern region as opined by Coulombe and Wooden (2007:4) is among the poorest in the country and this has been known to have significant implications on educating children especially girls as they progress from primary school towards the junior high school level. For instance the region's score in enrolment rates at the JHS level deducing from the EMIS reports from 2008 to date has been on the low. To buttress this available statistic on JHS enrolment in the region post major interventions in education shows that in the 2008/2009 academic year recorded 30.7%² enrolment for girls against 34.8% for boys (EMIS 2009:83), in the 2009/2010 academic year it once again recorded 38.1% for girls against 45.8% for boys (EMIS 2010:83) .

Again for the academic years 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 41% and 42.1% were recorded for girls while boys recorded 47% and 47.8% respectively (EMIS 2011,2012 :83). However in the 2012/2013 academic year report the enrolment dropped for both boys (45.1%) and girls (37.0%) (EMIS 2013:83) comparing these with the previous year above. Even though the JHS enrolment for boys does not greatly surpass that of girls, it still gives room for concern and for attention to be paid to the girls considering the global acknowledgement that they suffer inequalities in education.

Despite the fact that the northern region has the lowest enrolment for girls, the issue retention of girls at the Junior High School (JHS) level is of grave concern. The retention rates for girls using the same year range as the enrolment above shows that in the 2008/2009 academic year only 55.2%³ of girls were retained in school against 63.6% of boys (EMIS 2009). In the follow-

² Enrolment figures used here are Net enrolment

³ Retention rates were calculated using net enrolment and completion figures from the EMIS reports (Calculations were done by the researcher)

ing year 2009/2010 the retention rate dropped significantly for both girls (40.9%) and boys (43.6%) (EMIS 2010). The 2010/2011 academic year saw a slight rise in retention for girls at (42.9) and 47.3% for boys (EMIS 2011). For the academic years 2011/2012 and 2012/2013, 44.3% and 46.3% of girls were retained against 47.1% and 47.5% for boys respectively (EMIS 2012, 2013).

In the light of the above, the research investigated factors that accounted for the retention of girls in the northern region. The research focused on girls from JHS 1 to JHS 3 with an age range from 14 to 17 in the West Mamprusi district of the northern region. This range of girls were selected for the research because when they reach adolescence they are considered to be 'useful' for certain functions and activities in the home such as cooking, cleaning, caring for younger siblings, fetching water. Some are married off especially in the northern region.

The West Mamprusi district of the northern region was selected for this research as the study area. The district like most districts in the northern region is predominantly rural; it has a population of 168,011, with 80% of the populace being dependant on agriculture (PHC⁴ 2010:101). The enrolment according to the district website (West Mamprusi District 2006) stands at 19,398 made of 10,797 males (56%) and 8,601 females (44%). "Kayayo" induced drop outs for girls in this district is high even though currently there no statistics available both at the district and regional levels to back this claim, stakeholders do acknowledge the worrying trend in this phenomenon. Even though most districts in this region share these problems, the West Mamprusi district was chosen for the study, because the researcher is very familiar with this district than other the other districts in the region having worked there for a while and also have good contacts to make the research easier. These already established networks helped in doing the research than trying to establish new contacts in a new district.

The education administration in the district is divided into circuits. Currently, there are ten circuits but for the purpose of this research only two were used for data collection and analysis.

1.4. Research Questions

As expounded earlier, despite the considerable efforts by government and other stakeholders in education to improve access for girls, there seems to be issues still battling against their effective retention. The overarching question for the study is;

How does gender relations at the family level affect retention of girls in school in the West Mamprusi district?

Sub-Questions

These sub questions helped in arriving at answers for the main research question.

- How does household gender roles affect the retention of girls in schools?

⁴ Population and Housing Census

- How does the male dominated decision making at the family level influence girl's retention in school?

1.5. Objectives of the Study

The study's objectives were specifically about problems associated with girl's retention in in the northern region of Ghana. It aims at contributing empirical data to the debate on factors that hinder girl's educational access and also to serve as a useful document on programs on girl's education.

1.6. Relevance and Justification of Study

The increased global attention for educational involvement of girls is hinged on the long term hope that investing in them will improve their future labour returns and eventually lift them out of poverty (Heward 1999:4). It is also viewed as a basic human right that should be enjoyed by all irrespective of their gender (*ibid*). The right to education for all children (girls included) is also entrenched in several United Nations Conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28) (van Banning et al. 2004: 3, 24) which has been ratified by many countries including Ghana.

Access to education has been made easy with considerable efforts by the government of Ghana with the hope that all children of school going age will have the equal opportunity to access education (at least at the basic level) through the introduction of the school feeding programme and the free compulsory basic education and the Capitation grant (Akyeampong 2012: 4). These interventions are also supplemented by NGOs who have worked extensively in Ghana especially in the northern region but there still exist disparities in this field. These policies can be said to have relived parents and carers of the cost burden of paying school fees and also the feeding of children in schools. Even with the introduction of these very good policies, retention of children is still a problem especially for girls.

The interest in this topic arose from my experience working in schools in the northern region, I have on several occasions encountered children who miss school or drop out to per-form one duty or another at home to help parents in either domestic or economic activities or for some other reasons. These duties that children perform affect attendance, retention and transition. The question that beats my mind is if parents used to complain about the cost involved in educating their children and this part has been taken care of by government through the school feeding, capitation and free compulsory basic education, then, why are girls out of school in the northern region? As a person who grew up in the northern part of country and having worked there for a while, I have observed many NGO interventions in this region which concentrates on access to education for girls. This is because the northern region has been acknowledged to have low access to education for girls. The focus of this research will be to look at the retention of girls in the northern region of Ghana and asses the factors that accounts for them.

Even though, studies have been conducted to find out the root causes of girl child lagging behind in Ghana, most of these studies have either focus on the

regional disparities by acknowledging the problem in the northern region or compare the problems. This research will differ by concentrating on the northern region and using tools such as gender, poverty and patriarchy to analyse the issue of girls' access to education.

1.7. Methodology and methods of data collection strategies

This study utilises concepts like gender, poverty and patriarchy in an intersectional perspective for analysing the data that has been collected. It explores gender, poverty and patriarchy conceptions in an intersectional perspective in understanding the retention situation for girls in education with data gathered from comprehensive interviews and focus group discussions with parents, school girls, teachers and other key informants. This research employed qualitative method of data collection. The method gives the researcher the opportunity to analyse retention of girls using opinions, views and interpretations of this social phenomenon.

1.7.1. Study Site

In order to acquire the required data for analysis, this research was conducted in the West Mamprusi district of the northern region. The district is one of the districts created in 1988 under the government of Ghana's decentralisation and local government reform policy, with Walewale as the district capital (West Mamprusi District Profile 2006). It was carved out of the old Gambaga district in the Northern Region (Ibid). The major ethnic group is the Mamprusi's, however other ethnic groups such as the Frafra's, Kassina's, Bimoba's, Fulani's and Ewe's have migrated and settled there. The majority of the people live in huts built of mud and roofed with straw (Ibid). The general state of these housing structure is poor with a lot of them marked by cracked walls, leaking roofs and weak foundations. The poor state of housing in the area gives an indication of high poverty in the district (Ibid). However, there is an increasing trend in building with cement blocks and roofing with aluminium sheets.

The West Mamprusi district like most districts in the northern region is predominantly rural. The economic base of the district is agricultural with an average 80% of economically active population engaged in one form or other form of agricultural activity such as crop production, livestock and fisheries (West Mamprusi District Profile 2006). The agricultural activities here are basically done on a subsistence level with smallholder farmers representing the main users of agricultural land. This backdrop of poverty and low development influenced the decision to choose this area for the study of low retention of girls.

The district is divided into ten educational circuits but for the purposes of this research two were chosen for data collection because of lack of time and resource. These circuits are Walewale East and West. The two communities from the circuits that was selected for the research are Wungu and Nayoku.

1.7.2. Respondents Selection

The primary schools and JHS selected for the study in the two communities was due to the fact that they were the only primary and junior high schools in the communities, making it easy to proceed with selection of respondents. In all 4 teachers, 2 community leaders, 1 education officer and 1 girl were interviewed, while 34 school children (21 girls and 13 boys) and 20 parents were interacted with in a focus group discussion.

The students (boys and girls) respondents were from the schools and were purposively drawn from these schools in the two communities by virtue of their enrolment in the schools and their availability because schools were on holidays and also the study was conducted in the farming season when most children travel to cities in search for money to buy school materials (especially the girls) while others help their parents on the farm. Additionally during the discussion with some of the children and teachers in one of the communities, my attention was drawn to a girl who had dropped out of school and became pregnant. She was interviewed to enrich the study. The selection of teachers who participated in the research was also based on their availability since schools were on vacation and they do not permanently reside in the communities. While the research design had targeted 8 teachers to be interviewed only 4 were available to participate in the research. This was possible because these 4 teachers resided at the district capital Walewale and it was easy for the researcher to reach them for interviews. Parents drawn for the research were also purposively selected due to the fact that they were in a position to give information on the norms and practices that children perform at home, share experiences of supporting girl-children in school and their general views on the reasons for the low retention of girls.

1.7.3. Sources of data and methods

The main methods of data collection was interviews and focus group discussions. Focus group conducted with parents and school children utilised the help of an interpreter, because parents were not conversant with the medium of communication the researcher was using which was English. The researcher is not a native speaker of the people of West Mamprusi but understands the language and this helped to reduce the challenge of losing most of the data in translation.

Interviews (in-depth) were conducted using informal and structured patterns in order to establish rapport, gain trust and to draw out information (O'Leary 2012:196) with teachers. The purpose of this interview with teachers and head teachers was to collect data specifically on opinions and views why girls were lagging behind in education in the district and factors that may be responsible, participation level of girls in class in relation to boys in the same class, and then what they thought parents and other stakeholders in education were doing to ensure access for girls both in the district and regionally. They were also asked to share stories of drop outs among the girls and what strategies was in place to bring them back to school.

Key informants (community leaders 2: an assemblyman and a Unit committee member) were also interviewed to solicit their views and opinions on access to education for girls. They were asked for instance what the state of girls access in the district was, what in their opinions accounted to it and what

roles and responsibilities were assigned both boys and girls at home and if they thought it had any effect on them.

Additionally an interview was conducted with the girl-child education officer at the regional level. Her strategic position as girl-child education officer afforded her the opportunity to give her opinion on the current state of girls in the region. The officer also threw more light on the key social problems that has been identified to hamper girls' education. She equally shared practical actions taken by the education service especially the units the girls' education unit in mitigating the problem related to educating girls in the northern region.

Focus group discussions (4, two in each school) were conducted with selected girls and boys with their class stages in mind. Boys were included in this data collection process to compare their experiences and activities both at home and in school. This group discussion helped to collect data from girls and boys directly about the roles they play at home and whether these roles hinder them in any way in their retention, whether they had adequate time to study and do homework. It also helped solicit data related to parents' commitment towards their education, support from teachers and their communities as whole. For instance, data about whether responsibilities increase or decrease as they move from class to another as they progress, which child their parents will chose to educate if financial circumstances was to determine which child goes to school, which parent decides which child should go to school among others.

Parent's (a purposive sample of parents) views and opinions were sought through focus group discussion to gather data especially on the specific roles children play at home, what support system was at home to encourage them to study, who decides which child gets education and if they could share stories of drop outs of girls and what accounted for the drop outs.

For ethical reasons and to keep the anonymity of respondents for this re-search, anonymous names will be used in this paper where appropriate.

The purpose of this study will not be to generalise the findings due to the shortcomings of the sample technique and size, nevertheless, the research study will generate information and conclusions that will be perhaps be useful for future and current studies or programs on access to girls' education.

1.7.4. Secondary Data

Further information on education was obtained from the Northern Regional office of the Ghana Education Services. The information obtained was basically secondary data on education statistics specifically on enrolment, completion and gender parity in the region. The above data was reviewed in supporting the statistics in this paper.

1.7.5. Scope and Limitations

This study utilised essentially mixed method approach that is, qualitative and quantitative data collection to capture information during the research period. On the other hand, the analysis is mainly drawn from the use of qualitative data for the variables involved. Since most of the respondents in the study could not express themselves properly in English, some of the interac-

tions had to be recorded, therefore recorded data had to be transcribed into English to facilitate analysis.

1.8. Challenges of the Data Collection Process

Despite the research process being exciting, it was equally very demanding that anticipated. As with all social research I anticipated a few challenges however there were others that came my way and I handled them depending on the situation as the occasion demanded. Discussed here are some of the noteworthy steps taken to go through successfully with the field work schedule as planned. Since field work for the research was conducted in the rainy season which also happens to be the busiest time of the year for farmers⁵, it was difficult to meet parents (especially fathers), because they started work on their farms early and close later in the evening. Thus I had to meet them after the day's work for data collection. It rather became difficult to meet them individually for interviews since my contact person had informed parents of a collective meeting instead of the scheduled individual interviews. I however, utilised the opportunity to switch my data collection method from interviews to focus group discussion in order not to lose their interest to participate in the study.

Additionally, teachers who were also key respondents in the study were not easily available because schools were on vacation. It took a lot of phone calls and follow ups to be able to meet them for interviews. Another problem encountered was my inability to obtain district specific statistics from the West Mamprusi district education office, even though I had followed all available bureaucratic and protocol process to request for them, after making several follow ups, nobody was willing to give me the requested data. I was able to get the regional statistics from the northern regional education office.

Interestingly, because my contact person had worked with an NGO in both communities before, during focus group discussion with parents and even teachers they tended to imply in some of the comments for me to submit their problems to my superiors for further intervention, however had to remind them each time that I was only student researcher and could not carry out what they were implying.

1.9. Contribution

This research will contribute to literature on girls access to education in the northern region of Ghana by concentrating on issues that will be particularly peculiar to the northern region; and by the use of theoretical tools such as gender, poverty and patriarchy to give a different lens to this issue to inform stakeholders in education in Ghana to adopt pragmatic measures to solve this access to education for girls.

1.10. Organisation of the Paper

The paper is organised into four chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the research topic on the issues associated with girl's education in

⁵ Community members are mostly peasant farmers especially the men

the northern region. The second chapter provides a theoretical framework that is used to analyse the low retention of girls. The third chapter gives a presentation of research findings and analyse factors that contributes to the low retention of girls in schools. The last chapter concludes and summarises the research findings in the perspective of the research questions and gives the way forward.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Perspectives

2.1. Introduction

This research seeks to understand how girls in the northern region of Ghana have persistently lagged behind in education in the face of policies and programmes that has sought to improve their access, it is specifically looking at their low retention which results in their inability to complete at least the basic education. To do this, it is of outmost importance to provide a theoretical frame-work that will serve as a lens from which issues emanating can be viewed and analysed. The concepts deemed important to this re-search for discussions are gender, patriarchy and poverty, these used in the analysis in an intersectional perspective.

2.2. Intersectionality

This research will explore an intersectional perspective in analysing the nuances of girls' access to education in the northern region. An intersectional approach will perhaps help in understanding why this issue exist and possibly give a fresh lens to critically analyse it. The concept of intersectionality according to (Davis 2008:1) is the interaction of various identities and experiences of exclusion and subordinations of certain group of people in a given society. It is mostly used for analysis by feminist scholars to understand the complexities of oppressions that women encounter. In this case the approach will be used to assess the interactions of gender, poverty and patriarchy in relation to the complexities of exclusions, oppression and subordinations that girls in the northern region of Ghana face in their quest to access to education. Winker and Degele (2008:51) quoting from Crenshaw (1986) have reemphasized that as a replacement for simply summarising the effects of one, two, or three oppressive classifications, advocates of the concept of intersectionality stress the intertwined nature of these categories and how they can jointly support or weaken each other. Drawing from this quote, the study will critically assess the interwoven nature of the problem of access to education for girls in the northern region and its subsequent implications. This research will specifically adopt the intra-categorical complexity level by (McCall 2005:1774) to focus on girls in the northern region of Ghana as a particular social group that has been 'neglected' in the area of access to education. For example it will be of importance in explaining how the inequalities in gender, poverty and patriarchy have contributed to low access of education in the northern region of Ghana and how the unequal relationships of these concepts and their interwoven nature can perhaps be a tool for explanation.

2.3. The Concept of Gender Relations

Gender has been looked at by Snyder and Tadesse (1995:14) as a social construct that asserts that the expectations and responsibilities of men and women are not always biologically determined. Meaning gender is the differ-

ence between men and women that has been carefully constructed over time in most societies. These differences as a construct have great influence on what a woman or man can do or become, making gender power relations important in gender analysis. The dominant gender in any given situation can suppress or subordinate the weaker gender.

According to Pearson (1992:292) Gender relations are social categories of men and women, male and female and how they relate over the entire scope of social organisation, not just the interactions between individual men and women in the domain of personal relationships or in terms of biological reproduction. Lorber (1995:32) asserts that gender creates the social differences that designate men and women and that persons learn what is expected, see what is expected, act and react in expected ways and through this the gender is built and sustained. And so it has been through the ages that gender roles and responsibilities has survived until present times. Again, Pearson (1992:292) is of the opinion that, in all facets of social activity, comprising access to resources for production, rewards, or remuneration for work, distribution of consumption, income or goods, exercise of authority and power and participation in cultural and religious activity, gender is important in establishing people's behaviour and the outcomes of any social interaction. That is why it is important to look at gender power relations in analysing situations in societies. Even though gender differences exist, it is when these differences are stratified that subordinations and inequalities arise (Lorber 1995:33). The result of this stratification of gender ranks men above women in the different roles they play. For instance, it is gender stratification that makes the duties of the man more valuable than that of the woman. In most society's gender determines who makes decisions, whose views are heard and which child for example receives what education, health care and what sex of a child is born.

To this end, I will explore Scott's (1986: 1067) views on gender as one of power relation for my analysis. According to (Scott 1986:1068) gender power relation as an organizing principle of social life operates within four social levels of inter-relations:

Level of Subjective Identities; here gender is perceived as what it means to be male or female and how these subjective identities are produced through social norms and practices. In this research this level of subjective identities will be useful to analyse how girls perceive themselves in their social settings through the norms and practices and the implication of these perceived identities on their access to education;

Level of Institutions and Organizations; that is, how institutional knowledge, practice and power: family, labour market, political institutions; education are gendered. In this case the study will utilise this level to access how the family and school institutions are structured with their respective power relations and practices and how they affect access to education for girls;

Level of Ideology; justifies or helps in explaining structural inequalities, naturalize norms: political and religious ideologies and how gendered these ideologies can be of use in analysing certain meanings that affect men and women differently;

Level of Symbolic Meaning; familiarity of cultural symbols and metaphors give meanings to our realities: motion/reason; carry gendered symbolic meanings that de-fine reality and re-produce specific meanings in men and women, and

their hierarchies. And these have implications for who gets what or how decisions affect who.

These social levels of interrelations will be used to analyse the implications and nuances of gender in access to girls' education. In the light of this research the first two levels of gender relations will be specifically used to analyse how subjective identities and institutions impact girl's access to education. The level of subjective identities will be used to analyse how girls see or perceive themselves in relation to boys in school, at the community level and in the family, how they think certain roles are ascribed to them specifically because they are girls and if these self-perceptions and ascribed roles actually impact (positively or negatively) on their access to education especially in their attendance, retention and transition. For instance, it will be used to investigate what it means to be girl in the northern region of Ghana, what expectations and practices are associated with being girl and what opportunities are available to them at home, community level and in school.

Also, the institutional level will be used to analyse how the family as institution is gendered. This level of gender power relations will be utilised to specifically understand how the family is structured (in terms of gender), what power relations and practices are pre-sent and how do these affect boys and girls differently. For example, which parent makes the decision (the dominant parent at home) regarding children's welfare especially in who gets educated and why. It will also help in understanding how roles are structured at home for both boys and girls and does the family provide a safe place for both boys and girls to thrive and have access to education?

Again, the school as institution will be will be investigated to see the dynamics of the school environment and how it affects both boys and girls differently with help of gender as a level of institutions and organisation. The main issues to explore will be for instance, how is the school gendered and how are school activities structured to either encourage or discourage their access.

2.4. Patriarchy

Patriarchy according to LeGates (2001, in Chowdhury 2009:600) was a term used by ancient Greeks which means; "The rule of the father" and that its origin is from the Old Testament herding societies which used to describe fathers' authority over their family members. In other words the term patriarchy is associated with the control of males starting from the family as unit. (Walby 1990:20) has defined it as a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". She further goes on to categorize it into six structures namely; "the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, in the state, male violence, sexuality and cultural institutions" (Ibid: 20) and that male domination that subordinates the woman exist in all these structures. It is the dominance of males that influences the strict gender division of labour whereby the girl (woman) is burdened with domestic work which eventually affects their ability to stay in school. Again patriarchy is divided into what (Walby 1990:178) calls private and public patriarchy. The private is constructed within household production with a patriarch controlling women individually and openly in the rather private space of the home while the public is focused on structures outside the household (Ibid: 178).

Additionally, (Lerner 1986:34) states that the creation of patriarchy is by men and women and it has been so historically through time. She further argues that the basic unit of patriarchy is the family. (Millett 1980:34) has also added that patriarchy is the domination of women by men and further argues that this domination can be observed in the military, industry, political, education, office, among others and all “avenue of power within society” (Ibid:34). This drums the fact that male dominance is present everywhere in society

Other authors have associated patriarchy with capitalism and its appropriation tendencies. Delphy (1984:95) described patriarchy “as a system which is parallel to capitalism”. The argument advanced is that the domestic mode of production at the family level provides a system of oppression whereby husbands appropriate all the work done by their wives (Delphy 1984:95). This notion of patriarchy is reinforced by Hartmann (1979:207) that patriarchal control is mostly through the appropriation of women’s labour by men. She asserts that the key elements of patriarchy include; “heterosexual marriage, female childbearing and housework, women’s economic dependence on men, the state and different institutions which are based on social relations among men” (Ibid). She further points out that the family is the key learning unit of dominance and submission.

Mies (1986) argues the link between patriarchy and capitalism and also notes that capitalism is a different form of patriarchy. She further opines that “male dominance is not at the family level by fathers, but also rule of husbands, male bosses and the ruling men of society, politics and the economy”. These discussions on patriarchy by these writers identifies the family as the central unit of male dominance and even though it can be said times are changing for the highly placed male dominance to reduce, deep rooted cultural practices by people especially in rural areas is still influenced by patriarchy. In this light patriarchy will be used to analyse the gender division of labour and decision making at the family level in relation to girls education and particularly its implication for retention of girls in the research area.

2.5. Poverty

Poverty is phenomenon that world leaders have been grappling with for decades, it is also a concept that is difficult to define on the spot. It has been identified to have so many dimensions to it such as in being poor in housing, food, shelter, education, health, representation (World Bank 2009:1) among others, meaning the inability to access anyone of these and more can make a person poor. In his quest to interrogate the concept (Chambers 1995:6) defined it as “low income, as it is reported, recorded and analysed or often as low consumption which is easier to measure”. This he argues is the meaning typically among economist and that it is used for measuring poverty lines for equating groups and regions and a lot time used for evaluating improvements or backsliding within poverty in development”. In taking a cue from this definition means different professional may choose to define poverty differently. Bernstein et al. (1992:13) quoting form the 1990 World Development Report defines “poverty as the inability to attain minimal standard of living measured in terms of basic consumption needs or income required to satisfy them”. In simple terms poverty can be the inability of people to buy food to eat, have

shelter over their heads and not being able to afford school materials even though paying school fees may be absent.

Poverty is acknowledged to severely affect educating children especially in developing countries. UNICEF in their report *The State of the World's Children 2004: Girls Education and Development* notes that even though poverty affects the education of all children, girls suffer more because of their gender (UNICEF 2003:26). Similarly Bhoje (2013:2) has argued that poverty robs girls and women of their right to education which eventually leads to them being poorer. Gage (2005) also argues that limited resources of families due to family size or income levels may equally prompt them to withdraw children especially girls to support in economic activities (Gage 2005:433). In her contribution to this issue Tanye (2008:175) has equally argued that economic inadequacy is a crucial factor that hinder girl's access to education. She assert that due to low financial status of families due primarily to poverty, girls' education may suffer because of the cost involved. This is because situation where education has been made free even through government policies, poor families still have to cope with other essential school material that children may need which can be quite considerable expenses for them (Stromquist 2001:41). By implication therefore meagre family resources have a direct effect on educating children in poor families. From the above discussions, this concept will help in analysing its effects on retaining girls in schools and how poverty actually leads these girls on the kayayo journey to fend for themselves.

2.6 Conclusion

The concepts of gender and poverty were used as analytical tools to understand the inequalities associated with girl's education. It enabled the researcher to understand the persistent retention problems of girls in schools, while patriarchy as a concept was relevant to equally understand the decision making process in the family

Chapter 3

Discussion of Empirical Data

3.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the experiences of girls in the study in their quest to access education. The findings presented sheds light on the heavy burden that girls grapple with in the form combining domestic workload with academic work and its subsequent implication on their retention in school. It also brings to the fore the effects of social norms and practices and decision making with regards to the sharing of children's responsibilities in the family base on gender. These issues are analysed within the context of the family as unit and its nuanced implication on educating the girl-child.

3.2. Social Characteristics of the Northern Region

The people of the northern region of Ghana, although belongs to different ethnic group share common social characteristics. The major form of marriage here is the polygamous form, where a man has as many as two or three wives who co-exist within the same housing compound. The nature of marriages here by implication means individual wives have to go the extra mile to cater for their children, since the situation makes it difficult for the husbands to tend to the every need of each and every children. According to the northern regional profile, Islam is the prevailing religion, with about 56.1 percent of the population acknowledging to the Islamic faith (Northern Regional Profile 2006). The average household size is 7.4 percent and among the highest male-headed households (85.1%) in the country. The societies in this region are considered to be patrilineal, this is evident in their inheritance patterns. In patrilineal cultures the main inheritance pattern is through the fathers (La Ferrara 2007: 283), this practices makes families place high value on male children that female because evidently female children will usually be married off into a different family while male children will rather marry into their fathers family thereby continuing the lineage. Interestingly, the male preference situation makes families (especially fathers, since they the head of families) to pay more attention to male children particularly in education.

The structure of families are very much gendered, with most of the domestic work being the responsibility of female members, in this regard mothers begin to teach female children domestic work at an early age to take over from them as they grow and also to prepare them for marriage. It is a common practice for females to be married off at an early age (at an early age of 14 a girl can be given off to marriage) sometimes with older men who usually old enough to be their fathers (Northern Regional Profile 2006). In such situations some the girls refuse these marriages by running away from their communities into cities, which also present a serious case for them. In the following discussions these social norms and practices will be evidently clear in how they affect the retention of girls.

These factors advanced for the low access of girls in education and many more are actually right on point, however, what I did not come across in the litera-

ture reviewed is not delving into the issues of attendance, retention and transition. And even though it is widely acknowledged by key stakeholders in education that, the three northern regions have low access for girls, I still have not come across studies deeply focused in these areas to find the dynamics and nuances of the factors that hinder girls. I believe these are very important when discussing access to education for girls. The issue of having access by enrolling is one thing and being able to attend school and being retained is also another issue that needs to be looked at critically. That is what this research seeks to do, I believe that a study that delves into the dynamics of the people of the northern region will help in understanding and strategizing for better girls' access to education.

3.3. Gender relations in the family: a lens into the West Mamprusi

The issue of educating girls has been a matter of concern both governments and development partners for a very long time. This is because educating the girl child has been linked with the long term effect of eliminating poverty not just at the household level but nationwide. The core of this research was to find answers to factors that account for low retention of girls at the basic education level in the northern region of Ghana and how the influence of gender, poverty and patriarchy (in the form of norms and practices) affect their lives.

3.3.1. Double Burden of being a girl and educational retention

In discussing education for girls and most especially retaining them in schools, there is the need to begin with how the girls perceive themselves, because I have always been of the opinion that self-perception is of utmost importance in everything that one does, and this self-perception stems from the gender relations that they are exposed to at home. Gender relations is crucial in the defining individuals and it also shapes their behaviour. From the data gathered, girls are involved in activities that are ascribed to their gender, meaning they perform these specific roles simply because they are girls and those roles/activities are reserved for the female gender. These roles range from cooking, fetching water, sweeping and any other activity that is done domestically. On the other hand, activities performed by boys are what I will call seasonal, because helping on the farm or weeding around the house is done only in the rainy season, so in effect the boys have a lot of time on their hands to attend to their studies at home than the girls. From the activities performed by both boy and girls at home, it is very clear that girls perform more activities at home than their male counter parts. During focus group discussion with male school children, I asked who performs the domestic work at home when their sisters are either taken ill or are not around to do them, then one of them answered that in the event that for him his sisters are not around to perform the domestic functions, then 'our mothers will do them or a female relative will be asked to it, this kind of work is women work'. In affirmation to this, community leaders interviewed when asked about the male and female activities at home and why the trend was the way it was, re-iterated that activities performed by females has been there since time immemorial and there was nothing

ing that could be done about, in the words of one of the community leaders interviewed;

since I was a small boy it has always been the females who have been engaged in domestic work, girls are taught how to do this at very age in preparation for the future” (Alhassan, a male community leader at Nayoku).

Even though the domestic work performed by girls at home is considered to be part of the process of being born into the female gender and therefore no value is placed on it, but this comes at a cost to them in the form of their inability to fully access education.

The heavy burden placed on girls at home has direct effect on their retention in school, since they spend more time on domestic work than their male counterparts at home (Stromquist 1999:17). The ‘private’ patriarchal control of women at the family level (Walby 1990: 20) which is unrecognised and under-valued in the form of domestic work is passed onto daughters, which undoubtedly weighs them down in their quest to pursue education. Interestingly in the face of these heavy domestic burden, they have to complete the same school work load with their male counterparts, since the school environment does not put into account the domestic work done by girls.

Interaction with the girls revealed that sometimes homework given at school is left undone due to the many activities they perform at home which lead to them being punished at school. Getting punished at school more often can sometimes be a “push factor” for the girls to leave school. Aliya (a female 15 year old JHS 2 student in the focus group) recounted an incident where she was punished by her teacher for not doing her homework because after performing all her domestic duties at home she was too tired that she went straight to bed and only remembered her homework the next morning when she was getting ready to leave home for school. Unfortunately her teacher will not take any excuse and so she was punished. Almost all the girls I interacted with during this the data collection had been punished at least more than once for their inability to do homework because of the heavy activities performed at home.

“When I wake up in the morning, I sweep the compound and then go to fetch water for family.....when I return I set fire to boil water for those who want to have warm baths..... The next thing is to prepare breakfast and then bath my young siblings and get them ready for school before i myself will bath and go to school. After school if there is no firewood for the evening meal it means I have to fetch some from the farm.....on the days that am lucky my mum would have done that for me. Then I begin preparing the evening meal after the evening meal if the water fetched in the morning is finished then it will mean another round of water fetching. After the evening I have to gather all dirty bowls and wash, get my younger siblings ready for bed and if I have any homework, I do it before I sleep....but sometimes after doing this I forget to do my homework and get punished at school” (Memunah a female 14 year old JHS 2 student at Wungu)

On the contrary, activities and roles at school are equally shared, since according to the students and teachers interacted there is roaster for all students to follow. In effect both boys and girls work to keep schools clean. As much as the school environment provides a level playing ground for both boys and girls, we cannot loose site of the fact that, after all the work done by girls at home they still have to work again in the school

In using Scott's (1986: 1068) level of subjective identity of gender power relation as an organizing principle to explain this phenomenon, the girl's inter-acted with have resigned themselves to norms and practices that is associated with being 'a girl' by society. For that matter they identify themselves as girls and accept whatever responsibility that comes with it. But then again the patriarchal power relations at play does not give room for much challenge or change. A critical interpretation here means that at home and at community levels girls see themselves as different from boys and vice versa simply because they perform different roles. Sufficing to say that, it is these differences between males and females that is carried forward into adulthood, and as Lorber (1995:35) argues they willingly go along with whatsoever society's prescriptions for their particular gender status because norms and expectations get constructed into their sense of worth and identity.

3.3.2. Gender Relations at home and girl's retention

The family as institution can never be left out when discussing the retention of girls in school as the saying goes "charity begins at home"; it is during this research that I came to appreciate this common saying. The family can make or break a person because no matter far we travel and where we go, we always look to go back home. This shows how important the family is in our lives. Field data gathered showed families influence in the low retention of girls in a revealing way. During discussion with parents it became surprisingly clear that at the family level, the responsibility of a child depended on the gender of the child, meaning mothers are responsible for the girl children while the father was responsible for the boys. This will not be a problem if both parents were equally endowed financially to cater for whichever child fell in their respective gender.

What makes this an issue of concern and connected to girl's retention in school is the fact that, according to the women interacted with in the rural communities, they are housewives with no economic activities to generate income to support themselves and their children. They said their husbands are farmers which puts them in a better position to care for the children, and that they only plant vegetables on the farms of their husbands⁶ and that even if they land is allocated to them, it is most often not fertile to support plant growth. This practice is in line with the patrilineal system of inheritance where male children are favoured to inherit (La Ferrara 2007). This practice makes women in this part of the country not own land and since they cannot inherit⁷ from their father's or husbands (Chao 1999:21). A woman can only be allowed on a piece of land by her husband or her brother which is mostly for household consumption which in the long run limits their access to land use. This phenomenon affirms (Pearson 1992:297) argument that when women don't have direct ownership or rights to farm land, they in consequent have little say in the allocation of the resources from it. Interactions with the women revealed

⁶ They also mentioned that even in the situation where a husband releases a piece of land for a wife to farm, he decides how the income is divided

⁷ The inheritance pattern is patrilineal (this is where only male members of the family can inherit)

that, because they do not own lands to farm, since farming is the major occupation in their communities, they are usually not able to attend to the school needs of their girls.

The only other source they rely on is the picking of shea nuts and processing it into shea butter for sale. This activity is done in the rainy season (which is like only 4 months in a year), so for the rest of the year they rely on what they have and what their husbands provide for housekeeping. Under what seems like difficult financial circumstances for the women providing the every need of the girls they are 'supposed' to be supporting becomes somewhat a struggle.

"Our husbands are very much aware of our financial situation yet they still shift the responsibilities of the girls on us, I have two children (a boy and a girl) in senior high school. One day the boy called to ask for money and the father was quick to send him the money but when our daughter called he did not even allow her to speak, he immediately brought the phone to me to speak with her when he realized it was her. They just don't want to have anything to do with our daughters' education and this places a burden on us. Supposing you have about 5 children and they are all girls, it will be highly impossible to educate them all". (Madam Mariama, a mother and focus group discussant at Wungu)

This situation narrated above could be related to by about five of the ten women in the focus group held in the two communities or had a similar story of their own. The seemingly difficult financial situation of the women leads to some of them withdrawing their girl children from school. During focus group with the women, one of the discussants shared an incident where her 14 year old daughter who was in JHS three had drop out because she could not afford to pay her basic education certificate⁸ examination registration fee, she said even though it was some years back she still wishes she could have paid for her daughter to write the exams. Additionally, discussions with respondents equally revealed that sometimes older girls (usually between the ages of 14 to 17) are withdrawn from school especially during the shea nut picking season to help out their mothers in picking the nuts and processing to generate income for the upkeep of younger siblings and the school needs of the girls themselves, this according to them sometimes makes the girls lag behind in school work and then those who are not able to cope simply just drop out.

Amid these seemingly difficult financial situation of the women, there were claims by some section of respondents (mostly teachers and fathers) that mothers encourage girls to travel to cities⁹ to engage in load or goods carrying in markets known in local parlance as 'kayayo'. Now 'kaya' is a Hausa language meaning luggage, load or goods while 'yo' means female in Ga¹⁰, a 'kayayo' therefore means a woman or teenage girl who carries other people's load,

⁸ Basic Education Certificate Examination is the final examination for the Junior School pupils for passage into the Senior Secondary school. Pupils have to pay registration fee in order to sit for the exams.

⁹ Mostly in Accra (the capital city of Ghana), Kumasi the second largest city and recently Tamale

¹⁰ Ga and Hausa are both written and spoken languages in Ghana

goods or luggage on their head for a fee (Opare 2003:34). This according to them is major drain on girls' inability to stay in school, and that while some of them go and return others do not return. In an effort to affirm or deny claim by teachers and fathers (respondents) that mothers encourage their daughters to travel to cities to get money to buy school materials when they are not able to provide, a question was posed to that effect. One of the respondent obviously aggravated by my question retorted;

It is no mother's intention to allow her child to travel to a place that we as adults have never been before, but since our husbands push the responsibilities of our daughter's education on us, there are times that we really don't have any option than for them to go and look for money. It is not that mothers directly tell them to go for the kayayo, but some-times when they see the difference in the girls who have returned they are enticed to go. (Madam Asana, a mother and focus group discussant at Wungu)

From the perspective of the girls involved in this study, they usually will ask their mothers anytime they needed school materials, because when they ask their fathers they will refer them to their mothers, as a result they do not go through the trouble of asking their fathers anymore.

Since my elder sister dropped out secondary school some time ago, my father has refused to have anything to do with us the girls (his other daughters) school needs, he says he does not want to 'waste his money on girl's education. It is my mother who has been trying to provide our school needs (Ajara a 15 year old JHS girl at Nayoku).

3.3.3. Sharing Children's Responsibilities and the Consequences

Gendered pattern of sharing children's responsibilities coupled with poverty and girls' quest to pursue education takes them a very dangerous and risky journey 'kayayo' which leave them very vulnerable. Now the kind of work engaged in by these girls who embark on the 'kayayo' is by carrying back-breaking loads of shoppers (as described above) to their various destination. This seems to be a common phenomenon in the two communities visited for data collection. The reason cited by mothers in focus groups and teachers was that aside the fact that school fees has been abolished, there are other school materials that children need such as uniforms, books, shoes for school among others and when these needs are not provided, then the girls themselves find ways to cater for such needs. The argument that poverty affects girls more in poor families (Stromquist 1999:25 and UNICEF 2004:26) is being affirmed in this kayayo situation. This is because families' inability to provide their school needs leads some of them to embark on this kayayo journey which turns out to have painful consequence leaving them vulnerable.

During data collection with parents it became clear that some mothers encourage their older daughters to embark on the 'kayayo' journey during school vacation in order to acquire money for school expenses. In a revealing way, one of the mothers in the discussion group shared her story about how she had encouraged her older daughter (15years of age) who was in JHS 2, because she was having financial difficulties in taking care of her other children (5 children), according to her she had to borrow money for to travel to the capital city (Accra), with the hope that her daughter will return with enough money to pay back the loan. To her disappointment, her daughter returned after six

months, by which time school work had proceeded and since her daughter could not catch up, she decided not go back to school again. As disturbing as this story may sound, it is the reality of the girls in these communities visited, to further interrogate the question asked I as a researcher was why did the mother not travel to work for the money herself and the answer given was that, as a married woman, it was not allowed for her to leave her marital home and her children to unknown place without her husband's permission. Ironically, these mothers can allow their daughters to go to unknown spaces without them being worried about their safety and general wellbeing, this is what poverty has reduced parents to.

The downside of this 'kayayo' is the girls while some of them travel in groups and most often with a 'kayayo' returnee others travel to the city without knowing anybody. The situation in the cities puts them in a precarious accommodation predicament for them, since without money to rent proper or decent place to live they the options available to them has been categorised into four types of accommodation arrangements for 'kayayo' by Appiah-Yeboah and Yeboah (2009:3). According to them the first are those who share rented kiosks and contribute for the payment of the rent, the second consist of those who live as squatters in un-completed buildings in and round the cities especially around the markets where they ply their trade, the third are those they term "vulnerable" are those who sleep in front of stores or on city pavements during the night and the last are those who live with relatives or kinsmen in the city if they have any (Appiah-Yeboah and Yeboah 2009:3) A 15 year old 'kayayo' returnee who was in one of the communities shared her story of living conditions and the whole experience of kayayo. In narrating her experience, she said, she decided to leave for the city of Accra to engage in 'kayayo' because of her need for school material such as books, school uniform and since she was approaching JHS 3 to get money to pay her impending examination fee, this decision was also influenced by the fact that she had seen girls travel to the cities and re-turn with

“so many nice things so I thought if I also travel to the big city and carry load like those girls from my village, I will be able to buy my needs. When I arrived in the city I was fortunate to have met some girl's carrying load who introduced me to the work and after the day's work we went to sleep in kiosk that was located in the market where we worked. We were about 5 girls sleeping in the kiosk and then one night as we were sleeping, some robbers (2) broke into the kiosk and stole our monies, while some of the girls managed to escape two of us were not lucky to escape. They raped us and took all our savings away. After a month I started falling sick and when I did not see my period, I talk with one of the older girls and they told me it may be that an pregnant, she took me to a clinic and after checking my urine they told me I was really pregnant. When my stomach was becoming and I could not carry load as I used to, I decided to come home”. (Munira, a pregnant kayayo returnee at Nakyoku)

This narration can shed some light on the situation girls who travel for kayayo come up against, it also presents the reality of the girls who leave school to travel in search for school items that families are not able to provide. The struggle against poverty and patriarchal decision making takes these girls on a quest to achieve something for themselves. Even though typically under this patriarchal controlled societies like this one will under normal circumstances

not allow children to just wander off to unknown spaces, it must however be stated that because their strict decision making puts the female at a disadvantage, female children have also devised this 'kayayo' as a survivalist strategy. Interactions with mothers indicated that their husbands (who are head of families) decide by themselves which child to support (usually the male child) and that when such a decision is made you as a wife have absolutely no objection because any sign of objection will be interpreted as being disrespectful to your husband. This unchallenged decision making of supporting children coupled with the fact that these women are not adequately financial stable to support their girls' leads girls to abandon school to embark on the journey of 'kayayo' to help support themselves.

3.3.4. Social norms and its implication on retention of girls

There is common practice that was encountered during data collection which equally has implications for rate of retention for girls in schools. This practice according to the teacher's interview has to do with girls acquiring kitchen-ware and other possessions for marriage. They mentioned that when a girl is to marry it is the responsibility of her parents especially the mother to buy these kitchenware and other things for the girl. However, difficult financial situations makes the mothers unable to start buying the items in stock for the girls. As a researcher and as I person from a different social upbringing I was taken aback by this discovery. Upon further inquiry through discussions with parents, I was informed that the preparation for marriage needs to start when the girls start developing 'breast and see their first menstruation'¹¹ (which is usually from 12years upwards), consequently from this stage preparations begin to get them ready whether they are in school or not. Now what makes this important for this research is the fact that, the age range considered for this research falls within what communities consider to be within the 'marriageable age'. It became evident that during this stage the girls are oriented towards getting married and this idea of getting married serves as push factor for some of them to leave their communities for the cities for 'kayayo' in an effort to acquire these materials needed to get married. In an interview with a teachers during data collection, she was of the opinion that the 'getting married orientation' at home giving by mothers had a great influence on the girls leaving school for kayayo and in her words she opined that;

“The problem is that sometimes mothers encourage their daughters to for the kayayo in order to acquire items in preparation for marriage. These items are in real terms supposed to be provided by their mothers when getting married, so when the girls start developing they begin to put these ideas into their heads which leads them to drop out to pursue the kayayo and in the end miss out on education” (Madam Fauzia a female teacher at Nayoku) .

Even though the girls who were involved for research did not disclose their involvement in the 'kayayo' journey citing the reason that some of them were in a club organised by an NGO in their communities during holidays, they however shared stories of their classmates who had left for kayayo citing the acquisition of items for marriage. Interestingly, the male respondents (school

¹¹ This is the period of adolescences and when the girls begin their teenage years

boys) when asked if they as boys think about getting married soon, looked at me as if I was 'crazy' for asking them such as question, judging from their reaction to my question, it occurred to be that boys and girls are oriented differently. Whiles girls are oriented by their mothers to think of marriage and even prepare for it by acquiring items through 'kayayo', boys on the other hand are not. This by implication means places these girls at a vulnerable position based on their gender, age and the norms and practices from the communities they come from.

Deducing from these discussions, acquiring these kitchen is one of the reasons for the girls leaving school to embark on the 'kayayo' journey. This reason for 'kayayo' was also encountered by Peter DiCampo¹² in his photographic documentation of the 'kayayo' in Ghana in 2010 when he embarked on a project focused on 'kayayo' titled *Ghana's Market Girls the Kayayo*. In his interactions and photographic presentations revealed that the some kayayo mostly from the northern region of Ghana travelled for the kayayo solely to acquire kitchenware in order to marry, he particularly followed the life of one of the girls who has embarked on the kayayo journey to acquire the kitchen-ware for marriage and after being successful in purchasing them she went on to marry. It will be right for anyone to wonder why girls at these young age instead of concentrating on school, will be thinking about items for marriage, this is as a result of the orientation received at home.

In similar case, Wynd (1999: 114) writing on Education, Schooling and Fertility in Niger found out that, among the Hausa in rural Niger where women are 'secluded and forbidden' to sell in the market, the responsibility falls on their daughters especially the older ones to engage in economic activities for their mothers out-side the home and that the proceeds from such activities even though it is used to supplement household food and it is also to buy kitchenware for the girls future marriage. This practice according to Wynd (1999:114) affects the enrolment and especially retention of girls as they grow older. Whereas the case presented here by Wynd (Ibid) does not involve the girls traveling to big cities alone to acquire these items, it still has the element of withdrawing girls from school to hawk items in order to purchase kitchenware in preparation of girls at early ages for marriage which in the long run has an effect on them receiving education. It deprives them of the right to education which has been recognised to have the long term effect of reducing poverty.

Additionally, it is also a common practice to betroth girls at tender ages and the arrangement usually involves the supposed husband's family taken responsibility of the girl until she is ready for marriage. So when the girl starts developing physically, the men come forward to either marry them or those who are not able to afford the process of marriage impregnates them. The explanation to the impregnation is that once a girl is pregnant she must automatically be sent to the home of the man or boy who is responsible for it (this explanation is linked to the patrilineal system). In buttressing this point one of the teachers interviewed narrated an incident of a girl who the teachers thought had been abducted by a boy (apparently a common practice) but to the surprise

¹² Peter DiCampo received funding in 2010 from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting

there had been an arranged marriage for the girl and the supposed husband had come to take her away;

“We realized that she had stopped coming to school amid rumours that she had been abducted by a young man..., so we decided to check up on her at home to find out if the rumours were true. To our dismay they parents told us that she had been married to that particular young and that she had been sent to live with her husband. They also added that she was expecting the young man’s baby that this way why the marriage was facilitate so fast. Even though the case was referred to the district girl-child education office, there was nothing they could do”. (Mr. Issah male JHS Head teacher at Nayoku)

Even though the Children’s Act (1998) of Ghana is very clear on arranged marriages of children and betrothal, it states categorically clear that;

“No person shall force a child... (a) to be betrothed, (b) to be the subject of a dowry transaction; or to be married and that the minimum age of marriage of whatever kind shall be eighteen years” (Children’s Act 1998:9).

The Act stipulates that going contrary to this shall be punishable by law, even as this is stated beautifully no one is seeing to it that it is implemented and enforced as some many children especially girls are withdrawn from school and married off below the mini-mum age of marriage. The family that is ‘sup-posed to be the first unit to provide the protection needed for children is rather giving them up for marriage at very tender ages. This issue of giving girls up for marriage at this early age has been linked with poverty and that poverty serves as a major reason and result (Otoo-Oyortey and Pobi 2003:11) of early marriage especially in poor societies. Additionally, (Otoo-Oyortey and Pobi 2003:43) have reiterated in same article¹³ above that arrangements made in these early marriages for girls are to be respected due to social norms that requires them to and that these decisions are made on behalf of the girls by their fathers without question.

As tool of analysis Scott’s (1986) gender definitional levels, that is the level of institution and organization, which involves the practices and power relations at play at the family level has a great influence in whether girls are retained or not. Evidently fathers were the major decision making members in the family in the communities visited for the study and it became clear that the enormous power welded by father’s means that decisions in the family is unchallenged. In effect the decision to give girls up for marriage and which child to support in school solely lies with the father and this unequal decision making powers of fathers seems to disadvantage girls. By implication the moment one is born into the female gender then the disadvantages associated with being a female especially in this part of the country becomes inescapable. In a reflective mood, I find the information associated with girls low retention in this part of the country very different from what am used to, growing up in my family both parents were responsible for all children, meaning irrespective of a child’s gender you could ask any parent for whatever needs you may have, but then again what happens in families are not universal. Instead of the family providing an equal opportunity for both boys and girls to thrive and receive education, it is rather discriminatory environment where the girl has odds against her.

¹³ Early Marriage: Exploring the links for Policy and Programme Development

3.3.5. Educating the Boy or the Girl

It became evident from the data gathered that in analysing the low retention of girls, it must be noted much value is placed on educating boys in this part of the country than girls. Apparently it can be deduced from responses that a family will rather educate a boy instead of the girl, partly because of the deep rooted traditional perception that it is 'useless' in educating the girl because she will eventually end up getting married and that when she gets married, she belongs to the husband's family, so in the long run her father's household does not benefit directly meaning she will not contribute any income whatsoever in her father's family but educating the boy has direct benefits in the fathers household. This is typical in patrilineal societies, where sons are attributed with carrying the name of the family (Sen and Seth 2005:61) coupled with the fact that in societies like this one where patriarchy which is a cultural norm deeply entrenched and poverty is also a case of contention¹⁴, girls education does not seem to take precedence (Moletsane and Manuh 1999:86). In an interview with the northern regional girl child education officer, she also affirmed the fact that investing boy's education is usually the priority as the children move higher in education and the cost involved also become higher. It becomes clear from the above that in the mist of little resources then the best option will definitely be to look to support the child that in their calculations will produce the best dividend, which in case is the boy coupled with long standing cultural perceptions.

Again it appeared that perhaps educating the boy improves the social standing of families in these communities and for that matter priority is given to them. It can even be seen in the manner in which the responsibility of the children are shared among parents, with the boy's responsibility being borne by fathers who are better placed to support in the provision of school materials than the mothers who are oftentimes housewives and find it difficult to support the girls. But then again supporting children through school takes the collaborative efforts of both parents, this seems not to be the case in these areas.

During discussion with parents especially fathers, it became evident that disappointments suffered in educating girl children had affected their decision about supporting girl children in school. Some of them recounted incidence where their girls had gotten pregnant and left school. It could be felt from the parents during the discussions that they were very 'bitter and disappointed' in girls for their failure to pursue education. A community leader interviewed in one of the communities visited shared a story of a man in the community who had vowed never to 'waste his money on any of his girls' because apparently his attempt at educating his first born daughter had ended with the girl being pregnant which ended her education. This reserve albeit strong can be said to be an excuse to find reason not invest in the girl child, because the mistake of one child (in a particular gender) should not be visited on all other children in the same gender.

The issue of contention here is not about girls getting pregnant and dropping out, it is about the fact that educating the girl does not seem to yield

¹⁴ Emphasis mine

the expected result, maybe deep rooted traditional stereotypes plays a role in explaining why girls in this part of the country continue to suffer disadvantages in education, because after all boys are not immune to dropping out of school even though they do not get pregnant as a result of their biological make up, but parents/families are not discouraged from continuing to support them. It is palpable to say that boys are given priority when the decision has to be made in terms of education. This is situation as asserted by (Agbemabiese-Grooms 2011:21) where deep rooted social norms gives favours boy's education, it underpins patriarchal ideas that obstruct girl's educational prospects. In an effort to source out which child is preferred¹⁵ in terms of education to affirm or disprove my suspicion during interactions with respondents, I inquired from parents and the school children which child will be chosen to go to school during financial difficulties. Unsurprisingly, the preference was for boys especially among the fathers and even among the school girls interacted with, the reason cited for this was that according to them, was that there was the tendency for girls due to their biological make up to get pregnant and leave school. One of the father's remarked that 'a girl no matter one invests in the education a daughter she has to be married off at point and when that happens it is her husband's family that benefits from her education'. In a similar vein, one of the girls interacted with shared that she knows that in her family irrespective of the financial situation her father will definitely support her brothers to go to school and that currently it was only her mother who was taking care of her and her other sisters (3 younger sisters), she went on further to explain that, ever since her elder sister left school at the senior high school level due to pregnancy, her father has resolved 'never to suffer to support any of his girl children again'.

However, there were a few of the parents spoken to who were not deterred by the disappointment meted out to them by their girl children who dropped out of school, one father shared the story of his daughters who got pregnant and dropped out of school but he says;

“Am only hoping the little once still in primary school will not follow in the footsteps of their elder sisters by getting pregnant..... but will be able to make something of themselves through education” (Yaw Sayibu, Parent at Wungu).

The issue boils down to the fact that communities do not clearly place much value in educating the girl and when asked which child will be educated in times of financial difficulties, the answer was obviously the boy child. The reason cited was the fact that girls will usually drop out due to pregnancies and for that matter it will be useful to invest in the boy who most often than not are able to pursue education. Nevertheless the decision to educate which child surely lies with the dominant parent since power relations are at play in every human situation, what became evident from the interaction with respondents revealed that fathers hold the up-per hand in making decisions in families and this in no doubt is at the peril of the girl since clearly children are not treated equally at the household levels with priority being given to boys.

¹⁵ The intention here was not to incite any child preference but it was an effort to try to find out choices with a gender dimension in times of financial difficulties and its implication on the retention of girls education.

To sum up, the long standing gendered division of labour where girls are confined to do all the domestic at home clearly has an effect on their retention in school. The enormous domestic workload sometimes conflicted with their extended school obligation ending in undone homework, which evidently is proving to be a disincentive for girls in their quest to pursue education. While the domestic workload has not been the only deterrent for complete withdrawal from school, it is the interaction with the pattern of sharing children's responsibilities based gender, whereby fathers solely decide to support boy children in school, while girl children are supported by their mothers with the recognition of the financial situation of women in these communities. The resultant effect if these interactions is the 'kayayo' journey that girls embark on in an effort to find the means to support themselves, which takes them on quest with dire consequences on their retention in school.

Again, girls have to battle with societies expectations of them preparing for marriage at this age when they are supposed to be. This form of preparation involves acquiring full set of kitchenware before marriage which in actual fact is supposed to be provided by parents (mothers), however in the mist of their inability to provide these necessary some girls are encouraged by their mothers to go in search of non-existing jobs in big cities while some decide on own albeit with a some influence from societal expectations. The practice of giving girls up in marriage at an early age was equally issue that weighs down their retention and denies them a right to education. These practices inter-acted with family preference to educate boys in times of little financial resources.

Chapter 4

Summary Conclusion and the Way Forward

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this research was to establish gender relations at the family level and how it affected the retention of girls in schools in the Northern region of Ghana. The study explored how gendered division of labour, deep rooted social norms and practices and family decision making in sharing children's responsibilities influences and affect girls retention. This concluding chapter brings together the issues arising from the research into a conclusion from the perspective of the research questions.

4.2. Gender roles and girls retention

Gender roles ascribed to men and women goes a long way to influence how they each organise themselves in society. These roles shapes and works to position individuals as well as perceived identities. This research established how girls in accordance to what has been ascribed to them in the form of domestic duties goes a long way to affect their retention in school. It became evident through this study that girls are enormously burdened with domestic workload such that it interfered with their ability to perform academic activities and in the process led to punishment from teachers, this inadvertently serves a 'push factor' for leaving school. The nature of the domestic workload performed by girls as revealed by the study starts in the morning before and after school, this routine of workload usually leaves 'little time' for them to attend to their academic work such as homework, while their male counterparts according to the findings have ample time on their hands to attend to their academic needs. By implication the skewed domestic workload performed by girl's places them at a disadvantage in accessing education especially considering the age group (14 to 17 years) of the girls used in this study.

In addition, gender roles associated with girls was in apparent preparation for their future roles as wives. This is significant for this study because of the age group of girls used in this research fall within the age that they are 'supposedly' prepared for marriage. What makes this worthy of note and analysis in this research is the fact that according to norms and practices of the people in the study area, a girl requires certain items to be fully prepared aside the learning to perform domestic duties. The purchase of these items is supposed to be provided by parents (mothers), however in the face of financial constraints where mothers are not able to afford the purchase of these items; the research unveiled that while some mothers encouraged their daughters to travel to cities to work as 'kayayo in an effort to get money to purchase these items, some girls make the decision by themselves to embark on the journey to get acquire these items. The eventual consequence of this kayayo is that girls abandon school.

From the forgone, it becomes obvious that discourse on gender as level of subjective identity produced through social norms and practices by Scott (1986) which actually defines men and women in their respective gender is ap-

parently at play here. The identity of being a girl with its associated roles and duties constructed through social norms and practices greatly influences girls perception of themselves and therefore they act in accordingly. Here it will suffice to say that being born a girl intersects with financial constraints couple with social norms and practices to position girls at a disadvantage to be retained in school to receive an important right to education. It also presents a intricate interaction of relations (Unterhalter 2007:7) which mutually intersects to rob girls of education

4.3. Male dominance in decision making and girl's retention

The study revealed in a quite interesting way decisions made in the support of children in the study area. Apparently, in the communities visited for the data collection, each parent was responsible for the child that fell within their respective gender and this decision is done by fathers. The research established that fathers were responsible for the boy children in a family while mothers took care of the needs of the girls. It also brought to bear that this had an effect on girl's retention as it became clear through interactions that financial resources was skewed in favour of fathers placing huge responsibilities on mothers who are mostly housewives. Even though through policies in Ghana basic education is free, the buying of school materials such as books and uniforms are supposed to be borne by parents which in this specific case becomes difficult for mothers, the result of the financial difficulties sometimes makes girls to drop out. In effect the strategies adopted by girls in these communities is to travel to cities to engage in 'kayayo' in order to acquire these school needs. The situation faced in the cities makes them vulnerable and exposed to danger, also the nature of the jobs done does not yield enough to buy items needed and transport themselves back to their communities in time to continue with academic work, thereby making them to drop out or even fail to return back home.

Again, the research encountered the practice where young girls irrespective of whether they are in school or not are married off and according to the findings girls are usually betrothed at early ages, so when they begin to develop into young women then they are married to their respective suitors. This became significant for this research because it was revealed girls (within the age group considered for the study) dropped out to be married off. It was discovered that the decision to marry off daughters is taken by fathers, in other words, it is fathers who give their girls in marriage, this conforms to a pattern of decision making typical of patriarchal societies. It also goes without saying that in such a society where patriarchy is deeply imbedded in cultural norms, educating the girl's child does not seem to a priority (Moletsane and Manuh 1999:86).

The study equally observed that male children were preferred to be educated instead of female children. This male preference perhaps influenced the decision in sharing the responsibility of children with fathers who are financially endowed opting to support male children in an effort not 'waste their resources' on girl children who according to them may get pregnant and drop out. This perception by fathers affirms Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011:21) assertion that patriarchal notions that supports boy's education impede girl's educational chances.

The arguments from the research findings clearly brings to the fore gender power relations at play in the family between parents tilting enormous power balance in favour of the male as is characteristic in patriarchal settings with the dominant gender wielding so much power that it remains unchallenged; which transcends onto girl children with the interaction of insufficient re-sources weaves in to systematically deny the a crucial and an all-important right to education.

Conclusion

This research has provided a lens into the persistent problems associated with girl's educational participation in the northern region of Ghana. The interactions with parents, girls themselves, teachers and other stakeholders has shed light on the issues that has persistently placed them at a disadvantage in education. It also explored the coping strategies that girls have adopted in responds to factors such as poverty and patriarchal decision making coupled with deep rooted social norms and practices at the family level with their resultant interactions that battle against them in their quest to pursue education. However, these coping strategies which sees them traveling to cities to engage in *kayayo* is having dire consequences on their educational participation. The findings indicate that for the problem of girl's education to end, then programmes targeted at intervening needs to be geared towards intensive sensitisation of parents to change their mind sets and to recognise that educating children is an exclusive right. This has become necessary because from all indications, the problem with girls education is proving to be associated with the issue of perceptions. There seems to be no appreciation of the enormous benefits related with educating the girl child and its trickle-down effects on poverty especially in rural areas. Again, programmes interventions should be geared towards helping poor families in income generating activities that may result in more children being supported in schools for long term benefits.

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Appendix 1

Retention Calculation (in percentages). All enrolment and completion figures are drawn from the EMIS reports from the years mentioned here respectively.

Formula for calculation is $\text{completion} \div \text{enrolment} \times 100$

2008/2009

Girls

Enrolment-19042

Completion-10530

Therefore: $10530 \div 19042 \times 100 = 55.2\%$

=retention for girls is 55.2%

Boys

Enrolment-25562

Completion-16267

Therefore: $16267 \div 25562 \times 100 = 63.6\%$

=retention is 63.6%

2009/2010

Girls

Enrolment-24285

Completion-9945

Therefore: $9945 \div 24285 \times 100 = 40.9\%$

=retention is 40.9%

Boys

Enrolment-34512

Completion-15071

Therefore: $15071 \div 34512 \times 100 = 43.6\%$

-retention is 43.6%

2010/2011

Girls

Enrolment-26761

Completion-11469

Therefore: $11469 \div 26761 \times 100 = 42.9\%$

=retention is 42.9%

Boys

Enrolment-36248

Completion-17137

Therefore: $17137 \div 36248 \times 100 = 47.3\%$

=retention is 47.3%

2011/2012

Girls

Enrolment-28184

Completion-12472

Therefore: $12472 \div 28184 * 100 = 44.3\%$

=retention is 44.3%

Boys

Enrolment-37783

Completion-17785

Therefore: $17785 \div 37783 * 100 = 47.1\%$

=retention is 47.1%

2012/2013

Girls

Enrolment-29250

Completion-13548

Therefore: $13548 \div 29250 * 100 = 46.3\%$

=retention is 46.3

Boys

Enrolment-40203

Completion-19092

Therefore: $19092 \div 40203 * 100 = 47.5\%$

=retention is 47.5%