



Perspectives of Head Teachers on Girls Exclusion in Education in Northern 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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List of Acronyms

CamFed	Campaign for Female Education
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfers
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FFE	Food for Education
GH¢	Ghana Cedis
GNHR	Ghana National Household Registry
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GSFP	Ghana School Feeding Programme
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
MOGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PWD	Persons living with a disability
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
TVET	Technical and Vocational Educational Training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

Abstract

This study explores this issue of exclusion of girls in Ghana, with reference to the problem of low completion rates and high dropout rates among girls in basic education. Education of children most especially the girls is of primary concern in contemporary Ghana, a concern shared among the highest government levels, district-level assemblies, and parents. As a result, significant financial resources are annually allocated for educational development. Regardless of this, many young girls in the Northern region most especially those from the rural communities drop out due to several reasons. Various studies have approached the problem from the students' and the parent's perspectives, the point of view of head teachers have been left out from most of the argument put forward and this has pose a challenge to understand why students dropped out. We asked why has the problem of girls exclusion from education persisted despite above interventions by the government?, what roles do head teachers plays in curbing or contributing to the high rate of school dropouts among girls in the Tamale metropolis?, and what are the limits of the government's policy response in tackling the exclusion of girls in education. These questions were dealt with through the interview session with 16 head teachers from both primary and junior secondary schools, which are the foundation of basic education in Ghana. The findings show that the household factors remain the most dominant followed by the economic, and then societal factors that contributes to girls dropping out of school before completing their education. Nevertheless, these factors do interact with each other because the girls don't drop out of school because of a single reason; rather they drop out from school as a result of combined effect of multiple factors. It was also revealed that the head teachers are also complicit in pushing the girls out of school as much as they play significant roles in retention rate in school. Unfortunately, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer program and Ghana school feeding pro-gram (GSFP) Initiated by Ghana government to attract and retain girls to school has only managed to attract students, but many did not complete their studies.

Relevance to Development Studies

Women and girls' education occupy a significant space in the development discourse of the twentieth century. Girls' education has become a predictor for some development indicators such as infant mortality, national fertility rates, family income and productivity. Despite the strides achieved in enrolment rates in almost all developing countries, the exclusion of girls in education remains to be a problem. This study departs from previous approaches that focus on the government and parents as a source of information adopted to identify the problem of girls dropping out from school. Rather, the study focuses on head teachers that interact with these children.

Keywords

Head teacher, Exclusion, Girls, Education, Dropout.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Background to the Research Problem

Women and girls' education occupy a significant space in the development discourse of the twentieth century. Girls' education has become a predictor for some development indicators such as infant mortality, national fertility rates, family income and productivity (Amadi et al., 2013:124). Literate women are more productive, able to improve their opportunities and obtain higher status and better-paid jobs than non-literate women (Unterhalter, 2005; Klasen, 2002). Despite the strides achieved in enrolment rates in almost all developing countries, the exclusion of girls in education remains to be a problem. This study explores this issue in Ghana, concerning the problem of low completion rates and high dropout rates among girls in primary education. In Ghana, there is an apparent disparity in the completion rate between the boys and girls in Ghana (UNESCO, 2012:12). According to UNICEF, 27% of girls dropped out of school in Ghana in 2015 (UNICEF-Ghana, 2015:1). Statistics released by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and the United Nations of Ghana indicate a completion rate of 89.3% for boys and 84.3 % for girls (Nordensvard, 2012:278). However, the national averages mask differences at the regional level. For example, a report by UNICEF in Ghana suggests that in the Northern region, only 78.7% of girls complete primary school, while 92.4% of boys do so. (UNICEF-Ghana, 2015: n.p). Moreover, girls in this region are most likely to drop out of school before transiting into the next level of education¹, junior high school, and senior high school (CamFed-Ghana, 2012:11 UNDP-Ghana, 2012).

Education of children most especially the girls is of primary concern in contemporary Ghana, a concern shared within the rank and file of the highest government levels, district-level assemblies, and parents (Akyeampong, 2014: 218). As a result, significant financial resources are annually allocated for educational development. In 2015, 30% of the total national budget was allocated to Ministry of Education (Afful, 2015 no page). Resources assigned to the education sector has increased from GH¢1.7 billion (\$428,000) in 2010 to GH¢6.7 billion (\$1.7 million) in 2015. (Send West Africa, 2015:n.p). In recognition of the significance of education to poverty eradication, the government of Ghana has implemented some programmes supporting the aim providing universal basic education. Under the Ghana Highly Indebted Poverty Reduction (HIPC) and Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy I&II (GPRS 2003), a number of projects were implemented such as; introducing girl child education in the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) of 1995, free textbook scheme, capitation grant scheme and free sanitary pads. Also, some NGOs contribute to the education of girls particularly in Northern Ghana through payment of examination fees, school bags, bicycles and supply of required textbooks among others initiatives were efforts made “at ensuring school re-

¹ Basic education is compulsory in Ghana. It is constituted by two years of kindergarten, six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education

tention rate for girls, at all educational levels” is retained (Braimah and Oduro-Ofori 2005:68).

Why has the problem of girls exclusion from education persisted despite above interventions by the government? Many young girls in the Northern region most especially those from the rural communities drop out due to several reasons. Available data suggest that poverty which has been advance as the dominant factor is not always responsible for low school completion rate. For example, Greater Accra and Central regions have low primary school completion rate despite having the lowest poverty incidence (CamFed-Ghana, 2012:11). Some observers attribute high levels of ignorance of the significance of education to be the primary cause for high rates of girls’ school dropout. However, based on the increased sensitization of the value of education in the country, this factor could not be sole to blame. Therefore, it is anticipated that there could be other factors contributing to high school dropout for primary girls in Tamale metropolis. To explore these factors, this study attempts to ascertain the reasons for high rate of girls’ dropout from school from the head teacher’s perspective

As both a teacher and a head teacher for the past 23 years, I have witnessed many government projects and programmes all in the effort to retain young girls in schools that have failed in keeping girls in school. Clearly, there is something missing from the approaches that have been adopted by state and non-state actors, and that is what this study wants to investigate. This study departs from previous approaches that focus on the government and parents as a source of information adopted to identify the problem of girls dropping out from school. Rather, the study focuses on head teachers that interact with these children. It is important to consider the head teachers perspective because they are closer to the students by playing various roles in making sure that students accomplish academic goals through the completion of their studies. This role includes but not limited to guidance and counselling, motivation, administration of discipline to students, and the supervision of teaching and learning processes to curbing dropouts (Mwangi, 2014:15-22). Hence, incorporating their views will contribute significantly to the understanding of why girl’s dropout rate is higher than that of boys in primary and junior secondary school.

Although, various studies have approached the problem from the students’ and the parent's perspectives, the point of view of head teachers have been left out from most of the argument put forward and this has pose a challenge to understand why students dropped out (Knesting-Lund et al., 2013:60). Knesting-Lund et al. (2013:61) maintain that, “teachers did not only possess the potential to persuade students to complete their studies but also, can significantly influence the students to thrive in the academic environment.” While studies have been carried out to understand the perspective of head teachers in other countries on the factors responsible for high dropout rate in other countries such as Kenya for example, little has been done to repeat such studies in Ghana, in particular, the Northern region where the dropout rate is high in comparison to the national average.

1.2. Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspective of head teachers on the possible causes and solution to tackle the problem of girls low completion rates in school. Also, the study will assess the policy implications of rampant girl school drop outs in Tamale Metropolis. By investigating the underlying causes of girls' school dropout in basic education from the head teacher's perspectives, it will help us to assess the effectiveness of the existing strategies adopted by various actors to mitigate the problem of school dropout among girls. In particular, the role the teachers played if any, in the formulation of such strategies to combat school dropout in Tamale metropolis.

1.3. Research Questions

Main Question

What are the perspectives of head teachers on the reasons for and the possible solutions to tackle the problem of dropout?

Sub-Questions

1. Why have dropout rates for girls in Ghana been higher than that for boys, despite the resources provided by the government to provide universal education for all?
2. What roles do head teachers play in curbing or contributing to the high rate of school dropouts among girls in the Tamale metropolis?
3. What are the limits of the government's policy response in tackling the exclusion of girls in education?

1.4. Methodology

This study focuses on Tamale metropolis, the regional capital of the Northern Region of Ghana with the highest dropout rate in the country (UN-Habitat, 2009:9). Telephone interviews with sixteen head teachers from various parts in Tamale will be conducted. The respondents were selected through the use of purposive sampling whereby the selection of a sample is based on a particular purpose (O'Leary, 2014: 191). The sampling approach is suitable when considering the objectives and research questions of this study that focus on the perspectives of the head teachers. I interviewed ten female head teachers and six male head teachers from the total of 366 head teachers in the region, where there are 265 primary schools and 99 secondary schools (Tamale Metropolitan Assembly, 2013). Ten of the teachers interviewed were from the primary schools while the remaining six head teachers were from junior secondary schools. The choice of more female head teachers was influenced by the fact that the way the girls relate to their female head teachers is not the same as they relate to male head teachers as a result of gender-specific issues that can only be addressed by a female mentor. I also explore secondary data, including various government reports, published journal articles by scholars, web-based

sources and second-hand information gathered from different sources and contacts, including informal discussions.

Tamale is a big province with both urban and rural environmental arrangement. Therefore, I decided to balance the sample population by making sure that rural and urban schools head teachers are equally represented with eight respondents each. The questions asked were based on the three research questions, and the least time spent for each interview session was 20 minutes while longest interview session takes 38 minutes. Permission to record the telephone conversation was asked before the start of the interview, twelve of the respondents agreed to be recorded, and their names and schools can be referenced in the text of the study, while the remaining respondents declined permission to record and the use of their names. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and I promised to make their perspective anonymous before the start of the interview.

My experience as a head teacher for the past thirteen years in more than four different schools in Tamale allowed me to have access to the respondents, unpublished data. It is important that I deal with the subjectivity and biases that my personal experience as a head teacher might bring into the research as subjected by O'Leary (2010:114-115). I am aware of the impact such experience might have on the credibility of the outcome of the research; that is why I did not contact any of the head teachers that I have a personal rapport with or those in the three previous schools I use to head. This was done to make sure that respondents did not approach the interview with less seriousness or give answers that they considered as an obligation to do me a favour as a friend. The contacted respondents are those that I have no relationship with and were not aware until after the interview sessions that we share the same position of head teachers. I only revealed my position as a head teacher after all the questions asked have been answered, especially to assure them that I will maintain confidentiality that I promised earlier before the start of the interview sessions.

1.5. Structure of the paper

The study is organized into five chapters with the first chapter serving as the foundation of the study. I have already discussed the background, methodological approach for data collection, research problem and the justification to why it is essential to conduct the study. The chapter also outline the objectives, research question and the specific research questions that aimed at providing understanding to the reason behind the high rate of dropouts among girls in Tamale, Northern Ghana. Chapter two discussed the analytical framework for this study in this chapter I discuss the concept of 'social exclusion and the justification for adopting it as a framework. The discussion of social exclusion and how the girls can be excluded from education is further discuss in the literature review around social, institutional, and economic factors driving drop-out while I explore the role of head teachers in curbing or contributing to the high rates of drop outs. The review of the literature set the foundation to examine government response to the problem in chapter three. In chapter three, Government programmes, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer program and the Ghana school feeding program (GSFP). The choice of analysing the programs was informed by the fact that they represent crucial elements of the government policy to address social exclusion in educa-

tion. Chapter four focuses on the data analysis, arrange along the theme and research questions of this study. The last chapter is the conclusion, where give an overall summary of the study organised around the research questions posed by this study.

Chapter 2 Social Exclusion and the Factors that Exclude Girls from Education

2.1. Introduction

The central argument of this chapter is entrenched in the discussion of the theoretical framework of social exclusion and how it is related to this study. In this chapter, the literature and theoretical explanation of factors that led to the exclusion of girls in education in Ghana. It also provides critical analysis of the process that lead to exclusion of girls in education which is important for early warning in relation to girls at risk of not completing their studies after the initial enrolment. This process is discussed extensively and how it fits into the different typology of dropout, exclusion, and zones of exclusion. The chapter is organized into four sections, section one discuss the concept of social exclusion and its relationship to intended and unintended exclusion of girls from education. The second section briefly give an overview of the literature and on education exclusionary factors that serve as a barrier to girls education and how social exclusion concept help us to have a clearer understanding. The third section presents an argument for the head teachers roles in curbing dropout, this is important because it help us to understand better how and when the exclusion take place.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Social Exclusion

Social exclusion has in the recent years emerged as a contested major social policy in developing countries (Agulnik, 2002). Though there is yet to be a commonly accepted meaning, various scholars describe social exclusion as something to do with the inability to participate in socioeconomic life effectively, and in some features, it involves alienation and distancing from the mainstream society (Matos et al., 2015; Abrams & Killen, 2014; Richardson et al., 2014; Killen et al., 2013). Education is undoubtedly a critical factor that influences a child's development. Education has a tremendous intrinsic importance and as such access to education is a fundamental human right for children (Beiter, 2005: 11). Nonetheless, education can also be attributed to being a source of social exclusion. "This is particularly the case if, for some children, it fails to meet the standard called for in the Convention on the Rights of Children of 'development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.' It can also be exclusionary if the process of education fails to promote equal participation and access" (Klassen, 1999:9). The concept provides a broad understanding of the typology of dropouts and zones of exclusion as it echoes Sen's (2000:14) typology of active and passive exclusion and that of Saith (2001:4) voluntary and non-voluntary exclusion. The notion of dropping out carries dynamics within it that range from a temporary circumstance with the possibility of returning to school to a permanent state (Anaga, 2011:378).

According to a study conducted by Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) in 2010, there are five different types of dropouts. Three of the dropout's categories fall under temporary, and the other two fall under permanent dropouts. For the temporary dropout, we have Sporadic, Event, and Long-term while under the permanent dropout, we have the settled and unsettled. For example, the sporadic dropout represents students that withdraw from school temporarily as a result economic circumstances (Lewin, 2009; CREATE, 2010, Ananga, 2011). For Event dropout, the child dropout from school, as a result, one or more significant events that occur in the children's lives either at home, school or both (Ananga, 2011: 378). Outside school events that can affect a child include the death of one or both parents, migration, and sickness while the school events can include the conflict between a teacher and the child. There are six zones of exclusion as outlined by CREATE that can be used to describe educational access for children of school age (Lewin, 2009: 155-157). However, Zone 2 and 3 speaks directly to the theoretical framework of social exclusion. While Zone 2 comprises of children that enroll but after entry, they dropped out from primary school. This may either be a temporary or permanent dropout from school. Zone 3 is made up of low achievers, irregular attendees, and over age children at the primary level who are 'silently excluded.

Agulnik and Hills (2002: 13) add a new dimension to the concept of social exclusion by describing it as the non-realization of the core human rights to an individual. According to this description, this approach calls for deliberate actions to ensure all persons have equal access to basic human rights. Therefore, the denial of this basic human necessity such as education is what amounts to social exclusion. In the main, the concept is relevant to the understanding of the categories of people excluded such as girls and the places of their exclusion such as schools (Peace, 2001:17 emphasis are mine). Social exclusion just like dropping out of school is caused by an accumulation of various factors. Silver (2007) suggests that social exclusion is an aggregate of a structural process that contributes to the individual or group segregation from enjoying equal benefit as others in the society (Silver, 2007:1). Such societal benefits do not only include access to education but also, an enabling environment that will allow completion of studies

2.3. Factors responsible for Drop Out

There is a multiple of literature that indicates that girls find themselves dropping out of school for a variety of reasons. There is a substantial literature that shows how effective girls can be kept in school until they complete their studies. However, thousands of girls are dropping out of school because of a broad range of reasons. The factors range from cultural, economic, social and many others that exacerbated the exclusion of girls from the educational arrangement. The discussion of these factors is germane to the analytical framework of this study for many reasons. First, when it comes to the debate about the issue of social exclusion of children in the society, the usual first point of entry is to link the social exclusion to the existing economic opportunities in the households or families the children grow up in (Klassen, 1999:10). Besides, "the social exclusion of girls perpetuates poverty at the individual and household levels by denying them access to education, services, resources, decision-

making, and markets” (Hallman and Roca, 2007). Secondly, addressing the problem of social exclusion is not limited to the eradication of poverty: it requires dealing with the issue of social exclusion from a broader perspective (Atkinson & Marlier, 2010:7). For example, girls encounter exclusion from education on numerous grounds, whether it is deliberate (as a result of discrimination or traditional practices) or unintended (want to shelter girls from threat, or protect their chastity), the end result still remain the same: “girls’ lives are in every way more limited than those of boys” (Hallman and Roca, 2007). It is apparent that regardless of whatever factor that led to the exclusion, the consequences regarding education for the girls are real and undesirable (Lockheed, 2008, 116). It suffices to say that, there are a plethora of scholarships that have established the linkage between exclusion among children, girls in particular and the social and economic situation of the parents on academic achievement. Therefore, in the sections that follow, I shall discuss briefly some of the factors that contribute to the high rate of girls’ dropout

2.3.1. Cultural factors

Some scholars blame culture and gender discrimination as chief reasons why some girls drop out of school before completing their study course. Some girls drop out of school because their societies expect them to get married once they attain puberty stage (Wodon et al., 2016:57). The authors claim that such cultures of early marriage assume that regardless of the level of education women can attain, their natural position is in the kitchen and to raise children. Therefore, lots of families from cultures with such perceptions fail to educate their girls on account that they will end up wasting their money on people who will subsequently end up in the kitchen. Such societies ensure that women remain submissive to their husbands by installing some sanctions for any deviant behaviour. A similar study was conducted by Patrick and Ugwu (2013:5805), who observe that cultural practices are not favourable in regards to motivating girls to continue with educational studies. The authors cite the Ogoni ethnic group of Nigeria as an example of a community with unfavourable cultural practices for girls. In the Ogoni community, girls are encouraged to live a promiscuous lifestyle that as a result does not make them continue with their studies. Engaging in a promiscuous lifestyle ensures that the girls spend most of their free time practising sex, which subsequently makes them develop earlier pregnancies. There is a need for the communities to be educated on the adverse consequences. Certainly, it is clear that cultural practices like that practised by the Ogoni community create uncertainty among the girls by making them consider themselves as sexual rather as potential school materials.

Shahidul & Karim (2015:26) observe that the girls drop out of school because the decisions of their parents to prioritise boys over girls once they are faced with limited resources. They argue that this preference is deep rooted in cultures and traditions of the society discrimination against girls. Therefore, there is a need for a holistic approach to bring the much-needed change in the cultures of discriminations on girls. Earlier marriages have also been blamed by some scholars as contributing to the high numbers of girls discontinuing their studies at an earlier age. Smith et al., (2012) did a study and found out that earlier marriages in some communities contributed significantly to the high cases of girls dropping out of school. Smith et al., (2012) developed a framework that could be used to ensure girls remain in school until they complete their

studies. The authors observed that if mothers could be educated on the importance of education; they could be able to encourage their girls to continue with education until the full course. This observation is similar to the argument of Patrick and Ugwu (2013) in regards to the role of women in educating girls. General discrimination against women has also been attributed to be a major factor that discourages girls from pursuing education. Skjortnes and Zachariassen (2010) showed that regardless of the educational level, the society still discriminates women. The authors observed that societal discrimination has spread into educational circles and are having negative implications on the girls. For instance, the authors noted that some educational fields had been perceived to be for boys and others for girls.

2.3.2. Economic factors

Girls from more affluent families stand a better chance to remain in school than those from poorer families after enrolling in school. “Household income was often correlated with when children started school and how often they attended, whether they temporary withdraw and when and if they dropped out” (Amadi et al., 2013:126). The girls from households that are not financially buoyant are always under increased pressure to discontinue schooling earlier than boys as they become older (ibid). Indirect and directly associated schooling cost is a crucial determinant factor in a child education. Various studies indicate that education costs especially school fees, are a central reason for early dropout from schools (Shahidul & Karim, 2015:26). The high cost of education effect on children is in two phases. First, it pushes a lot of children into the labour market in a quest to make money that will enable them to afford school. Secondly, it can also pull them away from school as they cannot come up with the money for schooling (Canaga-rahaj & Coulombe, 1997 cited in Akyeampong, et al., 2007: xviii). Because of poverty many children in Ghana leave school early to join the labour maker to look for work, girls often drop out of school to migrate out of communities or remain within households, to work (Akyeampong, et al., 2007: xix).

2.3.3. The Role of Head Teachers in Mitigating Against Dropouts

When it comes to student’s retention in school, the head teachers have a significant role to play. The roles vary within an educational settings, the major practical phrase that best describes their roles is that of a leader and a manager in educational scope (Mwangi, 2014:14). However, School is a dynamic arrangement or setting that can either hinder or contribute to the student’s success as there are some school characteristics that do have an effect on the student’s performance. For example, classroom environment and instruction policies and disciplinary procedures, school demographic, administrator and staff professional characteristics (Bridegland et al., 2006). All these school characteristics contribute to the gradual process of student’s disengagement from school. Nevertheless, head teachers are distinctively positioned with the capacity to assess the whole school for the purpose of spotting problems, judging its strengths and weaknesses, identifying the aspect of work that is well-done and those that need attention and improvement (Mwangi, 2014:15). This gives them the opportunity to monitor teacher’s attitudes towards the pupil

and their work which have a massive effect on the educational accomplishment and the retention in school of their students, particularly girls (ibid)

The head teachers in Ghana are saddled with responsibilities to promote or supplement standard classroom instructions. Head teachers are expected to be deeply involved in the orientation, guidance and counselling of the students; this represents a crucial phase of educational management (Ojo & Olaniyan, 2008; Atta et al., 2000). Bridgeland et al., (2006: iv) posits that “attendance patterns are a clear early sign” of a student at risk of dropping out. It is the responsibility of the school leadership (head teachers) to keep tabs on students that failed to attend school, notify their guardians or parents, and take appropriate action to make sure they go to school with maximum support that might be required to remain and complete their education (Bridgeland et al., 2006: 15). Public basic schools in Ghana head teachers are responsible for motivating the pupils to learn, organise their teachers to ensure that the welfare of students is adequately taken care of, and institute disciplinary measures on public and moral issues (Esia-Donkoh, (2014:67). Esia-Donkoh maintained that head teacher are to ensure the school is safe for the students, “put in place measures to avoid physical as-sault (caning, hitting, fighting, etc.), verbal (insults, shouts, intimidation, etc.), and sexual abuses (harassment, aggression, defilement, rape, coercion etc.), and encourage victims of such atrocities to report to the appropriate authorities for redress” (ibid).

It can be argued that the role of the head teacher is the management of the school, influencing the situation and persons, and instructional supervision in the teaching process. Maithy and Saxena observe that the latter stages of primary education coincide with adolescence, which does not only come with some opportunities but also various risky practices. The decisions made by adolescent girls during puberty stage can have a serious consequence to their life in school (Maithy & Saxena, 2008. To ensure girls make appropriate choices while in school, the authors urged the head teachers to offer information, and counsel students on the best way they can behave at puberty stage. If teachers can take steps to understand the root causes of rampant school dropout by girls, they can be able to develop effective strategies to mitigate them (Maithy & Saxena, 2008). According to the authors, the common perception in public is that girls are neglected, and that is why some of them are unable to complete their education process.

2.4. Conclusion

In the conclusion, the theoretical framework of social exclusion offered us a unique understanding of how girls are excluded in the education sector and set the premise in which the exclusion might be addressed. Although, there are different interpretation of social exclusion, the diverse definition, typology, and zone of exclusion should not be allow to camouflage the commonality of exclusionary factors to girls education that I discussed in this chapter. Although, economic status of the households is an essential element of social exclusion, I argued that the social exclusion of girls in education is as a result of multi-factorial relational processes, economic, cultural, economic and so on, that deserved to be considered side-by-side in the process of developing and implementing intervention program to address the exclusion of girls in education. When one looks closely, there is a close relationship between the zone of ex-

clusion and typology of dropout; some might be pushed out of school while others are pulled out from school for various reasons at different stages and level of education. Therefore, to really appreciate the relevance of this theory above, the role of (head teachers) perspective that interact with the students, make decisions on discipline and conformity, first to notice a change in the academic performance of students, absenteeism, and violent behaviors was discussed

Chapter 3 Government's policy response in tackling the exclusion of girls in education

3.1. Introduction

Ghanaian government response to the exclusion of girls in education is deeply entrenched in the policies to tackle poverty as the major source of exclusion of many children most especially the girls. Ghana government emphasis has been on the social protection of the vulnerable and the needy through the initiation of various strategies and establishment of institutions that will follow through the implementation of such policies. As a result of the 2008-2009 global food price, financial and fuel crisis, the Ghana government initiated a National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) with the major social assistance programmes. The notable and prominent ones are the Education Capitalization Grants, School feeding, notably the School Feeding Programme, and the cash transfer programme (Amuzu, 2010:1). This chapter examine the programs and assess its success and failures in addressing the problem of girls dropping out of school. What are the monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place and how far this pro-gram has been able to serve the purpose of tackling exclusion of girls from education? This chapter is divided into three parts; the first part briefly discusses the steps that were taken by the government in tackling exclusion of girls in education, the following two parts of the chapter focus on the cash transfer and school feeding programs.

3.2. Setting the Foundation: The Emergence of Gender Ministry

In response to the exclusion of girls in education, the first step that was taken by the Ghana government was to replace the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWAC) established in 2001 with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP) in 2013. The formation of MOGCSP was the outcome of amalgamating the department of welfare and social protection that use to be under the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare with Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. The mission of the new Ministry is to promote gender equality and equity, the protection, and integration of excluded, vulnerable, and person living with a disability (PWD), facilitate the enforcement of the rights of children in the national development process through suitable strategies and policies with adequate funding. While the MOGCSP is committed to working towards the formulation of gender and children programs that will encourage women empowerment, the Ministry's functions also include advocacy in making sure that orphanages are equipped with adequate facilities, rights of the children are protected, and unregistered orphanages are closed down. Although, there are four programs available on the official websites of the Ministry (1). Ghana National Household Registry (GNHR)/ Targeting Unit, (2) Programmes and Intervention for the aged (GHANA), (3) Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer program and (4) Ghana school feeding pro-gram (GSFP). However, there is no available data for GHANA on the website and the GNHR did not have

any related program to the children. However, the two programs of intervention initiated by the Government under different Ministries before they were amalgamated to one to address the exclusion of children are the LEAP and GSF which I am going to examine in details in the following section.

3.3. LEAP Cash Transfer

LEAP is a social protection programme of the Ghana's government initiated in 2008 to address the poverty of low-income household in the country (Amuzu et al.; UNICEF, 2013; Handa, 2015;). As of 2015, more than 116,000 extremely poor has benefited from the program. According to Handa and others, "the aims of the programme, seeks to ease the effect of poverty on both short-term and long-term." This is done through offering direct cash payments for short-term and provision of health insurance and encouraging school enrollment on a long term. According to Handa et al., (2015:7) The LEAP program targets households that are extremely poor and that have orphan or vulnerable child (OVC), elderly and people with disability. As at the end of 2015 the beneficiary households are entitled to (GH¢) 16 -30 (US\$11-21 going by the exchange rate of and US\$4-7.5 going by 2016 exchange rate and the new Ghanaian cedi emphasis are mine) bi-monthly depending on the number of qualified members of the household members (Handa et al., 2015:8). In theory, while cash transfers to the elders that are poor and people living with disability are unconditional, cash transfer to the households with OVCs based on the following rules. "1) Enrol and retain all school-age children in the family in public basic schools. 2) Beneficiaries must be card bearing members of the NHIS; 3) Register new-born babies (0 -18 months) with the Birth and Deaths Registry and complete the Expanded Programme on Immunisation; 4) Ensure that no child in the household is trafficked or engaged in any activities constituting the worst forms of child labour" (Handa et al., 2015:8).

While the UNICEF reports emphasised that the LEAP cash transfer programme have positive impact on the beneficiaries' households was significant regarding education, food security, health among others which are important factors in the community development and economic growth (UNICEF.2013: 2). On the other hands, independent studies conducted on the LEAP program suggested that the LEAP cash transfer program when look carefully doesn't give the impression to have remarkably restructured the poor household dynamics. "This is in part because the transfer amount is low and does not provide women with any significant financial independence or start-up capital for petty income generation projects" (Amuzu et al., 2010: ix). Amuzu and others argued that the lack of public awareness on gender equality issues most importantly linking the cash transfer to women's caregiving responsibilities did not also help in reinforcing the messages and initiatives at the community level (Amuzu, 2010: ix). Ghana is not the first country to adopt cash transfer to fight poverty, in fact, cash transfer programs has gained momentum as a tool to combat poverty in many developing and developed countries. Even though, there have been anxieties about the extent at which beneficiaries become dependent on the program to sustain the household consumption. Gertler et al. (2012:1) argued that rather than recipients becoming dependent on government assistance, the cash transfer program alleviates low-income family's liquidity constraints by allowing them to engage in productive entrepreneurial

activities. But the primary concern should be if the program addresses the exclusion of girls in Ghana educational arrangement since girls continue to drop out school even though the enrolment rates has increased drastically.

A closer look at the renowned Mexico conditional cash transfer (PROGRESSA or OPORTUNIDADES) gives an insight to the limitation Ghana LEAP cash transfer. The problem is targeting and design the cash transfer can be used to address different social issues. Available evidence suggests that the conditions attached to the Ghana LEAP cash transfers meant for OVC children are not always verified (Handa et al., 2015: 5). Therefore, making the claim of the program meeting basic needs of the poorest families is doubtful when it comes to the issue of educating a girl child. There is no gainsaying that conditional cash transfer has a positive impact on household's ability to invest in the education and health of the children (Benhassine, 2013:2). On the other hand, the problem with LEAP is that there is no mechanism to verify what the money given to the families was used for, therefore making it unconditional cash transfer indirectly (Amuzu, 2010:4). However, under the Mexican PROGRESSA or OPORTUNIDADES, the targeting mechanism was evident, and the conditions were clearly stated with the mechanism to monitor compliance with such conditions. To be qualified for the monthly or bimonthly, the students must be enrolled and meet up with school attendance of at least 80% as the primary minimum (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2008:3). Besides, the CCT was targeted specifically at children of a particular grade range, and cash was transfer to the head of household. This is based on the assumption that mothers allocate better the resources for the well-being of the family (Reimers, 2006:14). On the contrary, the Ghana LEAP project lack verification of meeting conditions for the transfer, not particular about a girl child attending school, therefore leaves the decision of whom to send to school in a situation where the families are presented with a financial choice of sending a boy or a girl to school.

At this juncture, I must stress that the LEAP cash transfer has failed to address the exclusion of girls in education from two perspectives. First, the program only considered orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) with no precise definition of how the vulnerability was measured. In some context, a male child might be more vulnerable and will need the support more than a female. However, a program meant to address a particular gendered ought not to be muddled up with OVC. The vulnerability of poor household's ranges from the economic to the social risk. "Both economic risks (including the economic impact of environmental and natural risks) and social risks are influenced by gender dynamics and may have significant differential impacts on men and women. Because they are socially constructed, gender roles and responsibilities, are highly varied and infused with power relations" (Amuzu, 2010:4). Secondly, the amount of money allocated to the beneficiaries is not in any way near the type of money that can be used for any meaningful entrepreneurship business that will generate enough income to cover the indirect schooling cost and to take care of the whole family. One can argue that offering the poor households to tackle poverty is not even enough to guarantee that the girl child will not be excluded because of poverty ravaging the family. This is because the social sources of vulnerability are fundamental barriers to livelihood and overall well-being sustainability than economic shocks which is the primary focus of the government in designing social protection programs. "At a macro level, social

exclusion and discrimination often inform and are perpetuated by formal policies, legislation, and institutions” (Amuzu, 2010:6).

3.4. Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP)

The Ghana school feeding program is not a new phenomenon to policy makers in various developing countries. The aims and objectives of GSFP are laying the foundation for the children intellectual, emotional, and psycho-social development through the provision of an enabling environment for teaching and learning. “Presently, the school environment is hindered by short-term hunger and malnutrition which can distract children from their lessons. The school feeding programme can be a vehicle for improving the quality of teaching and learning within schools” (GSFP, 2015). The objectives of the GSFP are supported by various studies by revealing that, the government and non-governmental actors in different countries target population that faces chronic poverty and hunger by introducing Food for Education (FFE). The main aim of the FFE program is to stimulate school children enrolment and attendance through the exchange of food for the children (Lawson, 2012; Jomaa et al., 2011). The assumption is that poor households struggling to feed their kids will be left with little or no choice than to send their children to school. At least a meal free of charge is guaranteed for the child if he/she go to school. Figuratively, it means if you want to eat, go to school. There is a consensus backed with empirical evidence that Food for Education FFE programs increases school enrolment, attendance, and performance (Alderman et al., 2013; Ahmed, 2004; Dreze and Kingdon, 2001).

School feeding as suggested by Kristjansson et al. (2007: 2-3) is a program design to address the issue of hunger in children while studying, improve the children mental, physical and psychosocial health status. Although, the program can be designed to address different problems such as academic performance, cognition, and improving micro-nutrients status, how these programs are implemented differ from countries both in the developing and developed nations. In particular, school feeding is very useful in targeting gender objectives, which help in boosting enrolment of girls in school in places where there is limited access to education (Molina and de la Mothe, 2010). Molina and de la Mothe maintained that the program serves as “an incentive for households to send their children to school and ensure that they continue to attend. The provision of food, therefore, alleviates short-term hunger, while supporting the longer-term goals of educational attainment and improved nutrition and health” (Molina and de la Mothe, 2010: 221). Nutritional and health status have powerful effects on a child’s learning because weak health and poor nutrition among school-age children weaken their cognitive development. This can lead to constant class repetition and eventual loss of interest in schooling. Moreover, for the fact that students that are required to perform household chores as part of the cultural upbringing and in some cases walk long distance to school necessitate the need for more nutritious food than other children that are not of school age (Miller del Rosso, 1999: 5)

Unfortunately, the School feeding program initiated by Ghana government to attract and retain girls to school has only managed to attract students, but many did not complete their studies. Despite the fact that the program was designed to ameliorate girl’s deprivation and exclusion in education as a result

of poverty, supported by both international and national governmental and non-governmental actors such as the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). Available statistics on the rate of girls dropping out of school shows that the problem of retaining students in school or enrolment is beyond the narrow poverty narrative path the Ghana government is following. Moreover, the program suffered a serious setback from the non-payment of caterers that cook food for the school children. One could imagine the quality of food that the students were subjected to when those offering the services were not paid. It was not until April 2015 that the government released GH¢82 million (\$20,500) to offset the debt owed GSFP caterers (GSFP, 2015). The beneficiary districts are Tolon, Karaga and the Tamale metropolis in the Northern Region and Afigya Sekyere, Bosomtwe, and Kwabre East in the Ashanti Region. Although the current number of students that are currently benefiting from the scheme are unknown. However, the projection of the expansion of the program to other districts in Ghana with 50,000-100,000 beneficiaries and how they were going to be selected (which is not clear) is a testament to why the program has no impact in addressing high rate of drop out among the girls

3.5. Conclusion

It was evidence from the assessment of the two programs initiated by the Ghana government that the policy makers assume poverty is synonymous to the exclusion of girls in education and once the poverty is taken away, the problem of girl's exclusion will be solved. On the contrary to such assumption, the exclusion of girls in education is not homogenous. Although, it is difficult to disentangle social exclusion and poverty, however, discrimination and exclusion of children goes beyond poverty. Exclusion can occur as a result of a child household proximity to school, or geographical location in terms of where they live (Urban slums, refugee camps, rural or remote areas). It can also occur based on who they are (religious minorities, gender, language, with disabilities), and how they live (chronically ill, in poverty, malnourished). While it has become an acceptable norm to capture the consequences of social exclusion from the poverty lens, it should be noted that designing programs such as LEAP and GSFP should always factor that, there are different forms of barriers which might be obvious, subtle, and tacit for of exclusion.

Chapter 4 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1. Introduction

This chapter sole focus is the presentation and analysis of the data collected for the purpose of this study. The data collection was done through interviews conducted with sixteen head teachers from both primary and junior secondary schools in the Tamale metropolis region in Ghana. The interviews were conducted to gathered views of head teachers on the reasons for and the possible solutions to tackle the problem of dropout. To achieve this, three questions were put forward, one of the questions have already been answered in the last chapter. In the first part of this chapter, I engaged in the analysis around the first questions that seek to understand why have drop-out rates for girls in Ghana been higher than that for boys, despite the resources provided by the government to provide universal education for all?. The second part of the chapter entails the data analysis in line with the research question, what roles do head teachers plays in curbing or contributing to the high rate of school dropouts among girls in the Tamale metropolis?

4.2. Factors Undermining Government Efforts To Tackle the High Rate of Girls Drop out from School

4.2.1. Household Factors

One of the most important factors that influence the ability of a child to cope with the learning process in school is the family structure (Suleman et al., 2012:235-236). A child that is not psychologically stable is at risk of underperforming at school, which can eventually lead to losing interest in schooling. Polygamy is one of such family structure that has harmful influences and effects on mental health of teenagers and adolescents (Hamdan et al., 2009: 756). The polygamous family structure has severe consequences on the child education attainment, con-tributes to juvenile delinquency and rate of dropouts as well as causing the students to have low self-esteem (Al-Krenawi, and Gharai-beh, 2011: 595). This argument was dominant in almost all the head teacher's responses during our conversation; only three of the respondents did not place polygamous family setting at the centre of most challenging factor that they have encountered. Mr. Abukari shared his experience of the negative effect of polygamy on child education. He notes that even though people might be considering poverty as the primary reason a child discontinues schooling in the region but from his experience, father favouritism of one child to the other based on the status of their mothers is his heart is very common. He maintained that the family structure plays a significant role in whether a child drops out of school or not.

“I have witnessed many situations where fathers refused to pay fees, or give money for lunch for a child as a punishment to get back to the rudely and non-submissive mother. I have witnessed many situations where one child

has everything, and the other lacks everything despite the fact that they are from the same family” (Mr. Abubari, primary school Head teacher).

I interrupted him to ask if this father favouritism is gendered biased, but he said that it has nothing to do with gender. The findings of this study revealed that if a child (girl or boy) mother is not in the good book of the father, the child will suffer for everything and not only in education. For example, there were three girls from the same family in Mr. Abukari School, but one always came late to school and did not always attend on Wednesdays and Fridays. Mr. Abukari invited her into his office one day and asked her why she doesn't come to school regularly as her sisters are doing. In his words,

“The student told me that her mother is responsible for her schooling and she has to help her to sell in the markets early in the morning before coming to school. I followed her home to talk to the father; in fact, I don't want to remember such experience again because the father did not show any sign of changing his attitude towards the neglected child” (Mr. Abukari, primary school Head Teacher)

Madam Rose Kipo's perspective resonates with the opinion of Mr. Abukari, on the effect of polygamy family arrangement on girl's completion of school in the region. She notes that although poverty is an issue in dropping out from school, she insisted that many parents use poverty as an excuse to neglect the child of the un-favoured wives which are usually the senior's ones. She was of the opinion that, on several occasions, the fathers that claimed they don't have money to spend on the associated cost of studying of a girl child do have other girl children attending another school or the same school with the one that dropout from school.

“They will tell you that they don't have money to continue sending the child to school and yet they manage to send the children of the other wives to school. Those that are in the worse situation are the children living with their father and stepmothers after their father separated with their mothers” (Madam Rose, Head Teacher primary school).

The experience shared by Mr. Abukari and Madam Rose is not hard to believe because various studies have documented the consequences of polygamous families on child education to include the exhibition of little or no interest in the senior wives children by the father and the display of affection towards the children of the junior wives. (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999; Elebdour, 2002: 262). Polygamy is a common practice among the Muslims, and the Muslims population in Northern Ghana is estimated to be around 52% of the Tamale population, 21% traditional religion which did not also abhor polygamy, 19.3% are Christians, and the others occupied the remaining 3.3%. Other respondents accentuate the importance of family arrangement. Although they do identify that it is not all the children that come from a polygamous family end up dropping out from school. In fact, they give examples of a situation where stepmothers take charge of the wellbeing of the children to the extent that it will be difficult for one to distinguish any disparity between the children welfare. Nevertheless, when a stepmother is hostile to the child the probability of the child to be successful academically is very slim.

“I don't want to sound as if I am condemning polygamous marriage because there are women that don't discriminate against the children of the other wives, they see them as their biological children. But from my daily experience with these children, the percentages of girls that drop out from school

are higher in the polygamous family setting; they always look sad and stressed when they come to school” (Mrs. Yeng, Primary school Female Head Teacher)

In this kind of situation, many of the children suffer neglect and abuse meted on them by their stepmothers (Elebdour, 2002: 259). The opinions of the head teachers above further validate Sunal and Mutua (2007) argument on the negative effect of polygamy on the educational prospect of the children. “The future of children in polygamous marriage arrangement is at risk if care is not taken. The stepmothers have poison the mind of the husband where he shows no affection at all to the children of the senior wife; this act eventually led to the withdrawal of the children from school. If it is a monogamous marriage, the probability of child mother to convinced the father to withdraw the child from school will be minimal or non-existence (Sunal and Mutua. 2007:33). Similarly, the lack of concentration in class as a result of children lack of parental care is more damaging to the child future. The characteristics of the family circle influence whether a child will enrol, attend, suspend, or drop out permanently from school (Croft, 2002 cited in Hunt, 2008). Apart from polygamy, there are other household factors that hindered the progress of girl’s education in Northern Ghana.

Family shock as a result of mortality of a caregiver or parent is another factor that the respondents of this study identified for girls dropping out from school. The most likely traumatic experience for a child is the loss of a parent, and they are most liable to drop out of school than children that have not suffered any parental loss. (Gertler et al., 2004: 211). Although this scenario affects both boys and girls to drop out from school, Ampiah and Adu-Yeboah argued that the probability for girls to be affected by the incident of death in the family is higher than boys (Ampiah& Adu-Yeboah, 2009:226). This perspective was shared by half of the head teachers that I interviewed, although those that did not share the view of parental death did not disagree with the fact that parental or caregiver death affects the girls to drop out from school. The core of their arguments was that it is a common cultural and traditional practice for extended families to take over the care for the orphans education and well-being. For those that emphasis on the parental death, their argument was based on the fact that most children lost hope in continuing their study because they are too young to handle the shock of losing their parents. Mr. Moses, a junior secondary school health teacher in rural area, emphasized on the trauma argument

“Death of loved ones is something that affects many adults, and they find it difficult to cope with events happening around them, they enter into the depression mode. Now we are talking about a child that rely so much on her parents for emotional support, care and love; it will be difficult for them to cope with academic teachings. I have witnessed situations whereby children that lost their mothers continue to cry for months, isolating themselves.”

While the parental death effect on the girl’s ability to complete her studies cannot be ignored, the effect of such death depends on whether the deceased parent is the mother or the father. Studies have shown that there is a distinctive difference between the impact that the loss of mother and father have on the child. Those that lost their mother are less likely to continue schooling or enrolled in comparison with those that have a living mother (Case & Ardington, 2006:402). This is because they start fallen behind in school as a result of

caring for their sick mother and other family members until the time of death. Case and Ardington maintained that the unfortunate death of a mother may be so scary to the child to handle, therefore making the child less ready to return to school (ibid: 413). A noncompeting rationalization for this argument is embedded in the fact that “mothers are the gatekeepers for their children’s educations, and when mothers are gone, no other caregiver is as vigilant in ensuring that children get to school or that money for school fees and uniforms is found”(Case & Ardington, 2006: 413).

However, the respondents that supported the argument of parent’s death as a key factor did not differentiate whether the father’s or mother’s death is more critical in the girls dropping out from school. The perspectives of the respondents that refused to emphasise on the death of parents as a major factor can be best explain by Case and Ardington (2006:402) position that the economic status of the father before he died play a significant role in the determination of the continuation of a child educational adventure. According to one of the respondents that shared Case and Ardington argument, she said that

“It is true that death of the parents especially the father who is the breadwinner of the family have a significant impact of the continuation of a child education on the one hand. Then again, we can also say the financial status of the household before the death of the father is also a key factor. I have seen many students that lost their father but did not miss out in school apart from the initial few weeks for mourning. Although, this are kids that come from a well to do family, those that are from poor family will most likely stop coming to school to help contribute to the upkeep of the household”(Mrs. Tigenoa, Primary school Head Teacher)

The statement above shows that the death of the parents might just be an icing on the cake, a final blow from the accumulation of different factors such as poverty, irregular attendant, and unpleasant schooling experiences which make dropping out of school inevitable. A child that her school attendance is asymmetrical due to lack of finance before the death of her father is more vulnerable to drop out of school. Another important household factor that was shared by the head teachers that participated in the interview sections is the girl’s assigned family gender roles that make them be in charge of various household chores. Although the perspectives of the majority of the female teacher defer to those on their male counterparts, the female head teachers maintained that the only thing that is not good for the girls is when it is too much. Mr. James, a Junior Secondary school head teacher, explained how he invited more than 50 parents this year alone to advise them to reduce the household work they give to their daughters because it was affecting them to have enough time for schoolwork and assignments.

“These girls come late to school every day two hours or three hours sometimes and yet they will not do any of their assignments. They give the same excuse of taking their junior ones to their schools before coming to school because they cannot go themselves. They also need to fetch water and cook for the family every day. When they get to school, many of them fell asleep in class because they did house chores till late in the night when they supposed to be sleeping.”

He elucidates further that he even threatened to report them to child services if the situation continues but that doesn’t bother them at all. This is be-

cause they believed that they are doing the right thing to prepare their daughters for a successful marital life, and when he insisted that they must treat both girls and boys the same way about household chores, the outcome was not palatable.

“They will tell you to go hell because they are training their daughter so that they don’t have a marital problem, one even insulted me if my wife washes my clothes, cook and do other house chores or not. Can you allow your son to marry a lazy woman with no skills to carry out household chores duties she said to me”?

The interpretation of this perspective simply means girls are under gender assigned obligation to attend to several household chores while the boys are not expected or under any obligation to undertake family errands responsibilities. Although, several studies have established that domestic work affect girls school attendance negatively when compare to boys (As-sad et al., 2010; Chimombo et al., 2000; Westberg, 2009; Shahidul & Karim, 2015). And Kanuiwa and Yussuf (2013:3), argued that “competing demands on girls’ time had translated into relatively poorer academic performance than their male counterparts, often leading to high repetition and, ultimately, higher dropout rates”. Nonetheless, the vast majority of female head teachers I talked to argued that there is nothing wrong with a girl doing household chores. What they are against is subjecting the girls to excessive household chores. This is in line with Assad et al (2010:1) position that “substantial burden of girls’ domestic work leads to lower rates of school attendance”. Most of the female respondents maintained that when they were growing up as a teenager, they do household chores and they have daughters that do housework now. It did not affect their academic performance or make them to drop out from school. For example, Mrs. Baba a Primary school head teacher said that;

“I don’t think we can associate girls doing household chores to intermittent school attendance or repetition of class because it is a cultural thing that all girls assist their mother at home in household chores. If we want to follow that line of argument, it will mean that all girls will not be coming to school regularly, repeating classes or completes their studies.”

Mrs. Baba’s position was supported by Mrs. Kpeb, she was of the opinion that there is no woman, young or old in Ghana or Africa as a whole that has not passed through the experience of doing household chores. It does not limit their academic success because they are all there for everybody to see. Her argument was that, if at all, the household chores and other family responsibilities would have an adverse effect on a particular girl performance or to drop out of school; it must be reinforced by other factors such as polygamy, child abuse or labour, and poverty. According to her statement

“If we are saying girl’s roles at home affect their academic performance, what will you say about girls that excel academically and yet they do household chores. You as a researcher, don’t you do household chores when you were going to school, and yet you are successful academically. Even the wealthy families that have house maids doing the household chores, girls still do household chores no matter how small it is. I will rather suggest that you should rephrase your hypothesis to extreme household chores because” (Mrs. Kpeb, primary school Head Teacher).

The expression of the female head teachers is a reflection of the cultural expectations of girls to be equipped for future roles of mothers and home-

makers. Therefore, early participation and involvement in household work are considered as part and parcel of their training for adult roles of mothers (Assad et al., 2010: 20). Various studies have frequently failed to distinguish from child involvement in the labour market, subsistence work, and domestic work. However, Assad and others maintained that, before we can adjudge girl's participation in household chores as a factor that leads to girl's low performance in school or dropping out of school. The girl's involvement in domestic work should not be more than 14 hours per week; otherwise, it will make their involvement in household work to be tantamount to child labour (ibid: 16-17). The unique views shared by the majority of female head teachers does not necessarily invalidate the argument of gender assigned domestic household role as a factor that limits girls academic achievements that eventually facilitates their dropping out of school. A girl that engage in household work or any other type of work that is alien to class work for more than 2 hours a day will lag behind in her academic responsibilities.

4.2.2. Economic Factor

Regarding exclusion of girls in education in Tamale, child labour, and child migration are significant economic factors discovered by this study. Although, they appeared to be two different factors, however, my decision to discuss them together was influenced by the argument of Ananga (2013: 406), "child labour and child migration are not independent of each other. Often, child labour is the pull factor behind child migration". Besides, the perspectives shared by all the head teachers supported Ananga postulation. Migration is an essential part of people lives; people migrate for various reasons, but yet work is most likely the most important motivating factor why people migrate (Huijsmans, 2012: 1) in Ghana and other developing countries in particular. The findings of this studies revealed that migration is not limited to the rural-urban phenomenon that has been documented by various scholars, the girls also migrate from urban to rural to engage in farm work to earn money in the cocoa plantation. Mr. Mohammed, an urban primary school head teacher notes that lots of children drop out of schools by migrating to the rural areas of Tamale or other cities to engage in farm work during the planting and harvesting seasons. He states further;

"Many girls dropped out of school because they are involved in child labour to earn income to support their families, most especially during the farming seasons of June and July. Some of them worked on the family farms, and some also used to work for other farmers to generate earnings for their personal upkeep. Only a few of them return to school to continue their studies but eventually drop out again because they continue repeating classes when they have missed substantial parts of the academic session".

The view shared above is a testament to the fact that even if the girls dropped out of school temporarily to engage in child labour or work to assist their families, it is most likely that they will drop out from school even if they return to school. Previous studies in the region that have documented the direct connection between child labour and the high rates of dropping out in Northern Region with more than 45% of children involve in child labour in comparison with 26% of the Central region of Ghana (CamFed, 2012:11). Legally, the employment of children under the age of 15 is forbidden based on the Ghana's Labour Decree (1967), although, the law make exceptions for

children to engage in an undefined light work (CamFed, 2012:15). The migration out of Tamale to participate in child labour for income is not restricted to farming activities, Mrs. Kipo; a primary school head teacher explained how girls migrate to Accra the capital of Ghana, Kumasi the second biggest city in Ghana to work as head porters popularly called “Kayayo” for income. The parents will come to school to officially withdraw the girls on the excuse that the family is relocating to the capital city, and the girls will continue their schooling there. This is mostly untrue because these girls end up not going to school; there was a day. According to her statement;

“I was in Kumasi, and I met three of my ex-students doing kayayo six months after they migrated to Kumasi. Some of my teachers have also shared with me that they met some girls that withdrew from our school doing Kayayo in Kumasi and Accra on different occasions.” I was furious and asked these girls why they were not in school as expected; they told me that there was no plan for them to continue schooling in Kumasi. From my conversation with these girls, it appears to me that engaging these girls in child labour was the motivating factors for withdrawing them from school.”

I was curious to know if there were cases where these kids decided on their volition to migrate for the purpose of working in the city on as suggested by Huijsmans (2012:1). From the findings, the vast majority of the girls that dropped out of school were as a result of their parent decisions. This might be because of the targeted respondents that were limited to primary and junior secondary schools head teachers that deal with children between the ages of 6-14. Although the respondents acknowledge the fact that older girls from 15-17 years old might take such decisions, it is not likely for a ten years old child to make the decision herself to migrate to the city. It was also gathered that in a situation where these girls take such decision, it was because of many other factors that left them with the only option of migration. According to Mr. Ibrahim, a primary school head teacher

“I don’t think a child will just wake up one day to drop out of school by migrating to Accra or Kumasi to be doing kayayo, many of these children sees the migration as the golden opportunity to escape poverty or abuse by step-mothers. Most children that migrated without the consent of their parents were those that have already been neglected to fend for themselves with minimal or no inputs from the parents. These types of children are irregular school attendees and regular grade repeaters.”

The implication of the overall perspective shared by the head teachers is that schooling and child labour is a nexus that is not easy to sort out. The above statement correlate with Hashim (2007) position that “children rarely initiated their migration themselves, although they were often consulted in the process, and chose to move in response to a request from an elder or because they felt their new home offered better opportunities, for example in schooling. As children become older, however, and are increasingly expected to cater for themselves, they start to seek their welfare-maximizing opportunities, which might include travelling to alternative locations” (Hashim, 2007:914). There is proof to show that child labour negatively impacts on girl’s school achievement and contributes to the increase in grade repetition and the drop-out rates. Millions of children were forced into paying jobs by abandoning school because of household poverty (Global March Against Child Labour, 2014:2). It is important the government of Ghana to critically address the child

labour and migration for the purpose of work in Northern Ghana because the majority of the girl's child labourers have no chance of adequately utilising the free primary education scheme. This is because studies have shown that girls that did not engage in child labour perform better in school and most likely to complete their education compared to those of child labour (Nduati, 2007: V). It is unquestionable, that children that came from poor household encounter formidable obstacles that make education attainment for them impossible. However, the exclusion is “exacerbated for poor girls whose experience is situated in specific sociocultural, material and spatial contexts including rural and urban poor locales” (Okwany, 2016:1)

4.2.3. Societal Factor

The societal factors that were identified by virtually all the head teachers that I interviewed are peer group influence that leads to absenteeism from school, destructive behaviours, teenage pregnancy, and desire to seek employment to be independent. The last one was most relevant to those in the last stage of primary schools and the junior secondary school students because they were older than those in primary 1-6. The findings of this study show that many of the girls skip classes and school to engage in anti-social activities during school hours. According to Karim et al. (2003:15), adolescents are vulnerable to pressure from peers, both positively or negative. Peer pressure has an influence on the children ways of talking, the kind of music they listen to, the way they dress, and in general, the types of behaviour they are most likely to exhibit. This behaviour includes but not limited to indulging in the use of drugs, alcohol, cigarette, and sex. The intensity of the peer pressure as expressed by the head teachers differs from situation to situation. Mr. Abukari was of the opinion that most of the girls that skip school end up getting pregnant and consequently drop out of school. Other head teachers shared the same views of Mr. Abukari. One head teacher that doesn't want to be identified further explained how these girls leave their various houses in school uniforms, but they always sneak extra clothes into their bags or keep it somewhere where they can take it on their way to school.

“They change into these home dresses and go to their boyfriends that have also skip school or that are waiting for admission into universities; they do all sort of things such having sex, drinking, and smoking till after school hours. After then, changed back into school uniforms to go back home pretending they are coming from school to their parents” (Anonymous, Junior Secondary School Head teacher.

Mrs. Baba corroborates the anonymous respondent position

“On many occasions, I have met some of my students that supposed to be in school at the cyber café during school hours. When I asked them why are they not in school since they are not wearing school uniform, they give excuses of their parents sending them on necessary errands. I later got to know that their parents were not aware that they were not in school that fateful day.”

Children and teenagers undergo societal pressure to kowtow of the peer group with whom they mingle within the society. As a result of peer pressure, girls get pregnant and therefore drop out of school (M&G, 2015). “Because of

the sheer amount of time the typical child spends each day with his or her friends, the peer influence on a child can be substantial” (Johnson, 2000:2). However, the peer pressure is not synonymous to girls getting pregnant; it can also affect the children to seek employment to raise money to buy expensive phones, clothes, and other material things so that they can feel the sense of belonging among their richer peers. All the respondents shared this point of view because it is a common phenomenon to see parents coming to school and reports that they found expensive stuff that they did not buy for their children. Mr. Timeibu, a junior secondary school head teacher elucidate further on this perspective shared by the majority of the respondents.

“There is no single week that we don’t have a case of a parent coming to school to accuse us of negligence by allowing their child to be using expensive phones or shoes. Their point of argument was the child knows she can bring such things into the house because they did not buy it for her. The only place she can use it is when in school and if the school do it job, she will have nowhere to use it. However, the problem is, these girls don’t come to school regularly, so how can the head teachers or teachers monitor children that are not in school.”

I enquire further if poverty can be associated with this fact and probably forcing the girls to seek for domestic employment money to buy these things they mention or to receive it has gifts from older men through sex,

“Yes, it is possible that poverty is a factor, but the majority of cases that I have witnessed and those shared with me by my colleagues in other schools was a result lack of been contented with what they have. The school policy is against bringing phones to school, you don’t need expensive clothes or shoes to come to school, and all you need is the uniform and sandal. Tell me, what do they need all those things for, some of these girls are from a middle-class family; they don’t lack anything other than trying to earn respect among (Mr Timeibu, a junior high school head teacher).

However, a significant minority of the respondents maintained that poverty might make a girl succumb to peers pressure. One of the female head teachers explained that;

“The girls from low-income family see their colleagues doing Kayayo or working in the cocoa plantation using expensive phones and wearing the type of dress they would love to have. They see their peer becoming independent to do whatever they like because they earn their money and probably contribute to the family upkeep as a whole. The pressure intensifies if their friend is the generous type that gives them money or buys them things they need, it is very easy for their friends to influenced them to dump school and join them in doing the same trade they are into if they don’t want to be begging for money. The same goes to those that have sugar daddies or boyfriend to influence them to do the same” (Mrs. Agyen, junior high school Headteacher)

While peer pressure can be a motivating factor to learn new skills such as conflict resolution, group interactions, and building trust among others. It can also be a negative factor that encourages children to focus on anti-social instead of their studies (Johnson, 2000:7). The propensity for the social problem to occur when positive peer group interaction is missing is very high, which remain a fundamental element that dictates whether a child performs in school on not. This is because, “children are socialised by the people with whom they

associate; through daily interaction over the course of many years, and acceptable social customs are taught and fostered (Johnson, 2000:1).

4.2.4. Others

There are other less dominant factors that were shared by the head teachers, the principal reason for categorising them as less dominant is either because of the fact that one or two respondents identified them as factors responsible for dropout or it has already been associated with other factors that I already discussed. Teenage pregnancy is one of such factors; many students drop out after they become pregnant, but as discussed earlier majority of the head teachers has already linked it to peers pressure and poverty which is a social and economic factor. Only two junior secondary school head teachers identified early marriages as one of the factors responsible while one head teacher identified teacher's attitude as another reason girl's dropout. Factors such as distance, security, and social amenities appeared only once from the conversation I had with the head teachers.

4.3. Roles of head teachers in curbing or contributing to the high rate of school dropouts among girls

There are various strategies that have been adopted by the head teachers to effectively play their roles as educational managers responsible for the physical and academic well-being of the pupils in their schools. The most dominant strategy adopted by the head teachers to campaign against girls dropping out of school was through the facilitation of regular Parents-Teachers Associations meetings. A parent-teacher-association (PTA) is a formal group which is made up of teachers, staffs, and parents, teachers with the aim of facilitating parental involvement in a school. The importance of parents active involvement in their children education goes beyond paying for fees, they need to be at the forefront in encouraging their children to work hard and look after the general well-being of the children while at school (Nyambura, 2012:63). PTA meeting is the best avenue to get them involved. Unfortunately, the PTAs in Ghana are either not functioning, or they just meet once or twice in the whole year. However, since the rate of dropout continues to rise the first step all the head teachers I interacted with took was to reform the PTA. According to Mr. Abukari, a primary school head teacher, regular PTA meetings are crucial to monitor the children, most notably the girl's performance. He explained how he rejuvenated the PTA that now meets every month

“When I came to this school, I noticed that the PTA only met once a year at the end of the third term. It was more of like evaluation process of the academic year. I found this not sufficient enough because the parents need to be involved more in the day to day learning process of their children. Then I changed it to 3 times a year; the parents give feedbacks that the new format has helped them to discovered a lot of flaws in their children which they were able to correct rather than waiting to the end of the year to find how their children are doing in school. By that time, it would have been late to make any remedy, so they suggested that we should make it a monthly event to access the children performance”.

If parents are not actively involved in their children education, the chances of the children indulging in indiscipline matters which may eventually lead to dropping out of schools are very high (Nyambura, 2012:63). This sentiment was dominant throughout the conversation I had with the head teachers. According to Mr. Ibrahim, a primary school head teacher; the learning process of a child start from the family, he/she will raise and taught along the line of the underlying philosophy of life such as the type of behaviour that is acceptable in the society, what is wrong and what is right. The moment the child start schooling, the discipline and learning process that used to be the sole responsibility of the parents has now become a shared responsibility of both the parents and the school management. Without an effective organised PTA, there will be a gap in the monitoring and evaluation of the child performance which is crucial in identifying early signs of children at risk of dropping out from school. For example;

“A student is performing low in class, but to her parent, she is one of the best students in class. This particular student has another set of books that she reproduced the assignments and course work, marks it herself with higher grades and then shows it to her parents. She skipped classes, and the parents were unaware until they came for the PTA when I approached them to discuss the performance of their daughter. They were shocked and could not believe her real performance. If we had waited until the end of the year, the situation of the girl would have been worse.”

The interpretation of the argument above is that parent involvement is significant to the girl's education completion rate in Tamale, Ghana. “If parents are not interested in their children's education this may give them ways of playing truant or abscond school due to bad behaviour and bad company” (Nyambura, 2012:63). Available scholastic evidence also shows that when parents are involved in the school management in students learning process in school, they tend to maintain the quality of their work, make better transition to the next educational level, and likely to complete their studies (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Williams Bost, 2004; Mapp, 2004).

One characteristic of school efficacy as suggested by Mwangi (2014) is the degree to which guidance and counselling programs for the children are to introduce and managed by the headteacher. This entails making sure that the relationships between the pupils and the teachers are cordial to meet the needs of individual students. Mwangi maintained that, “for effective guidance and counselling, the head teacher should note the need for effective organisational structures in the school and the need for effective communication” (Mwangi, 2014:22). The head teachers that participated in this study perspective are not different from Mwangi argument. They all agreed to the fact that, well-organised guidance and counselling programs has kept a lot of girls in school. Mrs. Kipo, a primary school head teacher, explained how the direction and counselling unit in her school ensure that four girls that had already dropped out of school because of pregnancies return to school after delivery.

“I visited these girls' families to offer support to the girls, and I had a discussion with the parents on a regular basis. Then the counselling unit continues the visitation to enlighten the parents on why the girls need to return to school. We have a well-organized counselling service that will not make them feel embarrassed or discriminated in the school. So when these children to finish their study, they performed very well and moved to the junior second-

ary school. In fact, all the four are doing fine now, and we do invite them to come and share their experiences with girls in our school”.

Mrs. Kpeb position was not different from that of Mrs. Kipo on the responsibility of head teachers to put in place an effective guidance and counselling service as a preventive measure towards girl's dropout from school. She was of the opinion that, the majority of the girls got pregnant as a result of ignorance about sex. Although the counselling unit of her school has been consistent in the delivery of sex education to the children, many parents are not happy about the sex education services as they claimed it encourages young girls to indulge in early sex. Regardless, of the resistance from some parents, the guidance and counselling units did not relent on their task to make sure that all the girls have adequate information about sex-related issue. Mrs Kpeb perspective is in accordance with the argument of Koech (2013) that states that, “it is the responsibility of the head teacher to ensure that both boys and girls are well guided and counselled on changes due to puberty so as to attend school and remain at school even during their menstruation for the girls”(Koech, 2013:16). However, the counselling is not only useful in the facilitation of re-entry to school or prevention of pregnancy. It also helps the students that are struggling academically as a result of stress, family issues, or other related factors that I already discussed in chapter three of this study. Mr. Moses, a junior secondary school head teacher believed that the schools that have high rates of dropouts need to reassess their counselling unit. He explained how effective counselling had gone a long way to reducing the number of girls that drop out from the school he headed. According to him;

“These girls just don't wake up one day and say they are no longer coming to school, or get pregnant. They must have been showing some signs from their class performances. To prevent students from dropping out, any student that his/her overall average is less than 50% after the midterm test will be referred to the guidance and counselling unit. The mandate of the unit is to identify why the student performance is below average. The results have been outstanding, we have had different situations whereby we discovered that the child was suffering abuse from the stepmother, situation where the child worked more than 7k before getting to school, coming to school with an empty stomach, bullying by senior students. This allows the school management to rise to the occasion and help the child involve”.

The perspective of the head teachers above means that it is important for counsellors to be appointed in schools, a close working relationship between the school counsellors and the teachers. It also means that the adoption of different counselling measures can arrest the girl's propensity to drop out of school before they do so. Nevertheless, the “management of people in the school context involves the skilful control and guidance of pupils to achieve the school's desired outcomes” (Mwangi, 2014:21). One thing that has been established by the head teacher argument is that the guidance and counselling units of schools is not only responsible for dealing with academics issues but also opportunities that are outside the schooling environment scope. Studies have revealed the existence of a strong correlation between role models and young people civic engagement. The positive role models help teens to believe in themselves they could make a difference in the world (Price-Mitchell, 2011). The head teachers that participated in this study were all in unison on exposing the girls to other young female and successful celebrities or professionals (film

actors, sportswomen, lecturers, political leaders, scholarship winners, e.t.c) in the region. It involves the organisation of monthly events where these role models are invited to come and have a tete-a-tete with the children. Mrs. Kromo, a primary school teacher, emphasised on the how such moves have changed the mindset of many struggling students to become more serious about their academics with the hope that they can also become like the role models that took a picture with them.

“Anytime we invite these people to school to talk to the students; I have noticed that the performance of some students changed for better after the program. Classes are always full at least for the next two weeks before the number starts to dwindle. Even though the presence of role model might not have an impact on some students, to a large extent, a reasonable number of students has said to me that I want to be like Mrs. Kromo this or that.”

It is not a surprise that many of the students are aspiring to become like the invited role models to their schools. Price-Mitchell argued that role models can be influential in the developing of career aspirations and educational goals (Price-Mitchell, 2014). Mr. Timiebu, a head teacher of junior secondary school corroborate Mrs. Kromo position on how head teachers invitation of role models to engage the girls on the critical of education. He explained further that more attention should be given to girl because the boys already have numerous role models to choose from because the media and the society promote successful male more than the females. In his words

“When you walk through the playground, you will hear the boys calling each other names of their role models such as Ronaldo, Messi, Kalybos, and names of other people they see on TV. Girls, on the other hand, are did not have the luxury of role models. Therefore, it is important to let them know that there are lots of women that are doing exceptional and successful”

The development of children is embedded in their accumulation of many experiences and relationships. Role models play a major role in inspiring kids to learn, overcome obstacles, and understand that positive values can be lived each day. Nonetheless, it is not only successful celebrity that can be a role model to the children. “Whether you are a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, teacher, civic leader, clergy member, sports coach, after-school program leader, or a person who just happens into a child’s life, you have the ability to inspire” (Price-Mitchell, 2011).

On the contrary to the all too good accounts of the head teachers on the positive roles they are playing to curb the high rate of drop out in Tamale, although not mainstream, there are other perspectives that implicates head teachers in the girl’s exclusion from education in Tamale. Throughout the conversation I had with head teachers that participated in the study, it was gathered that the approaches adopted by some head teachers closely linked to their own moral and ethical principles frustrate some students out of school as suggested by Undie and Birungi (2016:8). While the boys can withstand the harsh treatment, many of the girls, most especially those that are already facing some domestic challenges are the most vulnerable to drop out. It was revealed that some head teachers have their personal rule book, the dos, and donts that they subject the students to, one of the head teachers elucidates further by saying;

“There are some of our colleagues that exacerbating an already worse situation by running the school they head as if they are running their families; they

want everybody to know them as a disciplinarian or no nonsense person. And this is common mostly, among the female head teachers. For example, my daughter came home one day with her friend from another school and shared her experience with me on how the Head Teacher always accused her of sneaking out of school to engage in sexual activities during break time. The worst part of it was that she always humiliates her in public in front of other students, making her as an example. I approached her and talk to her, but she maintained that it is her responsibility to manage her school and I should face my school. I had to arrange a transfer for the girl to my school because she was already contemplating to stop going to that school. You can imagine how many girls that are not privileged to have such opportunity of having a friend that is a daughter of a head teacher” (Anonymous, Male, Junior Secondary School Head teacher)

Bullying by students has been documented in several studies as a factor that affects girl’s participation in school; however, the teachers can also be guilty of bullying. It is important to note at this juncture that, head teachers occupied a double role, a teacher first then the leader of the school. They also teach the students, and they are capable of bullying students through punishments, intimidation or by calling them a wide range of unprintable names if they considered them less intelligent (Harber, 2008: 10-11). Another respondent emphasised on the issue of bullying but in this case, she blamed some head teachers not competent enough to run a school. Her argument was based on lackadaisical attitudes and unprofessionalism among some school principals. She said that,

“Bullying is a major problem in any school around the world, but that is why we have head teachers to make sure that no child especially the girls are not bullied. But we have head teachers in this our Tamale that don’t stay at school, immediately after the school assembly in the morning they already left for their personal business. How could a head teacher that did not stay in his/her post will be able to address the problem of bullying? Trust me it is a serious issue for the girls, and some head teachers contributed to it by allowing it to go on unchecked” (Anonymous, Female, Primary School Head teacher).

The argument above is agreement with Duncan (2006) argument that, schools have the propensity to ignore verbal abuse, “despite this being the most common form of bullying in schools and that this resulted in self-exclusion by girls when the necessary social, emotional and behavioral support was not forthcoming” (Duncan, 2006 cited in Harber, 2008:11). However, sexual harassment by some head teachers was another aspect revealed during the interview session with the participants. While the male head teachers did not acknowledge that such atrocities occurred among head teachers, the female head teachers testified to the fact that there are cases of sexual harassment, even impregnating girls at times. An anonymous respondent said that,

“Although, the case of pregnancy is not so common among the primary school students, but the sexual relationship and harassment when the girls refuse are very common most especially the girls with girls that are matured more than their class. They promise these girls, marks, gifts, and other things if they keep it a secret, and if they dare to reject the advances, they are in trouble. The problem is if the girls report the case, there is no way to prove the allegation, so the case will just die down like that” (Anonymous, Female, Junior Secondary School Head teacher).

The problem with dealing with the sexual aggression of male head teachers or teachers is that they allegation is often dismissed and the girls will receive the blame for seducing the teacher or asking for it. (Harber, 2008: 10-11). This phenomenon is not restricted to Tamale, the study conducted by Leach and Mitchell(2006) in eight different countries in Sub-Sahara Africa shows that there are cases where male teachers abused their position to demand sex in exchange for money, preferential treatment, and good grades (Leach and Mitchell, 2006: 26-28). Unfortunately, just like the findings demonstrate the teachers in question are rarely disciplined or dismissed from the teaching profession. The most likely scenario is to transfer such teacher to another school

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has been able to answer the research question for this study that seeks to investigate the root causes of school dropout among girls in Tamale Metropolis from the head teacher's perspective. While the major obstacles have to be propagated by many scholars to be poverty, this study finds out that the availability of school or free education by the Ghana government is insufficient to tackle the high rate of dropout in Tamale and the Northern region as a whole. Close attention should not only be limited to the economic factor but also household and social factors that hinder the progress of girls academically. I also discussed how the role of head teachers can curb or exacerbate the dropping out of girls in school. Although, the role in curbing the drop out phenomenon is much more dominant than how the contributed to the exclusion of girls. The next chapter shall focus the conclusion and recommendation for this studies based on the research questions of this studies

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspective of head teachers on the possible causes and solution to tackle the problem of girls low completion rates in school as well as making an assessment of the government policy response to the problem rampant girl school drop outs in Tamale Metropolis of Ghana. The study has successfully explores this problem by asking fundamental questions. We asked why has the problem of girls exclusion from education persisted despite above interventions by the government?, what roles do head teachers plays in curbing or contributing to the high rate of school dropouts among girls in the Tamale metropolis?, and what are the limits of the government's policy response in tackling the exclusion of girls in education. These questions were dealt with through the interview session with 16 head teachers from both primary and junior secondary schools, which are the foundation of basic education in Ghana.

The findings as regards research question one show that the household factors remain the most dominant followed by the economic, and then societal factors that contributes to girls dropping out of school before completing their education. These barriers includes polygamy, child labour, peer pressure, the death of parents, poor performance in school, teacher's attitude to the students, poor attendance, poverty, child labour and migration, pregnancy, early marriage, parental lack of interest in formal education, persistent learning difficulties, and grades repetition. Nevertheless, these factors do interact with each other because the girls don't drop out of school because of a single reason; rather they drop out from school as a result of combined effect of multiple factors. All the respondents shared similar perspective about the multidimensional aspect of girl's exclusion from school that eventually leads to the non-completion of their studies.

For research question two, the findings revealed that the role of the head teacher's is a two side of a coin, while they play significant roles in curbing high rates of dropout among the girls, they are also complicit in frustrating girls out of school before the completion of their studies. One of the ways the head teachers are using to curb the dropout of girls is through motivation by inviting role models to engage the girls on the importance of education. The focus on girls becomes necessary because the boys already have numerous role models to choose from because the media and the society promote successful male more than the females. Therefore, the head teachers organized monthly events where these role models, young female and successful celebrities or professionals (film actors, sportswomen, lecturers, political leaders, scholarship winners, and so on.) in the region are invited to come and have a tete-a-tete with the children. Another way is through the establishment of PTAs or reformation of the existing ones to make it more active. This is done to involve the parents and guardians in the education of the girls. it was a general consensus that a child always have two teachers, the one at home and that of school. With the help of regular PTAs meetings, many parents were able to monitor the progress of their children. Others ways includes the creation of guardian and counselling units in the schools and regular unannounced home visitation

to girls that are at risk of dropping out. Regardless of all the positivity, the findings also show that sexual harassment by some head teachers play a role in girl's dropout. While the male head teachers did not acknowledge that such atrocities occurred among head teachers, the female head teachers testified to the fact that there are cases of sexual harassment, even impregnating girls at times. Bullying by other students is usually ignored by the school because some head teachers just don't care about their responsibilities. However, the head teachers also bully the girls for rejecting sexual favour or the desire to portray a figure of a tough disciplinarian

As far as research question is concern, the findings shows that the first government policy response to high rate of dropout in Ghana was to replace the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWAC) established in 2001 with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP) in 2013. This new Ministry initiated four programs of actions; however, only two of these programs are children specific, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer program and Ghana school feeding pro-gram (GSFP). After critical assessment of the programs, the findings shows that the Ghanaian government response to the exclusion of girls in education is deeply entrenched in the policies to tackle poverty as the major source of exclusion of many children most especially the girls. Ghana government emphasis has been on the social protection of the vulnerable and the needy through the initiation of various strategies and establishment of institutions that will follow through the implementation of such policies. From the findings, i concluded that this approach is insufficient and it is misleading for government to assume that poverty is synonymous to the exclusion of girls in education and once the poverty is taken away, the problem of girl's exclusion will be solved. On the contrary to such an assumption, the exclusion of girls in education is not homogenous as shown documented in this study. While it has become an acceptable norm to capture the consequences of social exclusion from the poverty lens, however, from a critical standpoint, there is a need for an all en-compassing education sector policy beyond the poverty narrative that will address the retention of girl in Ghana schools, because there are different forms of barriers (some are obvious, subtle, and tacit) to girl's education.

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