

## **Relationship between Socio-Cultural Factors and Gender Disparity in Enrolment of Students in Public Mixed Day Secondary Schools in Kericho County, Kenya.**

### **Authors**

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### **Abstract**

This study attempted to establish the relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender disparity in enrolment of students in mixed public day secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya. The study was guided by Social Demand Theory. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study targeted 124 mixed day secondary schools. The target population consisted of 124 principals and 9,418 students. Sampling techniques applied included purposive and systematic random sampling techniques. A sample size of the principals was determined using Kerlinger's 30 per cent rule, whereas for the students Cochran formula was used. The sample size consisted of 38 principals and 384 students. Data for the study was collected by the use of questionnaires. There exists a statistically significant relationship between Socio-Cultural factors and Gender Disparity ( $r=0.536$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The study found out that, early pregnancies among girls had the highest mean score of 3.28, and this was followed by students' negative attitude towards education with a mean of 3.02. This was followed by peer influence with a mean of 2.98. Parent's preference to educate a boy at the expense of a girl with a mean of 2.92. The study recommended that stakeholders and especially the county education ministry should develop and fund peer education programs through which they can outreach students from all over the county and encourage them to complete their secondary education cycle. Education providers and stakeholders should address early marriages, early pregnancies and domestic chores among girls to address gender disparity in enrolment.

**Key terms:** socio-cultural, gender disparity, enrolment, public mixed day school

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education for girls is one of the critical pathways to promote social and economic development (World Bank, 2017). Moreover, women and girls have been given special attention in several goals. For example, Education for All (EFA) goal two, stipulates that by 2015 all children especially girls, children in harsh circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities should have access to complete, free and compulsory basic education of good quality. EFA goal was focused on eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and attaining gender equality in education by 2015, with a purpose of ensuring girls' access to and achieve basic knowledge of good quality fully and equally (UNESCO, 2015). Millenium Development Goal (MDG) 3 echoed these objectives (Psaki, et al., 2018).

In a study carried out by Sang et al. (2013) in Kericho district, it was revealed that drop-out levels in public secondary schools were higher in day schools (at 1.43 %) compared to boarding schools (at 1.39 %). It was further revealed that the dropout in mixed schools was higher as compared to single-sex schools. Currently, enrolment of students in Kericho County raises a lot of concern since, apart from the fact that full enrolment has not been achieved, gender disparity is also an issue. As shown in Table 1, during the last 6 years, the enrolment of girls remains far below that one of the boys as presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Enrolment Rates of Students in Mixed Day Secondary Schools between 2013 & 2018**

Year	Boys	Girls	Total	Disparity (B-G)	GPI
2013	17,101	14,715	31,816	2,386	0.86
2014	18,785	15,919	31,704	2,866	0.85
2015	19,911	17,965	37,876	1,946	0.90
2016	20,035	18,222	38,258	1,814	0.91
2017	21,505	19,079	40,584	2,426	0.89
2018	23,166	21,325	44,491	1,841	0.92

**Source: County Education Office (2018) Kericho, Kenya.**

According to Table 1, it is clear that the Gender Parity Index has always remained less than one. With this kind of scenario, it is critically important to investigate the factors influencing gender disparity in enrolment in mixed day secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya.

According to the Social Demand Theory, education is a social good rather than investment good and, therefore, all children have an inalienable right to education. However, inequitable access to education still exists in various pockets of the world despite the concerted efforts by stakeholders including governments, development partners and non-governmental organizations, among others agitating for global action in making education accessible. One of the formidable gaps that remains to be closed is gender disparity in access to education and, especially, in access to secondary education. According to the Millennium Development Goal number 3, gender disparity in secondary education was supposed to be eliminated by 2005 at all levels of education by 2015 globally. Furthermore, according to Sustainable Development Goals, universal secondary education is supposed to be achieved by 2030. However, as indicated by the background of the current study, gender disparity still presents a significant challenge in the education sector as evidenced by data on mixed public day secondary

schools in Kericho County which shows that gross student enrolment has been consistently skewed in favour of boys than girls in mixed day secondary schools in the area (Ministry of Education, 2013). This is in spite of the government's commitment to ensure access, equity, transition, retention and completion of secondary school education for all its learners. This means that the country may fail to achieve its education target in line with its commitment to the global action for education for all and its policy imperatives.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, the state of girl's education has improved significantly. However, girls continue to lag behind boys in many parts of the world in terms of access to education, completion of education and acquisition of basic skills such as literacy. Globally, there is still plenty of gender gap in youth literacy rates. In 2009, roughly 35 million girls were out of school compared to 31 million boys (World Bank, 2011). Most female children in rural areas are given out in marriage very early. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2017) report, illiteracy is one of the key drivers of child marriage in Kenya. It indicates that 67 per cent of women aged 20-24 with no education are married as minors. It reiterates that one in four girls (25%) is married before attaining her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in Kenya. Moreover, one in every 25 girls is also married before her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. According to the report these rates vary across regions, with North Eastern and Coastal regions recording the highest prevalence rates, while Nairobi and Central regions record the lowest.

One of the factors that affect the gender parity index is unwanted pregnancies (Ngeno, et al., 2014). According to a study by Gimbo et al. (2015), it is revealed that teenage pregnancies were part of the factors that affect the continuity of girls in secondary education. The findings further indicate that most girls fail to complete their education due to early marriages. Girls are married off in order to get resources for the family and therefore fail to finish school as expected. They reiterate that girls are married off sometimes by force at an early age instead of being sent to school because the community regard girls as a source of wealth and therefore early marriage can bring quick returns as opposed to education. Where daughters traditionally "marry out" of their families and join their husbands, parents may doubt they will benefit from having more educated daughters (Filmer, 2000). The opportunity cost of having girls in schools, in terms of lost chore time and contributions of family income, is a formidable barrier as well. According to a study by Mollel and Chong (2017) in Mtwara district, Tanzania, it was revealed that early marriage, traditional ceremonies, male preference, social perception and social roles are some of the key socio-cultural factors that hinder girls' education.

In most communities where circumcision/initiation is practised, the ceremonies are scheduled to be conducted during the school holidays, but the process starts earlier, leading to absenteeism from school (Oguta, 2013). Circumcised children take longer to heal before they go back to school. Although initiation ceremonies involve both boys and girls the expectations after the ceremony are more on a girl child than the boy child because girls are married off after initiation in some communities. Kainuwa and Najeema (2013), in their study, shows that girls who undergo initiation ceremonies consider themselves as adults and perceive school as an initiation for children. Consequently, they become rude to the teachers, misbehave to their teachers, and absent themselves

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from school hence perform poorly in class, which leads to drop out of school. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) lowers the chances of girls accessing education (Lewin, 2007; Oguta, 2013).

This practice is also still common in a number of areas in the County of Kericho. Although girls may perform very well in the KCPE Exams, they fail to proceed to secondary due to female genital mutilation. Consequently, this may be the cause of gender disparity in enrolment in the County. According to the Standard newspaper of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 (p. 32) report, eight women of Poywek location, Ainamoi constituency in Kericho County were arrested for subjecting six girls to female genital mutilation (FGM), and the girls were rescued and taken to Kericho district hospital as a result of excessive bleeding. In another Standard Newspaper dated 29.12 2017, ten suspects were arrested by police in Barut, Nakuru west sub-County for helping girls to undergo the outlawed female genital mutilation (FGM). According to the report, two girls who had undergone the cut and were bleeding profusely were rushed to the Nakuru women's hospital where they were referred to Rift valley provincial general hospital. It is apparent that several studies carried out so far did not investigate in the depth of the relationship existing between socio-cultural factors such as Early Marriages, Initiation Ceremonies and Teenage Pregnancies and gender disparity in enrolment of students in mixed day secondary schools and this was the primary concern of the study.

Factors behind gender inequality in education include negative cultural values, thus disregarding girl's education (Mollel, & Chong, 2017). The community discriminates while sending the children to school by choosing the boy to go to school, particularly when they are faced with a scarcity of resources Ombago (2014). This may be the cause of gender disparities in secondary schools. Preference for the boy child, girl child's attitudes and enhancement of compulsory basic education policy should be integrated into the free secondary education approach to minimize gender disparity. In South Africa and Seychelles, girls were discriminated against and rarely given a chance by the parents to go to school, and the boys were given preference instead. This concurs with a study by Dakwa et al. (2014) in Zimbabwe, which indicated that parents preferred boys staying in school when faced with a choice or when they don't have the means to finance their children's education. When parents have to pay school fees or to buy school uniforms and have to meet other responsibilities, they are less likely to invest such expenses for a girl.

According to a study by Mollel and Chong (2017) in Mtwara district, Tanzania, it was revealed that early marriage, traditional ceremonies, male preference, social perception and social role are some of the key socio-cultural factors that hinder girls' education. If the family level of income is not sound to afford the cost of education for all children in the family, in most cases boys are given the priority than girls. This corroborates with a study by James (2014) gender disparity between boys and girls is due to the difference in the ways the households perceive male and female children. According to the study, it is reported that there is a preference for boys over girls in secondary school enrolment. It is evident that the several existing studies overlooked the relationship between the preference of the boy child as a socio-cultural factor and gender disparity in enrolment of students, which was the main concern of this study.

Secondary school-going age period of 14-17 years is a very critical time in one's lifetime. This is the time when one is faced with tough choices concerning ones' life. This is a period when an individual begins to interact with a wider scope of friends who may influence their lives. According to the United Nations (2012), people seek recognition for their behaviour from their peers whom they attempt to convince them to join them in their habit as a way of seeking acceptance. According to Abdul-Alim (2014), peer pressure has very strong effects that can affect educational choices and can determine whether a student can undertake important investments that can improve their academic performance or Outcomes. Peer pressure can influence a student's behaviour towards education. In a number of cases, many students lack interest in schooling or develop bad feelings towards schooling and lack hope for the future (Dakwa, et al., 2014). Negative attitude towards schooling is a contributory factor towards school dropout. However, insufficient research on the relationship between peer influence and attitude towards education of the girl child as socio-cultural factors and gender disparity exists in education in secondary schools in Kericho County.

### 3.0 RESULTS

The descriptive analysis of socio-cultural factors according to girls is presented in table 2

**Table2: Socio-cultural Factors**

Statement	N	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Students' negative attitude towards school is related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	12.4	21.2	30.0	36.5
Early pregnancies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	7.1	7.6	34.7	50.6
Peer influence is related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	7.6	21.8	33.5	37.1
The feeling of becoming an adult is related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	22.4	15.3	29.4	32.9
Community's negative attitude to educate girl child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	12.9	20.6	24.1	42.4
Early marriages are related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	18.2	24.1	30.6	27.1
Initiation ceremonies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	30.6	26.5	24.1	18.8
Parents preference to educate boy child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	13.5	17.1	43.5	25.9

According to the study, it was revealed that early marriages are related to gender disparity in schools, as was indicated by 85.3 per cent of the respondents. 85.3 of the respondents indicated further early pregnancy. This implies that when young girls who are supposed to be in schools are married at an early age, they are unable to continue with their studies. This could be a reason why there exists gender disparity in enrolment of students in schools. This view was upheld by Ajaja (2012) who affirm that female students drop out of school prematurely due to early marriage and teenage pregnancies as well as that a number of factors that hinder the girls from

proceeding with their education as compared to boys. This directly influences gender disparity in enrolment of students in schools. Moreover, Achoka (2007) reiterates that while educating both boys and girls, early marriages affect secondary education, thus causing gender inequality in enrolment. This concurred with the findings of Ngeno, Simatwa and Ayodo (2014) which shows that early marriage is a significant factor that influences gender parity in secondary education.

Peer influence affects gender parity in enrolment, as indicated by 70.6 per cent of the respondents. It was also observed that 69.4 per cent of the respondents indicated that parents' preference to educate a boy child is one of the factors that cause gender disparity in schools. This implies that when parents prefer to educate a boy child, the girl child loses focus and even lose interest in education. This could be a reason for gender disparity in enrolment of students in schools. When a community is faced with a scarcity of resources, they decide to send the boy child to school and leave the girl child to suffer (UNICEF, 2011), thus causing gender disparities in enrolment in secondary schools. Education has an aim of developing vibrant personality, and therefore, a proper understanding of the significance of learning by school students is important to enhance the prestige of education, as well as to raise the intellectual and spiritual level within the society. However, surprisingly, this may not be achieved as the study found that the students have a negative attitude towards education as agreed by 66.5% of the respondents. It was further indicated that the community's negative attitude towards education (66.5%) is related to gender disparity in enrolment. This suggests students' and community's negative attitude towards education could affect their overall potential to focus on their educational achievement. This could affect their ability to finish their studies. These findings agree with that of (Ajaja, 2012) who reiterates that factors that affect enrolment among girls include negative cultural values, teenage pregnancies, early marriages, sexual harassment and excessive domestic chores. The finding further showed that 62.3 per cent of the respondents also agreed that the feeling of being an adult by students influences gender disparity. However, it was noted that 57.1 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the fact that initiation ceremonies affect gender parity in schools. In communities where circumcision / initiation of children is still practiced, the ceremonies are scheduled to be done during the school holidays, but the process begins earlier, leading to absenteeism from school (Oguta, 2013). The Means Descriptive Statistics of Socio-Cultural Factors was duly analysed and the findings presented in table 3.

**Table 1: Means Descriptive Statistics of Socio-Cultural Factors (According to Girls)**

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Parents preference to educate boy child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	1.00	4.00	2.82	0.97
Initiation ceremonies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	1.00	4.00	2.31	1.10
Early marriages are related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	1.00	4.00	2.66	1.07
Community's negative attitude to educate girl child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	1.00	4.00	2.96	1.07

The feeling of becoming an adult is related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	1.00	4.00	2.73	1.14
Peer influence is related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	1.00	4.00	3.00	0.95
Early pregnancies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	1.00	4.00	3.29	0.89
Students' negative attitude towards school is related to gender disparity in enrolment	170	1.00	4.00	2.91	1.03
<b>Socio-cultural factors overall index</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>1.50</b>	<b>3.90</b>	<b>2.79</b>	<b>0.50</b>

The findings indicated early pregnancies among girls had the highest mean of 3.29. This indicates that most of the youth and particularly the students have not understood the importance of completing their secondary education without indulging in any unnecessary sexual behaviour. Pregnancy and marriage are major contributors to non-schooling attendance among girls in secondary schools (Ombago, 2014). This implies that early pregnancies among girls were the major hindrance of girls to a meaningful education and thus the main contributor of gender disparity in enrolment among students in schools.

This was followed by peer influence among the youth with a mean of 3.00. Peer influence among secondary school students is a kind of social pressure on them to adopt a type of behaviour or attitude in order to be accepted as part of a group. This agrees with Onsoti (2017), who asserts that students fall victims of peer pressure in order to be accepted among their peers. He further argues that depending on the group that is causing influence, an individual can become a victim of school dropout, and this brings about gender disparity in enrolment.

Community's negative attitude had a mean of 2.96, whereas parents' preference to educate boys at the expense of girls had a mean of 2.82. This implies that the community's negative attitude towards girl child education could affect their zeal to enrol and complete their studies. Parents' negative attitude towards school is a contributory factor towards school dropout. Parents who may not be having sufficient education or no education at all would not value education for girls (Dakwa, et al., 2014). According to Ombago (2014), in most cases, parents choose which of the children to educate, which in most cases goes to disadvantage the girl child. Students' negative attitude towards School had a mean of 2.91, whereas the feeling of being an adult had a mean of 2.73, and this was followed by early marriages with a mean of 2.66. According to the findings, this is an indication that up to total, cultural factors still plays a negative role in the promotion of education in society. In a number of cases, many students lacked interest in schools or had terrible feelings towards schooling and lacked hope for the future (Dakwa, et al., 2014). This may be a cause of gender disparity in enrolment in schools. All the items except initiation ceremonies (mean = 2.31) had a mean above average. The overall mean (2.79) was above the average mean, which implies that the items above had a very strong relationship with gender disparity in enrolment. Generally, this suggests that the relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender disparity in enrolment of students in mixed day secondary schools is very strong.

### Descriptive analysis data obtained from the Boys

The mean descriptive analysis of Socio-cultural Factors is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Socio-cultural Factors**

Statement	N	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Students' negative attitude towards school is related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	16.8	15.0	31.1	37.1
Early pregnancies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	12.0	14.4	36.5	37.1
Peer influence is related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	15.0	18.6	34.1	32.3
The feeling of becoming an adult is related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	22.8	14.4	39.5	23.4
Community's negative attitude to educate girl child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	17.4	13.8	31.7	37.1
Early marriages are related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	22.8	26.9	31.7	18.6
Initiation ceremonies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	18.0	36.5	32.3	13.2
Parents preference to educate boy child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	13.8	19.8	40.1	26.3

According to Table 4, the boys ranked parents' preference to educate boy child as the factor with the greatest relationship with gender disparity in enrolment in schools as was indicated by 86.4 per cent. It means that when parents are not in a position to provide for their children, the child to be compromised in terms of education is the girl child. This could lead to gender disparity in enrolment among students in schools. The same observation corresponds to that of Oguta (2013). They found that many school-age girls are employed as house girls and baby sitters in urban and rural places in order to meet their own and their parents' economic needs. Such children cannot effectively participate in secondary education.

Early pregnancy is another factor related to gender disparity in enrolment of students, as was indicated by 73.6 per cent of the respondents. The findings suggest that 68.8 per cent of the boys agreed that the community's negative attitude to educate a girl is related to gender disparity in enrolment in schools. This means that girls are caught up with early pregnancies, they drop out of school to take care of the situation. This could negatively affect their ability to continue with studies, thus leading to gender disparity in enrolment of students in schools. Students are members of the society and so if the community surrounding them has a negative attitude towards education as reported by 68.8 per cent of the respondents. These students drop out of school or not even enrol



at all. This agrees with Ajaja (2012), who notes that most parents in rural areas are reluctant in sending female children to schools.

The findings further show that students' negative attitude to the school plays a role in determining gender disparity in schools, as was supported by 68.2 per cent of the respondents. This implies that when students develop a negative attitude towards learning, they begin to lose interest in the school curriculum and consequently may cause them to go back to school. This could influence gender disparity in enrolment among students in schools. Peer influence and feeling of being an adult has an impact on gender disparity in schools, as was indicated by 66.4 per cent and 62.9 per cent of the respondents, respectively. This means that negative peer influence from deviant non-school going peers may instil a negative attitude towards school activities to the students who are attending school. This could also lead to gender disparity in enrolment in schools.

The finding showed that up to 50.3 per cent of the respondents agreed that early marriages are related to gender disparity as well. As pointed earlier, early marriages hinder girls from completing their studies, thus affecting parity in enrolment between boys and girls in schools. This study corroborates with that of Ngeno et al. (2014), who affirm that early marriage is a major factor related to gender parity in secondary education. The researcher wanted to know if initiation ceremonies are related to girls enrolling in school, but 45.5 per cent of the boys agreed, and 54.5 per cent disagreed and this points that the practice is dying out slowly. Despite this view, FGM is a factor that affects gender disparity in enrolment as it lowers the chances of girls going through education (Lewin, 2007). Mean Descriptive Statistics of Socio-cultural Factors According to Boys is shown in table 5.

**Table5: Mean Descriptive Statistics of Socio-cultural Factors (According to Boys)**

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Parents preference to educate boy child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	1.00	4.00	2.79	0.99
Initiation ceremonies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	1.00	4.00	2.41	0.93
Early marriages are related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	1.00	4.00	2.46	1.04
Community's negative attitude to educate girl child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	1.00	4.00	2.89	1.09
The feeling of becoming an adult is related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	1.00	4.00	2.63	1.08
Peer influence is related to gender disparity in Enrolment	167	1.00	4.00	2.84	1.04
Early pregnancies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	1.00	4.00	2.99	1.00
Students' negative attitude towards school is related to gender disparity in enrolment	167	1.00	4.00	2.89	1.09
<b>Socio-cultural factors Overall Index</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>1.50</b>	<b>3.70</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>0.49</b>

Boys' views on the relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender disparity in public day secondary schools were analysed to get the mean and standard deviation. According to Table 5, early pregnancies among girls had the highest mean of 2.99, and this was followed by early marriages with a mean of 2.66. From the findings, it can be inferred that most of the girls leave school prematurely due to pregnancies and early marriages, thus causing gender disparity in enrolment. This agrees with Mollel and Chong (2017) factors that hinder girls from enrolling include negative cultural values, teenage pregnancies, early marriages, sexual harassment and excessive domestic chores. Students' negative attitude towards school had a mean of 2.89. Similarly, the community's attitude to educate a girl child had a mean of 2.89, whereas parents' preference to educate boy child had a mean of 2.79. This implies that students' negative attitude towards school and community's attitude to educate a girl child was agreed to have a relationship with gender disparity in enrolment of students. The community discriminate while sending their children to school by giving preference to a boy child to go to school, particularly when they are faced with a scarcity of resources (UNICEF, 2011). Consequently, this may be the cause of gender disparity in enrolment in schools.

Peer influence had a mean of 2.84, while the feeling of being an adult had a mean of 2.63. This is an indication that peer pressure has a strong influence on the students to engage in unbecoming behaviour to the extent that they boycott learning. Due to peer influence, some refuse to take instructions because they think that they have grown up. According to (Abdul-Alim, 2014), Peer pressure has very strong effects that can affect educational choices and can determine whether a student can undertake important investments that can improve their academic performance or outcomes. It can be inferred that when such factors dominate gender disparity in enrolment is affected. All factors except initiation ceremonies (mean =2.41) had a mean above average. Generally, it was established that socio-cultural factors had a relationship with gender disparity in enrolment of students because the overall mean was 2.74, which was above average.

**Descriptive Analysis of Socio-Cultural Factors (According to Headteachers)**

**Table 6: Socio-cultural Factors**

Statement	N	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Students' negative attitude towards school is related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	5.6%	5.6%	47.2%	41.7%
Early pregnancies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	0.0%	5.6%	33.3%	61.1%
Peer influence is related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	8.3%	25.0%	13.9%	52.8%
Feeling of becoming an adult is related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	5.6%	33.3%	33.3%	27.8%
Community's negative attitude to educate girl child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	11.1%	30.6%	16.7%	41.7%
Early marriages are related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	5.6%	27.8%	33.3%	33.3%
Initiation ceremonies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	8.3%	30.6%	16.7%	44.4%
Parents preference to educate boy child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	8.3%	19.4%	19.4%	52.8%

Table 6, establishes early pregnancies was the greater factor that is related to gender disparity in enrolment as 93.4 per cent of the headteachers agreed. This implies that when girls get pregnant a bit early, they will not be in a position to proceed with their studies, while their male counterparts will be continuing in school. This, therefore, influences gender disparity in enrolment in schools. The finding showed that students negative attitude to education ranked second as 88.9 per cent of the respondents supported the fact. This means that when students lack interest in learning, they may end up dropping out of school. This could be a reason for the existing gender disparity in enrolment of students in schools.

Other factors that are related to gender disparity in enrolment are parents' preference to educate boy child at the expense of the girl child, and early marriages as was supported by 72.2 per cent and 66.6 per cent respectively. This suggests that when parents prefer to educate boy child to girl child, this could affect girl child's participation in learning. This results in gender disparity in enrolment of students. According Filmer (1999), most girls fail to complete their education due to early marriage. Low income for a family can act as a hindrance to children from poor families from attending school. This kind of scenario, coupled with socio-cultural values force the parent to choose which of the children to educate. In most cases, the parents give preference to a boy child (Ombago, 2014). Secondary school is an important period in students' life as the authority is being challenged by peer influence at the same time. When headteachers were asked whether peer influence had a relationship with gender disparity in enrolment in their schools, 66.7 per cent of them agreed. This indicates that negative peer influence may implant a negative attitude towards learning among the potential school age going children.

This finding concurs with the findings by Cosnoe et al. (2008) who reported that compared with a student with friends who showed little interest in learning, one without such friends had better education outcomes. Those with good friends are less likely to drop out of school and more likely to be enrolled in an academic programme, graduate from high school and continue with their education after graduating. Students fall victims of peer pressure in order to be accepted among peers (Onsoti, 2017). Similarly, it was reported that initiation ceremonies and feeling of being adult by students affect gender disparity in enrolment as were each supported by 61.1 per cent of the respondents. Equally, up to 58.4 per cent of the head teachers agreed that community's negative attitude to girls' education is related to gender disparity in enrolment. This implies that a focus on initiation ceremonies by local communities could deprive their learners of accessing school activities and especially when the ceremonies coincide with term activities. Mean Descriptive Statistics of Socio-cultural Factors (According to Head Teachers) are shown in table 7.

**Table 7: Mean Descriptive Statistics of Socio-cultural Factors**

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Parents preference to educate boy child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	1.00	4.00	3.17	1.03
Initiation ceremonies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	1.00	4.00	2.97	1.06
Early marriages are related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	1.00	4.00	2.94	0.92
Community's negative attitude to educate girl child is related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	1.00	4.00	2.89	1.09
The feeling of becoming an adult is related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	1.00	4.00	2.83	0.91
Peer influence is related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	1.00	4.00	3.11	1.06
Early pregnancies are related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	2.00	4.00	3.56	0.61
Students' negative attitude towards school is related to gender disparity in enrolment	36	1.00	4.00	3.25	0.81
<b>Socio-cultural factors Overall Index</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1.70</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>0.47</b>

Head Teachers' views on the relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender parity in public day secondary schools were analysed to get the mean and standard deviation. According to Table 7, early pregnancies among girls had the highest mean of 3.56, while Students' negative attitude had a mean of 3.25. This means that most of the girls do not take their education seriously but indulge in unbecoming behaviour, thus causing gender disparity in enrolment. Parents' preference to educate a boy at the expense of a girl child had a mean of 3.12, whereas initiation ceremonies had a mean of 2.97. Early marriages had a mean of 2.94, and community's negative attitude towards education had a mean of 2.89. This suggests that most of the parents are affected by retrogressive cultural beliefs to the extent that they fail to play their parental role of educating their children. Factors such as early pregnancies, domestic chores, negative attitude and parent's preference to educate a boy was seen to be the major contributors of gender disparity in enrolment between boys and girls in

schools. This concurs with (Wanjohi, 2013) who argues that traditional beliefs, household attitude, early marriages among the community are a setback to the education of the children.

Peer influence is another factor related to gender disparity in enrolment had a mean of 3.11. The feeling of being an adult had a mean of 2.83. Peer influence can lead to dropping out of students from the school. Peer pressure has a strong influence on youth to engage in unbecoming behaviour such as taking of illicit drugs under the false notion that the drugs stimulate appetite for food, increase strength and provide wisdom as well as courage to face life. This can be brought about by friends who have already dropped out of high school to win the minds of those who are still in school, thus causing gender disparity in enrolment. All the items had a mean above average, and the overall mean 3.08. Therefore, this indicated that Socio-cultural factors had a relationship with gender disparity on the enrolment of students.

#### Mean Difference in Socio-Cultural Factors by Gender

An independent sample t-test was carried out to determine if there was a significant mean difference between girls and boys on Socio-cultural factors causing gender disparity in enrolment at 0.05 Level. The finding is presented in Table 35.

**Table 8: t-test for Socio-cultural factors by Gender**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p-value
Girls	170	2.79	0.50	335	0.983	0.326
Boys	167	2.74	0.49			

The finding shows that there was no significant mean difference between girls and boys on the relationship existing between Socio-cultural factors and gender disparity in enrolment at 0.05,  $t(335) = 0.983$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). This implies that both girls and boys perceived the influence of Socio-cultural factors in much the same way. This means that both genders were affected by socio-cultural factors in a similar manner because they were exposed to a similar way of life. The overall correlation of Data obtained from Boys, Girls and Headteachers are shown in table 10.

**Table 210: Relationship between Socio-cultural factors and Gender Disparity according to all respondents**

		Gender Disparity	Socio-cultural factors
Gender Parity	Pearson Correlation	1	.536**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	373	373
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The study established that there exists a statistically significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and Gender Disparity ( $r=0.536^{**}$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). This indicates that when Socio-cultural factors under analysis increase, gender disparity also increases. Gimbo, Nadine and Sara (2015) assert that in many cultures in Tanzania, girls are primarily regarded as a source of wealth and thus can be married off sometimes by force at an early age instead of being sent to school, as the community perceives that early marriage brings quicker returns than education.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

**Conclusion:** As regards socio-cultural factors, early pregnancies among girls had the highest mean score of 3.28, and this was followed by students' negative attitude towards education with a mean of 3.02. This was followed by peer influence with a mean of 2.98. Parent's preference to educate a boy at the expense of a girl with a mean of 2.92. This means that factors such as early pregnancies, negative attitude towards education by students and parent's preference to educate a boy were seen to be the major contributors of gender disparity in enrolment between boys and girls in mixed schools. Initiation ceremonies had the least score of 2.56, which is an indication that the culture is dying out with time. In addition, drawing from the tests of hypothesis, the study concludes that socio-cultural factors had a significant relationship with gender disparity in enrolment of students in mixed day secondary schools in Kericho County that needed to be put into consideration.

**Recommendations:** Stakeholders and especially the county education ministry should develop and fund peer education programs through which they can outreach students from all over the county and encourage them to complete their secondary education cycle. Education providers and stakeholders should address early marriages, early pregnancies and domestic chores among girls in order to address gender disparity in enrolment.

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