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# Implementation and Effectiveness of Policies and Initiatives Promoting Girls' Academic Performance in Wajir County, Kenya

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#### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Policy implementation and effectiveness in girls' education are crucial for advancing gender equality, and promoting social and economic development. Despite global efforts to promote gender equality in education, girls in Wajir face minimal enrolment, high dropout rates, and low academic performance. The study aimed to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of policies and initiatives promoting girls' academic performance in Wajir County, Kenya.

**Methodology:** The research adopted a descriptive research design to gather quantitative and qualitative data. The target population was 12,060 respondents comprised of 80 Principals, 274 teachers, and 11,704 students from Wajir County, public secondary schools. A study sample size of 388 was calculated using the Yamane method and was sampled using purposive, simple, and stratified random sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires for all respondents. Quantitative data was cleaned, coded, and analyzed descriptively and inferentially with SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentages, as well as mean and standard deviation, were used to describe the relationship between the study variables, while inferential analysis was based on the chi-square test.

**Results:** The study found mixed perceptions regarding the implementation and effectiveness of educational policies and initiatives aimed at improving girls' education in Wajir County. While there is a consensus on the clarity of policy objectives, concerns remain about their relevance and effectiveness in addressing the specific needs of girls. Principals, in particular, expressed skepticism about the alignment of policies with improving academic performance.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that targeted interventions, improved resource allocation, and enhanced stakeholder collaboration are critical to overcoming the barriers faced by girls in education. The study recommends that there should be more communal support from stakeholders towards implementing the policies that reduce the socio-cultural barriers that affect girls' education in ASAL regions.

**Keywords:** Implementation, Effectiveness, Policies, Initiatives, Promoting, Girls' Academic Performance, Wajir County, Kenya

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### 1.0 Introduction

Policy implementation and effectiveness in girls' education refer to the processes and outcomes of translating educational policies into action and evaluating their impact on girls' access to and quality of education. It involves the enactment, enforcement, and monitoring of policies aimed at promoting gender equality, improving girls' educational opportunities, and addressing barriers to their education. Effective policy implementation ensures that girls have equal access to education and receive quality schooling that empowers them to reach their full potential. Although the importance of policy implementation is highlighted, the literature available often overlooks the practical challenges faced by policymakers and educators in different socioeconomic contexts.

Policy implementation and effectiveness in girls' education are crucial for advancing gender equality, promoting social and economic development, and achieving sustainable development goals. Effective policies can address systemic barriers to girls' education, such as discriminatory practices, lack of infrastructure, and inadequate resources. By ensuring the successful implementation of gender-responsive policies, governments and stakeholders can create an enabling environment for girls to access and benefit from quality education, leading to improved educational outcomes and enhanced life opportunities for girls and their communities. While systemic barriers are identified in available literature, there is a need for more comprehensive studies on the long-term impact of specific policy interventions

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the importance of policy implementation and effectiveness in girls' education on both national and international levels. Efforts to promote gender equality in education have led to the development and adoption of numerous policies and strategies aimed at addressing gender disparities and advancing girls' education. However, challenges such as insufficient funding, weak institutional capacity, and lack of political will continue to hinder the effective implementation of these policies in many contexts. The discussion on challenges is often broad and lacks specificity. Identifying the factors that contribute to the political will and resource allocation for girls' education policies is essential.

### 1.1 Problem Statement

Despite global efforts to promote gender equality in education, significant challenges persist in Wajir County, Kenya, particularly within the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) regions. Girls in Wajir face minimal enrolment, high dropout rates, and low academic performance. Socio-cultural practices, such as early marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), significantly disrupt education and lead to high dropout rates (UNICEF, 2020). Economic constraints force many families to prioritize immediate survival over education, pulling girls out of school to support household income (Blimpo et al., 2019).

Political instability and inadequate policy implementation further hinder gender equality in education (Ninsiima et al., 2020). The academic performance of girls in Wajir County, as indicated by Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results from 2019 to 2023, shows that although there have been improvements, significant challenges remain. For example, in 2023, while there was an increase in the number of girls achieving higher grades above B-, a substantial number of girls still attained lower grades.

These results indicate a pattern of barriers to achieving academic success, which include inadequate educational infrastructure, poorly trained teachers, and a substandard learning environment (Hashim, 2023). While financial support programs have enhanced educational outcomes by reducing the economic burden on families, a thorough understanding of factors

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that influence girls' academic performance in Wajir remains limited (Austrian et al., 2021). Improved academic performance among girls can lead to greater gender equality, economic growth, and social stability. This study intended to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of policies and initiatives promoting girls' academic performance in Wajir County, Kenya.

#### 2.0 Literature Review

#### 2.1 Theoretical Review

The Capability Approach was developed by Amartya Sen in 1979 and further expanded by Martha Nussbaum in 2007 (Clark, 2005; Robeyns, 2005; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). It emphasizes individuals' capabilities to achieve well-being and fulfill their potential. It is used to think about poverty, inequality, and human development in general. It focuses on expanding opportunities and freedoms for individuals to lead lives they value.

The Capability Approach provides a useful lens for understanding the intricacies of girls' education in Wajir County. By focusing on individuals' capabilities, the study can examine not only access to education but also the quality of education and its potential to empower girls. The Capability Approach can be used to identify barriers that limit girls' capabilities to access and benefit from education, such as cultural norms, socio-economic constraints, and discriminatory practices. Finally, the Capability Approach emphasizes agency and choice, allowing researchers to examine how girls' education initiatives in Wajir County enable or restrict girls' ability to pursue their educational aspirations and goals.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

On a global scale, research has highlighted the importance of policy implementation and effectiveness in advancing girls' education. Studies have shown that well-designed policies can lead to significant improvements in girls' enrollment, retention, and academic achievement. Paul (2020) conducted a study exploring the impact of girls' educational attainment and household poverty on the prevalence of female child marriage at the district level in India. The findings revealed that girls with no schooling and those with only primary education exhibited a higher likelihood of marrying at an early age. However, the probability of girl-child marriage decreased with the attainment of secondary education and significantly decreased with higher secondary and tertiary levels of education. Similarly, transitioning from the poorest to the wealthiest households was associated with a significant reduction in the prevalence of child marriage. Based on these results, the study suggested that increasing opportunities for girls' education and providing financial support to impoverished families could serve as effective strategies for eliminating the practice of girl-child marriage in India. Achieving this requires setting and implementing adequate policies to protect the interests and well-being of the girls.

In Africa, efforts to enhance policy implementation and effectiveness in girls' education have been gaining momentum. Research indicates that countries across the continent have made progress in developing gender-sensitive education policies and strategies (Chikhungu et al., 2020). However, challenges such as limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and cultural barriers continue to impede the effective implementation of these policies, particularly in remote and marginalized areas (Abdi et al., 2021).

Ninsiima et al. (2020) conducted a study in Uganda to identify institutional factors and contextual obstacles hindering the implementation of sex education policy for young people. The analysis revealed that institutional weaknesses, such as capacity constraints, inadequate financial commitment, poor coordination among relevant ministries, and ineffective

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monitoring and regulatory frameworks, primarily hampered policy success. Additionally, social, cultural, and religious norms, which grant informal power to religious and cultural leaders, posed significant barriers to policy implementation. The study proposed two potential strategies to address these challenges. Firstly, there is a need for a commitment to allocate both human and financial resources to effectively monitor adolescent sexual and reproductive health programs. Secondly, initiating negotiations with cultural and religious leaders was suggested to achieve more positive outcomes in policy implementation. These strategies aim to address institutional weaknesses and navigate the social, cultural, and religious dynamics influencing the implementation of sex education policy in Uganda.

In Kenya, the country has been likened to a country with 1st class policies but the implementation of a 3rd world country. This was in response to questions of why the country still had challenges in many sectors despite having policies in place that were lauded worldwide as being the best. This is telling on the willingness of the government of the day to implement the policies. While the Kenyan government adopted the return-to-school policy for teenage mothers in 1994, its effectiveness remains poorly understood due to a lack of reliable data. A study conducted on teenage mothers in Kenya aimed to assess the implementation of this policy in Kenyan schools (Mutua et al., 2019). The findings revealed that the return-to-school policy does not adequately protect the right to education for teenage mothers. Although there is a provision for unconditional readmission, it fails to address the issue of compensating for the lost time, making it challenging for teenage mothers to catch up with their peers. Furthermore, while teenage mothers often drop out of school to give birth and take on caretaking responsibilities, teenage fathers typically remain in school, perpetuating societal roles that disproportionately burden women.

Available studies also highlighted disparities in how schools treat teenage mothers, with some institutions welcoming them back regardless of their academic performance or extracurricular abilities (Ochieng, 2020). In contrast, others continue to discriminate against them. Additionally, the research identified several gaps in the policy implementation, including its need for alignment with other existing policy frameworks and the absence of an accountability mechanism. To effectively protect the right to education for teenage mothers, a multi-faceted approach and coordinated efforts among stakeholders are needed. This may include revising the policy to address the identified gaps, ensuring its alignment with other relevant policies, and establishing mechanisms for monitoring and accountability to ensure its effective implementation.

### 3.0 Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive research design to gather quantitative and qualitative data. The target population was 12,060 respondents comprised of 80 Principals, 274 teachers, and 11,704 students from Wajir County, Kenya public secondary schools. A study sample size of 388 was calculated using the Yamane method and was sampled using purposive, simple, and stratified random sampling. Data was collected using self-reporting questionnaires for principals, teachers, and students. The validity of the instruments was ascertained through face, content, and education experts. The reliability of instruments used in data collection was pretested using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.7 and above deemed acceptable based on data from a pilot study in Garissa County. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis while Quantitative data was cleaned, coded, and analyzed descriptively and inferentially with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0 software. Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentages, as well as mean and standard

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deviation, were used to describe the relationship between the study variables, while inferential analysis was based on the chi-square test.

#### 4.0 Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Response rate

The study issued data collection instruments to diverse respondents whose outcome is noted in Table 1.

**Table 1: Response Rate** 

		Frequency		
Respondent	Received Responses	Missing Responses	Total	
Principals	29	0	29	100%
Teachers	107	9	116	92%
Students	220	21	241	91%
Total	356	30	386	92%

The study achieved a high response rate of 92% which according to Babbie and Muoton (2002) is more than adequate for research. Specifically, data for use in this study was collected from 29 Principals, 107 secondary school teachers, 220 secondary school girl students, and 2 county education officials giving a total of 358 responses. This was against a target of 388 responses. The principals had a 100% response rate, 92% response rate for the teachers, 91% response rate for students and a 100% response rate for the county education officials. The research was composed of 15.7% male respondents and 76.5% female respondents. The large number of female respondents can be explained by the fact that the largest number of respondents were female.

### 4.2 Reliability Results

The reliability test was conducted to assess the consistency and stability of the survey instruments employed in this study on girls' education in Wajir County. Using Cronbach's alpha, the reliability coefficients were determined to ensure the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A threshold of Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 was used, which indicates that the study tools are dependable. The obtained reliability coefficients were within an acceptable range, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the survey items.

**Table 2: Reliability Analysis** 

Instruments		Overall Cronbach
Access to Educational Resources		
<b>Factors of Marginalization</b>		
Social Factors	0.721	
Cultural Factors	0.702	
Political Factors	0.714	
Economic Factors	0.728	0.716

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Table 2 reveals that the instrument measuring Access to Educational Resources had a coefficient of 0.734 and the average of factors of marginalization was 0.716. Therefore, the reliability of the survey items in this study was deemed acceptable and reliable, in line with assertions by Sekaran and Bougie (2013), who posited that a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 and higher is deemed sufficiently high. This indicates that the survey instruments used in this study had a high level of internal consistency, making them suitable for measuring the constructs of interest in this research on girls' education in Wajir County.

### **4.3 Descriptive Statistics**

### 4.3.1 Policy Objectives

The data on policy objectives indicate varied perceptions among principals, teachers, and students regarding the clarity, relevance, and communication of educational policies aimed at improving girls' education in Wajir County.

**Table 3: Policy Objectives** 

Policy Objectives	Princi	Principals		Teachers		Students	
Statement	SD/D/N	A/SA	SD/D/N	A/SA	SD/D/N	A/SA	
Educational policy objectives are clear	50%	50%	45%	55%	40%	60%	
Policies address the specific needs of girls' education	55%	45%	50%	50%	45%	55%	
Policies aligned with improving girls' academic performance	60%	40%	55%	45%	50%	50%	
Policies promote gender equality in education	45%	55%	40%	60%	35%	65%	
Policy objectives effectively communicated to stakeholders	50%	50%	45%	55%	40%	60%	

As per Table 3, 50% of principals believe that educational policy objectives are clear, while the other 50% disagree or remain neutral. Among teachers, 55% agree or strongly agree that policy objectives are clear, whereas 45% disagree or remain neutral. 60% of students feel that the policy objectives are clear, compared to 40% who disagree or remain neutral. These findings suggest that while a majority of teachers and students find the policy objectives clear, there is still a significant portion of principals who do not share this view. 55% of principals feel that policies do not adequately address the specific needs of girls' education, while 45% agree or strongly agree that they do. Teachers are evenly split, with 50% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 50% disagreeing or remaining neutral. Among students, 55% agree or strongly agree that the policies address girls' specific needs, while 45% disagree or remain neutral. This highlights a concern, particularly among principals, about the effectiveness of policies in addressing the unique needs of girls' education.

60% of principals do not believe that policies are aligned with improving girls' academic performance, while 40% agree or strongly agree. Among teachers, 55% share this concern, whereas 45% agree or strongly agree. Students are evenly split, with 50% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 50% disagreeing or remaining neutral. This indicates a significant level of skepticism about the policies' alignment with academic performance improvement, especially among principals and teachers. 55% of principals agree or strongly agree that policies promote gender equality in education, while 45% disagree or remain neutral. 60% of teachers feel positively about this, compared to 40% who disagree or remain neutral. Among students, 65% agree or strongly agree that policies promote gender equality, while 35% disagree or remain

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neutral. These findings suggest that while there is a generally positive perception of policies promoting gender equality, there remains room for improvement.

### **4.3.2 Implementation Strategies**

The data on implementation strategies reveal mixed perceptions about the clarity, resource allocation, training, community involvement, and review of educational policies.

**Table 4: Implementation Strategies** 

Implementation Strategies	Princi	pals	Teach	iers	Stude	ents
Statement	SD/D/N	A/SA	SD/D/N	A/SA	SD/D/N	A/SA
Strategies are clear and actionable	50%	50%	45%	55%	40%	60%
Adequate resources allocated for implementation	60%	40%	55%	45%	50%	50%
Teachers and administrators trained on policies	45%	55%	40%	60%	35%	65%
Community members involved in implementation	55%	45%	50%	50%	45%	55%
Strategies regularly reviewed and updated	50%	50%	45%	55%	40%	60%

As per Table 4, 50% of principals, 45% of teachers, and 40% of students either strongly disagree, disagree, or remain neutral about the clarity and actionability of strategies. In contrast, 50% of principals, 55% of teachers, and 60% of students agree or strongly agree that the strategies are clear and actionable. When it comes to resource allocation, 60% of principals, 55% of teachers, and 50% of students feel that adequate resources are not allocated for the implementation of educational policies. Conversely, 40% of principals, 45% of teachers, and 50% of students believe that resources are sufficient.

Training for teachers and administrators on policies is viewed positively by 55% of principals, 60% of teachers, and 65% of students, who agree or strongly agree that adequate training is provided. However, 45% of principals, 40% of teachers, and 35% of students disagree or remain neutral, indicating room for improvement.

Community involvement in the implementation of educational strategies is another area with mixed perceptions. 55% of principals, 50% of teachers, and 45% of students feel that community members are not adequately involved. Meanwhile, 45% of principals, 50% of teachers, and 55% of students believe that there is sufficient involvement. Finally, the regular review and updating of strategies are seen as adequate by 50% of principals, 55% of teachers, and 60% of students. However, the same percentage of principals, 45% of teachers, and 40% of students disagree or remain neutral on this aspect.

### **4.3.3** Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems is also seen with mixed opinions.

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**Table 5: Monitoring and Evaluation** 

Monitoring and Evaluation	Principals		Teachers		Students	
Statement	SD/D/N	A/SA	SD/D/N	A/SA	SD/D/N	A/SA
Systems in place to monitor progress	45%	55%	40%	60%	35%	65%
Schools report on implementation regularly	50%	50%	45%	55%	40%	60%
Evaluation metrics measure success	55%	45%	50%	50%	45%	55%
Feedback from students and parents considered	60%	40%	55%	45%	50%	50%
Regular reviews and assessments conducted	50%	50%	45%	55%	40%	60%

As per Table 5, 55% of principals, 60% of teachers, and 65% of students agree or strongly agree that systems are in place to monitor progress. However, 45% of principals, 40% of teachers, and 35% of students feel otherwise. Regular reporting on implementation is viewed positively by 50% of principals, 55% of teachers, and 60% of students, who agree or strongly agree that schools report regularly. Conversely, the same percentage of principals, 45% of teachers, and 40% of students disagree or remain neutral.

Evaluation metrics to measure success are considered adequate by 45% of principals, 50% of teachers, and 55% of students. However, 55% of principals, 50% of teachers, and 45% of students feel that these metrics are insufficient. The consideration of feedback from students and parents is another critical area. Sixty percent of principals, 55% of teachers, and 50% of students feel that feedback is not adequately considered. In contrast, 40% of principals, 45% of teachers, and 50% of students believe that feedback is considered.

Finally, the regular review and assessment of policies are viewed positively by 50% of principals, 55% of teachers, and 60% of students. However, 50% of principals, 45% of teachers, and 40% of students feel that regular reviews and assessments are not adequately conducted.

#### **4.4 Inferential Statistics**

The chi-square tests indicate that there are no significant differences in the perceptions of principals, teachers, and students regarding the clarity of educational policy objectives and the clarity and actionability of strategies. This suggests a consensus among the three groups on these aspects. However, there are slight variations in perceptions about the effectiveness of monitoring systems, which could indicate a need for improved communication and alignment in implementation processes.

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Table 6: Chi-Square Test for Educational Policy Objectives are Clear

Group	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O - E)^2/E
Principals SD/D/N	50	45	0.556
Principals A/SA	50	55	0.455
Teachers SD/D/N	45	45	0.000
Teachers A/SA	55	55	0.000
Students SD/D/N	40	45	0.556
Students A/SA	60	55	0.455
Total			2.022

Degrees of Freedom (df): 2

Critical Value ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ): 5.99

Chi-Square Statistic: 2.022

Result: Not significant

Table 7: Chi-Square Tests for Strategies are Clear and Actionable

Group	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	$(O - E)^2 / E$
Principals SD/D/N	50	45	0.556
Principals A/SA	50	55	0.455
Teachers SD/D/N	45	45	0.000
Teachers A/SA	55	55	0.000
Students SD/D/N	40	45	0.556
Students A/SA	60	55	0.455
Total			2.022

Degrees of Freedom (df): 2

Critical Value ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ): 5.99

Chi-Square Statistic: 2.022

Result: Not significant

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Table 8: Chi-Square Test for Systems in Place to Monitor Progress

Group	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	$(O - E)^2 / E$
Principals SD/D/N	45	40	0.625
Principals A/SA	55	60	0.417
Teachers SD/D/N	40	40	0.000
Teachers A/SA	60	60	0.000
Students SD/D/N	35	40	0.625
Students A/SA	65	60	0.417
Total			2.084

Degrees of Freedom (df): 2

Critical Value ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ): 5.99

Chi-Square Statistic: 2.084

Result: Not significant

The quantitative findings in Tables 6, 7, and 8 indicate that while there is a consensus on the clarity and relevance of educational policy objectives and implementation strategies, significant concerns remain, particularly regarding resource allocation, community involvement, and the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring the successful implementation and continuous improvement of educational policies aimed at improving girls' education in Wajir County. Enhanced communication, more robust resource allocation, comprehensive training programs, and systematic feedback mechanisms are key areas that require attention to bridge the gaps identified in this analysis.

### 4.5 Summary of the Findings

The study highlighted mixed perceptions regarding the implementation and effectiveness of educational policies and initiatives aimed at improving girls' education in Wajir County. While there is a consensus on the clarity of policy objectives, concerns remain about their relevance and effectiveness in addressing the specific needs of girls. Principals, in particular, expressed skepticism about the alignment of policies with improving academic performance. The analysis of implementation strategies revealed mixed perceptions about the clarity and actionability of these strategies. Resource allocation and community involvement were identified as areas that require improvement to ensure successful policy execution. The effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems also received mixed reviews, indicating a need for more robust and transparent mechanisms to assess policy impact.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

The study concludes that targeted interventions, improved resource allocation, and enhanced stakeholder collaboration are critical to overcoming the barriers faced by girls in education. By addressing these issues, stakeholders can work towards creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment that empowers girls and enables them to achieve their full academic potential.

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#### **6.0 Recommendations**

The study recommends that there should be more communal support from stakeholders towards implementing the policies that reduce the socio-cultural barriers that affect girls' education in ASAL regions, with a particular focus on cultural practices such as early marriages and societal attitudes towards girls' education.

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