
**EDUCATION INEQUALITY WITH EMPHASIS ON SCHOOLS DROP-OUT
AMONG GIRLS IN BASIC SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF TAMALE
METROPOLIS IN NORTHERN GHANA**

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ABSTRACT: *Over the years, Government of Ghana and Non-Governmental Organizations has implemented a number of policies and interventions aimed at achieving access and quality education which is gender inclusive in basic schools across the country. Some of these policies include School Feeding Programme, Capitation Grant, Free Exercise Books and recently the Free School Uniforms for pupils in Basic Schools among others. Despite these interventions, drop out from school especially among girls at the basic level it still a problem in Ghana. This paper specifically focused on school dropout among girls in basic schools in Ghana; A case study of Tamale Metropolis. The Metropolis was selected for the study because of the demographic characteristics that pose challenges to girls schooling and its accessibility with regards to location. Qualitative method was used to gain an insight into the perceptions and feelings of teachers, parents, out of school girls and girl learners on causes of dropouts among girls. The case study design was used because the researchers wanted to have a clear understanding of why and how girl child school dropout happens. The population of the study comprised of head teachers, teachers, parents, school girls and out of school girls. Purposive sampling was used to select 20 Primary Schools and 10 Junior High Schools from the district whose total enrolment of boys out number girls. Data was collected using interview as main instrument. The study also used secondary data from published dissertations, textbooks, journals and the internet. Several strategies were used to ensure data quality. The findings reveals that parental ignorance on value of girls education, poor parental care, teenage pregnancy, early marriage, poverty, child prostitution, migration of girls to major cities in the south to work as head potters and peer group influence are some of the major reasons why girls drop out of school in Tamale Metropolis. Based on the findings, it has been recommended that Government should roll out programmes to reduce poverty in the country. Scholarships and other incentives should be provided to needy but brilliant girls to enable them stay in school to learn for a brighter future. Sex education and career counselling should be given to girls to help reduce teenage pregnancies. Basic schools should also be encouraged to set up girls clubs to monitor and motivate girls to take their education seriously. Disable and girl friendly infrastructure should be provided in schools to make them safe for girls. Corporal punishment especially canning should be abolished entirely to make schools safer places for girls. Punitive actions should be given to those who marry school girls to serve as deterrent to others. Finally, parents within the metropolis should be sensitized on the value of girls education to enable them support their school girls to stay and learn in school for a brighter future.*

KEYWORDS: Basic Education, Dropout among girls, Poverty, Teenage Pregnancy and Girls Education.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, education is recognized as a one of the basic human right. Article 26 of the UN Charter asserts that, everyone has the right to education and that education should be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages of schooling (Human Rights Charter, 1948). Education forms the basis upon which economic, social and political development of any nation is founded and investing in education can help to foster economic growth, enhance productivity, contribute to national and social development and thereby reducing social inequality (World Bank, 2011). That is why it has been a widely belief among educational economists that educational development would lead to accelerated economic growth, more wealth and income distribution, greater equality of opportunity, availability of skilled human power, a decline in population growth, long life, better health outcomes, low crime rates, national unity and political stability (Schultz, 1998). Education enables girls to make their own decisions and to influence their families positively. Education has the potential to improve the lives of girls and women directly and indirectly. It allows them to have greater control of their lives and provides them with skills to contribute to the development of their societies. It is against this background that Basic Education Collation (2016) opines that “educated women marry later; have fewer children and better prenatal care. Their children have higher survival rates, better health and nutrition, and are more likely to attend and succeed in school, creating a ripple effect throughout society”. UNICEF (2004) report shared similar views when it indicated that girls’ education leads to more equitable development, stronger families, better services, better child health and effective participation in governance. Additionally, at the World Education Forum, 2000, Kofi Annan (Former UN Secretary General) postulated that “No development strategy is better than one that involves women as central players”. It has immediate benefits for nutrition, health, savings, and reinvestment at the family, community, and ultimately, country level. In other words, educating girls is a social development policy that works. It is a long-term investment that yields an exceptionally high return.... We need those with power to change things to come together in an alliance for girls’ education: governments, voluntary progressive groups, and above all, local communities, schools, and families”.

Despite the obvious benefits of girls Education to national development, research findings indicate that girls’ dropout rate from school is higher in Ghana than that of boys. Globally, girls represent the majority of children out of school and face challenges in getting education. In 2006 for instance, 75 million children of primary school age were not enrolled in school while in 2007, 101 million were not attending school and most out-of-school primary school-age children (88%) live in Africa and Asia (UNICEF, 2009). In Sub Saharan Africa however, there are still gaps in certain countries with only 16% of girls enrolled in secondary school in Ethiopia compared to 28% of boys (Murphy and Carr, 2007). Generally, the enrollment rate of girls remains lower than that of boys, their drop out and absenteeism rates higher, and their achievements and performance are poorer particularly in Mathematics and Science (Harding, 1992). Mohammed (2004) equally reported that a girl may be withdrawn from school if a good marriage prospect arises. Early marriage is a sociocultural factor that hinders the girl child’s access to school. Some parents, in an attempt to protect their teenage daughters, may give them out to wealthy old friends. Some of these girls who attempt to escape from such forced marriages end up in even more complicated social vices. According to Egbochuku (2002), efforts made to ensure that adolescent girls who re-enrolled in school are retained with a view to acquiring education will permanently close the door to poverty and ignorance and at the same time open that of prosperity in terms of economic buoyancy, social advancement and civilization. Alike and Egbochuku (2009) shared similar views when their study concluded that

the socio-economic status of the girls imposes considerable constraints upon their continuing stay in school. In fact, they asserted that a girl's particular socio-economic inheritance may have a direct and important effect on her educational attainment". Ghana, a lower middle income country has made progress towards achieving equal access to education overall but is a long way from achieving gender equality. The situation is worse in the Northern Region of Ghana where girls enrolment and completion rates are far lower than the national average.

Statement of the Problem

Basic Education refers to the level of education in any country that constitutes the foundation stage to all children (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1991). Nelson Mandela stressed the importance of education when he opines that "education is a great engine of personal development. It is only through education, a daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that the child of a farm worker can become the President of a great nation (Mandela 2000:559). Ghanaian girls start primary school with the hope of staying in school to learn till completion for a brighter future. However, not all girls are able to continue up Junior High School because some drop out of school permanently. Several studies highlighted the link between poverty and dropping out from school (Birdsall *et al.*, 2005; Boyle *et al.*, 2002; Brown & Park, 2002; Bruneforth, 2006; Cardoso & Verner, 2007; Gakuru cited in Ackers *et al.* 2001; Dachi & Garrett, 2003; Hunter & May, 2003; Porteus *et al.*, 2000; Ranasinghe & Hartog, 2002; UIS & UNICEF, 2005; Vavrus, 2002). For instance, Porteus *et al.* (2000) cited in Hunter and May (2003), whilst describing exclusions rather than drop out per se, point poverty as 'the most common primary and contributory reason for students to be out of school. The dropout rate at the Primary level in Ghana is stagnant while at the Junior High School level it is 1.1%. Transition from Junior High School form 3 to Senior High School is also stagnant (33% to 32.8%). At the secondary and tertiary level it seems that policies and programmes specifically addressing questions of gender equity have stimulated a response in the target population. There is evidence of improved performance. Despite these improvements, low enrolment and transitions at basic level give a general view of stagnation (Sutherland-Addy, 2002:67-68).

Also, in a description of the details of dropout in Ghana's basic education system, the multi indicator cluster survey (MICS) 2006, reports that dropout rates across all grades in Ghana are similar (4% per year) except for grade 3, which is 5% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2006). Considering gender, males have higher dropout rates than females in almost all grades. From grades 1, 3 and 6, dropout rates in rural areas stood at 3.9%, 4.6%, and 3.9% respectively compared with 3.3%, 5.5%, and 4.5% in urban areas. There are however, wide regional variations in dropout rates. The regions with the worst dropout rates are the Upper West, Northern, and Central regions. In the Central region, dropout rates from Grades 1 to 6 stood at 7.3%, 8.2%, 10.7%, 8.5%, 8.6% and 6.2% respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2006). To achieve universal basic education by 2020 in Ghana, policies needs to focus more on addressing dropout. Several factors, particularly direct educational costs to households and some socio-cultural practices including child labour may be responsible for girls dropping out of school in most parts of the country including Northern Region. In Ghana, Basic Education has been relatively free since 1987, though some schools continue to charge maintenance fees which some believed is partly responsible for children dropping out of school. In 2005, the Government of Ghana introduced a Capitation Grant Scheme to replace all fees charged by public schools. The Capitation Scheme is reported to have attracted both unenrolled children and drop outs into school (Ministry of Education Science and Sports, 2006) cited in Ananga (2011). Despite this, dropout continues to occur in some basic schools in Ghana, which

threatens the achievement of universal basic education by 2015 (Akyeampong et al, 2007). Statistics from Northern Regional Education Sector Review Report (2015) indicated that out of 27,494 class 6 Girls for 2013/2014 academic year, 24,632 of them made it to Junior High School during 2014/2015 academic year. Apparently, the remaining 2,862 girls may have dropped out of school. Besides, UNICEF (2015) in their study in Ghana title “Global Initiative on Out-Of-School children in Ghana” identified early marriage and child fosterage as significant sociocultural barriers to girls’ education. However, the study failed to specifically address the dropout among girls in Tamale Metropolis. Also, a survey conducted by Center for Active Learning and Integrated Development (2010) has identified girls’ defilement and early marriage practices as some major causes of astronomical increase in girls’ dropout of school in some selected districts of the Northern Region. The survey however failed to deal with the nature of dropout among girls specifically in Tamale Metropolis. Alhassan and Odame (2015) in their study titled “Gender inequality in basic education in Northern Region of Ghana: Household and contextual factors in Perspectives” focused more on gender inequality in terms of boys and girls attendance and enrollment in the Northern Region of Ghana with very little on dropout among girls especially in Tamale. It against this background that the study is conducted to fill the gap. The study also examine the factors and forces responsible for dropout among Girls in basic school within Tamale Metropolis so that appropriate recommendations could be made for innovative policies that could be implemented to remedy the situation. It will serve as an excellent resource for policy reforms and designing of targeted interventions to tackle different barriers and circumstances that hinder Girl-Child in Tamale Metropolis from enjoying basic education.

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of school dropout among Girls in Basic schools within Tamale Metropolis?
2. What policy measures can be applied to reduce the dropout among Girls in Basic schools within Tamale Metropolis?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

A number of theories have been advanced to understand the phenomena of children dropping out of school. Some these theories have been used to explain dropping out as part of larger phenomena of student achievement (Coleman 1988, Newmann *et al.* 1992, Ogbu, 1992) cited in Rwechungura (2014). These theories originated from some of the Social Science disciplines such as Psychology, Sociology, Geography and Economics and identify a range of specific factors related to dropout. This study is therefore specifically guided by the following theories:

Radical Feminists Theory

In this study, radical feminism theory is used to explain the drop out among girls within Tamale Metropolis. The radical feminists hold the notion that “men are responsible for and benefit from the exploitation of women as well as girls” (Alabi et al., 2013, p.58). Patriarchy is viewed by feminists as a serious problem. Mlama, Dioum, Makoye, Murage, Wagah, and Washika (2004) cited in Atta (2015) define patriarchy as an “ideology and social system that propagates male supremacy or male power and superiority over women as natural and God given. The

operating premise is that men are biologically, intellectually and emotionally superior to women” (p.2). On the contrary, women are seen as feeble, weak, unintelligent and rely mostly on men as a source of “protection, guidance, upkeep and general survival” (Mloma et al., 2004, p.2.) cited in Atta (2015). This ideology has been institutionalized through formal and informal systems, supported by ideas, beliefs, practices and culture, and sometimes force is applied. Therefore some girls drop out of school due to these unfair ideas, practices, beliefs and culture of the people within the Tamale metropolis.

Academic Mediation Theory

The Academic Mediation Theory emphasizes that every factor involved in a student’s life impacts how well he/she does in school; his/her grades, or what he/she gets out of his/her work ethics influence his/her desire to drop out of school (Rwechungura (2014). Many studies have shown that a student’s academic performance greatly influences whether or not he/she will finish school. If student girl performs well in school, she will most likely continue with school and if she consistently performs poorly in school, then the propensity to drop out of school becomes higher.

General Deviance Theory

The General Deviance Theory stresses the impact that certain deviant behaviors have on a student finishing school. Certain factors, such as delinquency, drug use, pregnancy, and early sex are good predictors for high school drop outs. This theory looks at the relationship between deviant behavior and dropout. Deviant behavior includes delinquency, drug use, prostitution and early pregnancy. If student girl engages in early sex, engages in prostitution, gambling, armed robbery, uses drugs and finally become pregnant, the only option left is to drop out of school.

Deviant Affiliation Theory

The Deviant Affiliation Theory looks into how peers can influence each other in terms of drop out of school. This can be caused by negative influence of some other students or by rejection and trouble with peers. The relationship described in this theory is one between an individual bonding with antisocial peers and its effect on dropout rates. Students receive the classification of antisocial if they are likely to drop out themselves and have low school attachment. If a student girl has antisocial friends like prostitutes, armed robbers, thieves, gun runners, drug users, chain smokers and the like, she is much more likely to drop out of school regardless of how well she performs in school.

Poor Family Socialization Theory

The Poor Family Socialization goes back to a child’s development within his/her family. A student’s performance in school is directly affected by his family history including divorce, stress and parental behavior. The most critical aspects of this theory is the education level of the students’ parents and their future plans for the child. If neither of the two parents has completed high school, it is easy to see why the student would drop out himself/herself. Similarly, if neither parent expects anything good from a girl continuous schooling, it is easy to see why she would leave. Factors of poor family socialization include low parental expectations and a parental lack of education.

Importance of Girl's Education

Numerous studies have shown that investing in girls' education is probably the most cost-effective measure a developing country can take to improve its standard of living (Acheampong 1992) cited in Ananga (2011). Educating girls produces considerable social and welfare benefits, such as lower infant mortality and fertility rates (Bruce 1997). In a study of maternal education and child survival in Ghana, Owusu-Darko (1996) found that the higher the education level of the mother, the greater the survival rate of her children. The mother's level of education has also been found to have a direct influence on economic productivity and the level of her daughters' education (Swainson 1995; World Bank 1989). In the words of a famous Ghanaian Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General at the World Education Forum (2000) "No development strategy is better than one that involves women as central players. It has immediate benefits for nutrition, health, savings, and reinvestment at the family, community, and ultimately, country level. In other words, educating girls is a social development policy that works. It is a long-term investment that yields an exceptionally high return.... We need those with power to change things to come together in an alliance for girls' education: governments, voluntary progressive groups, and above all, local communities, schools, and families". The commitment of the Government of Ghana to make girls' education a priority has been demonstrated by the creation of a new, high-ranking position, the Minister of State for Primary, Secondary and Girl-Child Education to achieve this critical objective. Also, girls' education helps to reduce hunger. For example, in a cross country analysis of 63 countries conducted by the Brookings Institute (2011) opines that "gains in women education resulted in 43 percent reduction in malnutrition (FAWE, 2013) cited in Atta (2015). A report from one World Bank study revealed that one additional year formal education raises girls' wages by 20 percent, and total dividends on primary education were quite higher for girls than boys (Fant, 2008). Also, "low and middle income countries lose around 92 billion Dollars each year by not educating girls to the same standards as boys (FAWE, 2008).

Meaning of the Concept School Dropout

UNESCO (1987) explains dropout as the percentage of pupils or students who leave school before completing a grade or a particular level of education. This assertion was corroborated by Brimer and Pauli (1971) when they defined school dropout as a person who leaves school before the end of the final year of the education stage in which he or she is enrolled. Most girls who drop out of school are not likely to have strength in basic numeracy and literacy. If this phenomenon is not checked, then Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 are not likely to be attained by Ghana by the year 2030. According to a report by Discovery Learning Alliance (2016), girls in Northern Ghana are marginalized in many ways; among them are:

1. Household chores
2. Taking care of children, the sick, elderly etc.
3. Priority for boys education as opposed to girls education
4. Fostering
5. Supporting family income/child labour
6. Marginalized by religion: For instance, early marriage.

7. Disability: Socio-cultural beliefs and practices that discriminate against girls and children with disability.

Above factors put girls within the region at a greater disadvantage of staying in school and learning through their entire school lives.

Types of School Dropout

Generally, school dropout can be categorized into several strands. For instance, Ananga (2011) outline five main types of school dropout as follows:

1. Event Dropout: Stopping schooling temporarily in response to one or more critical event, such as sickness, conflicts with the schools authorities, death of a parent among others.
2. Sporadic Dropout: Dropping out temporarily for about a term or two due to economic survival need(s).
3. Long term Dropout: Leaving school for one to three but with the possibility of returning to school; that is falling out of one's cohort group.
4. Settled Dropout: Drooping out of school permanently but engaged in a vocation, trade or other economic activities.
5. Unsettled Dropout: Permanently leaving school with no respect of any particular economic activity or apparent means of survival.

Causes of School Dropout among Girls

A growing number of literature shows that girls' dropout rates are higher compared to boys' in most parts of the world. For instance, according to UNESCO (2012) cited in Ananga (2011), the dropout rate is higher for girls in 49 countries compared to boys. Chimombo (1999) agrees when he observes that though the enrolment in school is almost same for girls and boys, boys have a higher likelihood of continuing school compared to girls. Finally, Holmes (2003) also found that girls overall attain less education and tend to drop out of school earlier as compared to boys. To identify why girls in particular drop out of school is difficult because the phenomenon is influenced by a multiplicity of factors including the following;

Economic Factors

Chronic Poverty: The Ghana Poverty reduction Strategy points out the attendant effects of poverty in the following three ways-incomes or consumption poverty, lack of access to basic services and as an impediment to human development. Most girls who drop out of school are likely to come from deprive homes. Ones parents are unable to afford the cost of education; it will lead to withdrawal from school. Schooling costs are sometimes linked to the gender of the children as parents are sometimes become unwilling to pay schooling fees for their daughters. For instance, Brown and Park (2002) investigated that in rural China, parents' incapability to pay compensate school fees was the reason for the dropout of 47% of girls while only 33% of boys dropout in elementary schools; in junior secondary high school, fees were half for the girls but only 8% for the boys. Hunter and May (2002) found that school fees were significant reason for the dropout rate of 27% of boys but 30 % of girls before secondary school graduation in South Africa.

School Fees: Research has suggested that cost of fees in schools was a reason most children withdraw from school. For instance, Fuller and Laing (1999) and Grant and Hallman (2006) found an association between a family's financial strength and the likelihood of the daughter's dropout in South Africa. Direct and indirect schooling costs are important factors for the education of children and some research indicate that schooling costs especially school fees are a central reason for early dropout from schools. Schooling costs are sometimes linked to the gender of the children as parents are sometimes become unwilling to pay schooling fees for their daughters. For instance, Brown and Park (2002) cited in Ananga (2011) investigated that in rural China, parents' incapability to pay school fees was the reason for the dropout of 47% of girls while only 33% of boys dropout in elementary schools. Also, the numbers of children within a family negatively affect retention of the girl child in school. For instance, where there are more children in the household with many of them being less than five years old, it negatively affects the regular attendance of girls (Glick and Sahn, 2000). Studies indicate that female students tend to drop out of school to take care of their younger siblings (Brock & Cammish, 1997). Another study found that if children less than 6 years old are present at home, elder sisters are more likely to drop out (Canagarajah & Coulombe, (1997). Most girls who drop out of school do not stay with their biological parents. Again, some of these girls have their parents being divorced or widowed. They take a heavier workload at home and this many a time lead to their dropping out of school. This assertion is supported by Kane, (2004) when he postulated that "Girls are found to be performing more duties that take them out of school than boys".

Early Marriage/ Child betrothal: Early marriage is another important reason why girls drop out of school than boys. This view is shared by Holcamp (2009) when his study discovered that in rural areas girls' dropout rate became higher because parents consider girls' schooling as of no benefit when they leave their own family after getting married. Mansory (2007) also found that early marriage is the foremost cause of early school dropout of girls. A lot of research have highlighted on girls' age and education and found that when girls reach puberty, parents consider it is time for them to be married and tend to arrange the marriage instead of continuing schooling (Molteno et al., 2000). Some scholars argue that early marriage of girls is associated with dropouts in certain contexts. For instance, in societies where girls leave parental household after marriage, girls' dropout might be higher in that society (Ackers et al., 2001). Several studies also investigated that teenage pregnancy is a significant cause of school dropout for girls (Boyle et al., 2002).

House Hold Factors

Female Involvement in Household Chores

Many studies observe that girls sometimes begin working at an earlier age than boys especially in rural areas and girls also tend to do more work in the household than boys. Several studies indicate that female students tend to drop out of school to take care of their younger siblings (Brock & Cammish, 1997). Another study found that if children less than 6 years old are present at home, elder sisters are more likely to drop out (Canagarajah & Coulombe, (1997). Another research indicates that if mothers work and get wage outside of the home, female children take some responsibilities of the household which causes them to drop out, Fuller & Liang (1999). In general, girls take more loads of household chores than the boys and on the other hand rural girls do more household works than urban girls (Ersado, 2005). Fuller and Liang (1999) argue that the advantage of having females as household heads may be the result of increased autonomy of the females when males are absent in the decision- making process. Shahidul

(2013) examine data in Bangladesh and found that if a mother participates in the household's decision-making process, the dropout rate of girls is decreased. Though female headship eventually gives advantage to girls, studies sometimes show controversial results. This is because, many studies found that single-female headed households face greater financial and time constraints than two-parent households in general which may impact differently on children's academic achievement (Guo & Harris, 2000; Pong et al., 2003) cited in Ananga (2011). In fact, girls in households headed by married women have higher educational attainment while girls of widows are more likely to drop out of school.

School Level Factors

Extra-curricular Activities

They exist several evidences to show that participation in extra-curricular activities varied by gender and girls are usually less participative than boys. For instance, Jacqueline et al. (2012) investigated gender dynamics in the valuing of extra-curricular activities and their survey results show a significant difference in the proportion of participation in extra-curricular activities of male and female students. Results show that approximately 76% of male students participate in extracurricular activities compared to only 48% of female students. Sometime girls' participation in extra-curricular activities constrained by the lack of facilities in schools. For instance Osiki Jonathan Ohiorenuan (2008) cited in Ananga (2011) observes that 90% of the schools in the study area had extra-curricular facilities for the boys but the facilities for the girls were either not available or were provided minimally. This occurs in schools in most developing countries, especially in the rural areas.

Female Teacher in School

Several studies examined the impact of female teachers on the educational achievement of girls. Solotaroff et al. (2007) found that in Afghanistan, lack of female teachers is an obstacle to girls' participation and enrollment in schools. Afghan people believe that girls should not be taught by male teachers; however, female teachers are not available in Afghan society which is the foremost reason for the low rate of female education. Solotaroff, et al. (2007) presented that in Pakistan, girls usually drop out early because of lacking of female teachers in schools. In these societies, parents tend to stop their daughters' education before adulthood as female teachers are not available in schools. Though parents are sometimes reluctant to send girls to schools based on their religious feelings, in fact female teachers are effective in achieving educational outcome for female students. In this respect, a number of studies have attempted to examine the effect of having female teachers in schools. For instance, many studies found that having female teachers in the school has a positive impact on female students' academic achievement outcomes (Carrell et al., 2010; Hoffman & Nixon, 2009; Rothstein, 1995; Robinson, 1999). Therefore, lack of female teachers in school negatively impacts on girls' education and may lead to dropout.

Teachers Attitudes and their Teaching Practices

Teachers' attitude and their teaching practices can impact negatively in sustaining girls in basic schools within Tamale Metropolis. According to Nekatibeb (2002) study from several countries indicate that both female and male teachers believed that boys were academically better than girls. This study also found that most teachers tend to pay more attention to boys in the classroom than girls. Research by Fawe (2001) shows that teachers were not conscious in using their language toward girls in the classroom. Some teachers used gender bias language

in their instruction that tend to favor boys than girls. Some teachers also perceived girls as less intelligent than boys and that the place for girls is in the kitchen. According to Njau and Wamahiu (1994) cited in Ananga (2011) in a study on dropout rates in Sub-Saharan Africa, it was found that the foremost cause of higher rate of girls' dropout was the attitude of teachers towards girls in class. Teachers tend to favor boys than girls in terms of academic performance and achievement which led to dropout.

Absenteeism

Girls can also experience more drop out because of absenteeism due to child labour, household work, or sickness. Research shows that irregular attendance can be a trigger for dropping out from school regardless of the gender of the pupils. However, it can be argued that school absenteeism can be somewhat negatively more effective for early dropout from school female students. In this regard, Manacorda (2012) argues that girls are at a greater risk of absenteeism, repetition, withdrawal and dropout, and have lower educational achievement than boys in upper primary school. There are some causes for girls' dropout because of absenteeism. For example, teenage pregnancy among girls is usually associated with frequent absence from school initially, then permanent and or temporary dropout. Moreover, availability of toilets and access to feminine hygiene supplies impact on girls' absenteeism. In this regard, Gran (2013) indicates that female students were more likely to be absent if their toilets at school were dirty. In addition, Ngales (2005) found that in Ethiopia, female students were often absent in class during menstruation and frequent absence led them to drop out from school.

Feminine Facilities in Schools

Inadequate sanitation facilities in schools massively affect girls' dropout because this inadequacy indicates that schools are not safe for girls. Lizettee (2000) cited in Ananga (2011) observes that though lack of facilities and poor hygiene affect both girls and boys, sanitation in schools has a strong negative impact on girls. Parents expect safe and separate sanitation for their daughters in schools. UNICEF (2006) observe that in Africa, the lack of basic sanitation is the cause of decreasing enrollment of girls in secondary schools but girls spend more time in schools when sanitation facilities are adequate. Similarly, UNICEF (1998) further observe that if the toilets are shared by girls and boys or are closely located in schools a significant number of girls may eventually drop out because of harassment and lack of privacy.

METHODOLOGY

According to Ghana Statistical Service (2012), the population of Northern Region stood at 2,479,461. The research was a case study focusing on school dropout among girls in basic schools in Tamale Metropolis within the Northern Region of Ghana. The Metropolis was selected for the study because of the demographic characteristics that pose challenges to girls schooling and its accessibility with regards to location. Qualitative method was mainly used to gain an insight into the perceptions and feelings of teachers, parents, out of school girls and girl learners on causes of dropouts among girls. Qualitative studies aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. Hossain (2011:145) cited in Simofrosa and Rosemay (2015) asserts that qualitative researchers study people in their natural settings, to identify how their experiences and behaviors are shaped by the contexts of their lives such as the social, economic, cultural and physical contexts. Qualitative methods produce information only on the particular cases studied. The qualitative approach was also used to a

limited extent to determine the prevalence and frequency of opinions and perceptions of the sampled on girls school dropouts within the study area. Within the qualitative approach the study adopted a case study research design. A case study is a field of inquiry that investigates a specific area in order to gain access to the real life context where the problem is clearly visible (Punch 2000:15). It is an in-depth study of a specific individual, group or institution in a specific context. The case study design was used because the researchers wanted to have a clear understanding of why and how girl child school dropout happens. The population of the study comprised of head teachers, teachers, parents, school girls, out of school girls and District Girls Education Officer. Purposive sampling was used to select 20 primary and 10 Junior High Schools from the district whose total enrolment of boys out number girls. Purposive sampling seeks individuals and sites that can best supply relevant information needed to answer research questions raised (Cresswell, 2008:214). The sample size consisted of 30 head teachers, 30 girl learners and 30 parents and 10 out of school girls giving a total of 100 participants. Data was collected using interview as major instrument. Several strategies were used to ensure data quality. The research team provided remote guidance on data quality assurance by examining the data that had been collected from the field on regular basis. The team also shared feedback with among each other to ensure that data can be verified and changes to the data collection can be implemented when necessary. The study also used secondary data from published dissertations, textbooks, journals and the internet.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

From the interviews, it came out clearly from the respondents that the dropout rate among girls within the Tamale Metropolis was low compare to that of boys. But fact remains that the problem exists. This confirmed Ananga (2011) whose study concluded that “considering gender, males have higher dropout rates than girls in almost all grades in Ghana”. This success according to Metropolitan Director of Education has been achieved through “the interventions from Government of Ghana and Non-Governmental Organization specifically aimed at improving the access and quality of education for a Ghanaian child. In some Junior High Schools, enrollment of girls out number boys as can be seen below.

Table 1: Enrollment in some Selected Primary Schools within the Tamale Metropolis during 2015/2016 Academic Year

Table 1: Pre-test Results of Pupils Performance

School	Boys	Girls	Total
AAlu Ibrahim Islamic Primary	109	137	247
Adabiya Garbiya Islamic Primary	49	82	131
Aminiya Islamic Primary	82	98	180
Bethany M/A Primary	108	119	227
Bilpela A.G/M.A Primary ‘A’	43	60	103
Central Zahariya T. I Ahmadiya Primary	159	190	349
Dakpema M/A Primary ‘A’	121	140	261
Dakpema M/A Primary ‘B’	108	122	230
Kukuo AME Zion Primary	328	368	696
Sakasaka Primary ‘D’	94	136	230
Total	1202	1452	2654

Source: Tamale Metropolitan Education Office

From table 1, it is clear that all schools enrolled more girls than boys during the 2015/2016 academic year with 1,452 girls as against 1,202 boys. However, as to whether these girls can stay in school to learn to enable them successfully transit to the Junior High Schools is another issue worth close monitoring. Additionally, data from the interview reveals that though several inter-related social, economic, school and cultural factors affect school dropout outcome regardless of the gender of the students, there are some particular factors that exacerbate the dropout rate particularly among girls in basic schools within Tamale Metropolis. These include the following:

Poor Parental Care: One major factor according to the respondents responsible for the dropout among girls in the Tamale Metropolis is poor parental care. According to one of the Head teachers in the Metropolis, majority of the pupils come to school without pocket money. Some of these attitudes of parents are as a result of poverty and ignorance on the benefits of girls' education. Some illiterate parents have low academic expectation for their daughters and therefore do not want to spend more on their education. Some believe that higher education is for boys only and that boys are more brilliant than girls and perform better than girls. These confirmed the assertion by Agyeman (1986) that highly educated parents demand more education for their children irrespective of their sex than illiterate Parents. The finding is also in line with Mwangi (2004) who concluded in his study that a combination of poverty, disease and backward cultural practices continued to deny the girl-child her right to education. Despite the introduction of free school uniforms, school lunch, textbooks and capitation grants in Ghana which accounted for an increase in enrolment, a sizeable number of children, especially girls, still find themselves out of school owing to poverty in the Tamale Metropolis. The incidence of household poverty is very high in the Tamale Metropolis that transportation to and from school is too expensive for some families. Families who cannot afford to educate all of their children, preference often goes to boys. The girl therefore has no choice than to stay out of school.

Large family size: The extended family system that is practiced in Ghana is highly cherished in the most inhabitants in the Metropolis. Majority of the men in the Tamale Metropolis also practice polygamous marriage. In an interview with one of the teachers, it was confirmed that the number of wives and children a man has determine his prestige in society. This family size affects the ability of the family to educate their children. When the family is confronted with economic hardship, a great number of children especially girls will be denied access to education. Even families which are aware of the significance of female education will be forced to educate boys at the expense of girls. This is partly because it is still believed that the man is the "bread winner" of the family and therefore boys need more education than girls who will get married and will have a man to take care of them. Most families will only consider sending their girls to school when they have enough money. Girls are regarded as strangers or temporary members of the household as they will get married and leave their families. These attitudes of parents in the Metropolis confirmed the observation made by Knodel and Wongsith (1991) that single siblings has better chances than two or more siblings in a family. They argued that large family size adversely affects the educational achievements of children. They again observed that with additional children in the family the already low and scarce resources get very limited, hence some families put a stop to their children's education or choose to support one or two who show signs of succeeding in school. In such a situation, girls' education usually adversely affected

Corporal Punishment: Data from the interview with some school girls revealed that corporal punishment played a critical role in terms of pushing the girl child away from school. On the

issue of corporal punishment as a causal factor leading to girl child dropout, Amina a 15 year old girl in primary six told us:

Many of us girls drops out of school because of the rate at which we are canned and punished severely by our teachers anytime we come to school late or do some mistake in school.

Iddrisu Amina (Not Real Name)

Yet, school authorities deny the fact that students are canned and made to engage in all manner of punishments when they come to school late or misbehaves in school. According to one teacher interviewed, “we teachers are not allowed to cane students as a form of punishment”. Nevertheless, it appears that pupils are still being canned as a form of punishment. Such children therefore chose to stay out of school to be safe. Rahima, a 16 year-old girl in Junior High School within the Metropolis, told us:

We girls fear to be canned and punished harshly, and so, if over little issues the girl will have to be punished severely, then most of them prefer to stay at home. She stated further that the behaviors of the girls are usually misunderstood as truancy by school authorities.

Issahku Rahima (Not Real Name)

Poverty: Most of the girls who drop out of school in the Tamale Metropolis are from economically deprive homes. One out of school girl told us that:

Ones parents are unable to afford the cost of education; it definitely will lead to withdrawal from school.

Another school girl also added that:

Some of our parents are not able to pay our fees such as sports and culture, entertainment, extra classes' fees and transportation fares. This has led to many of our colleague girls leaving school”.

When poverty is exacerbated, children are compelled to drop out of school. Based on children’s accounts, it may be argued that there is a correlation between poverty and school desertion.

Repetition: School administrative policy on repetition appears to be one of the most decisive factors at this level that incites girls to drop out of school. During interviews, it was noticed that repeating the same class so many times could push a child out of school. One girl told us that some friends had dropped out of school because: the headmaster said they could not graduate because they had not passed all their papers in the school examination.

Ramatu, a 17 year-old girl, told us:

A colleague of mine did not report to school early enough when the term began, and the headmaster asked her to stay at home and come back next year because she may not be able to cope with the terms academic work and therefore may not pass at the end of the term exam; but she got pregnant while at home, so she could not go to school again.

Mahama Ramatu (Not Real Name)

It appears insisting that girls should repeat a class or asking them to wait until the following academic year can eventually push them to stay away from school for a longer period, which might have made their chances of returning to school slimmer. Judging from these accounts, it appears that children do not think that they should be repeated in the same class by their teachers who for not reporting to school early enough and being asked to stay at home. Most teachers I spoke with confirmed that most of the girls tended to be more interested in extracurricular activities such as sports and athletics whose assessment did not form part of the progression process.

Teenage Pregnancy: Another important reason for the dropout of Girls in the Tamale metropolis which came out strongly is teenage pregnancy. According to a teacher in one of the schools in the Metropolis, many girls are sexually active during their primary stage due to the internet and video movies materials they are exposed to at home. According to him, when they become pregnant, are usually expelled from school. Only a few of these girls return to school later to continue with their education. He was however, not happy that the boys who impregnate these girls are allowed to continue their schooling. Some of these girls do not engage in sex just to satisfy their sexual desires but also for material gains. Some of them receive money and goods from men which gradually turn them into prostitutes. Child prostitution impedes girls' education in the Tamale Metropolis because they do not more see the need to continue with schooling when they can earn so much from such ventures.

Disability: Another important factor responsible for dropout among girls in Tamale Metropolis is disability. An interaction with a physically challenged girls begging on the street of Tamale during school hours revealed the following:

I don't go to school again because of my condition. First I was attending school but my friends would always make fun of me and my teachers do nothing. So I decided to stay away.

Ayisha Mohammed (Not real name)

An interaction with an epileptic girl in Gumbihini community on why she was not in school during school hours confirm above assertion when she put out the following:

I use to go to school up to Junior High School form two (2) class. One day my head teacher called me and told me that I am sick and should not come to school again. I have nothing to do because he is the owner of the school so I do not go there again. I would not go to another school again so that they too would sack me.

Mohammed Rahama (Not Real Name)

Above discussion confirm a study by Rousso (2003) which concluded that “disabled girls are more likely to have restricted access to school; and when disabled children are enrolled, user unfriendly school facilities and a hostile school environment have the potential to push such children out of school”.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Parents should be sensitized on the value of girls' education. Parents should be encouraged to actively show interest in the education of their wards especially girls to keep them in school to build a better future for them and their communities.
2. Government and NGO's working in the education sector should provide incentive packages such as feeding in school, free text and exercise books, scholarships and others for girls in basic schools to urge them stay in school to learn for a brighter future.
3. Disability and girls' friendly school infrastructure should be provided in all basic schools in Ghana to make them suitable and comfortable for girls and pupils with disability to stay in school to learn.
4. All forms of corporal punishment in basic schools especially canning should be entirely abolished to make schools safer places conducive for effective learning. All forms of sexual harassment including bullying should also be discouraged.
5. There should be adequate training for teachers in Basic schools on gender inclusive methodology and how to handle the disabled, orphan children particularly girls in school.
6. Government of Ghana should expand the School Feeding Programme to cover more basic schools to enable more children to attend and stay in school to learn especially the girls.
7. Since the more a girl is repeated in a particular class in school, the higher the chances that she may dropout, they should be a policy abolishing all kinds of repetition of girls in schools at the basic level to keep them from deserting school.

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