

Determinants of Females' Primary School Participation and Persistence in SNNPR

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Abstract: The intent of this study was to examine the salient factors that limit females' participation in education with particular reference to SNNPR. To generate the relevant data, questionnaire, interview, community conversation and review of documents were employed. Agere Selam, Awassa, and Alaba were the study settings that were selected on the basis of purposive sampling. Parents, female dropouts, female teachers and education officials took part in the study in recognition of their role towards the desired end. The assessment was carried out by employing a descriptive survey method. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques have been used to analyze the data obtained. Consequently, poverty, need for child labor, male preference in educating children, lack of female role models in rural schools, teachers' perception of females as incompetent, and early and/or forced marriage were identified as major hindrances of girls' participation and persistence in education. The study also forwarded useful recommendations that help to alleviate the prevailing challenges.

Background of the Study

The essence of Universal Primary Education (UPE) is about making educational opportunities available to all children. However, the accomplishment of the task has become difficult for many developing nations ever since the issue became an international agenda.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1948, holds that "Following this declaration Universal Primary Education (UPE) has become a world wide priority". In 1989 the Convention on the Rights of the child again reaffirmed this intention. The following year (1990), delegates from 155 countries at the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) acknowledged the responsibility of their respective

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governments for providing access to basic education for all their children (Colclough, 1993; Bennaars, 1993).

Though several declarations were issued, protocols signed, and efforts were made to get universal access to primary education, the reality seems to be highly unbearable for many countries. A large proportion of children and adults in the low-income countries have been denied access to compulsory primary education (Colclough, 1993; Prather, 1993; Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991; World Bank, 1990).

In further analysis, Garrido (1986), World Bank (1990), Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) agreed that though impressive increases were exhibited from 1960s on ward, the battle to universalize primary education is not yet over. For example, between 114 and 145 million school age children, many of whom were from the disadvantaged segments of the society were out of school in 1985. UNICEF, in the report it released in 1990, noted that many countries were further away from the goal of providing a primary school place for their eligible children.

This mismatch between the 'universalization' attempts and the results obtained in the past decades may urge policy makers to examine the past experiences and current practices of universal primary education. This might enable to more realistically forecast the future. Without this "legislating for access and entitlement in primary education... will not of itself ensure equality of educational opportunity for all children," Barbara (1996, p.270).

Statement of the Problem

Ethiopia with the lowest school enrollment rates can be taken as an example of higher gender disparity in education. In this country an average illiteracy rate among females of the ages 15 and above reaches 84 percent (World Bank, 1990). The gender gap for the first cycle primary (1–4) was 25.1% in favor of boys in the year 2001. The gap for the whole primary (1- 8) shows 20% in favor of boys (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia/FDRE, 2002).

If weighed in terms of urban–rural disparity, the average percentage points stated here would show quite different things.

The manifestation of equal opportunity in education for boys and girls is usually evidenced through male-female ratio in different levels of schooling. According to Ministry of Education (MoE) (2002), the reported primary school Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) has reached 61.6%. But when seen in gender segregated statistics only 51.2% (out of 100 school age girls) were enrolled as against the boys' participation that accounted for 71.7%. This trend of inequity in access to education increases with the increase in the level of education. For instance, from the total secondary school students in the country during the year 2002 females constituted 39.3%. As regards participation in tertiary level of education, the share of females is shown to be 23.8%, 15.9%, and 7.3 % in diploma, BA/BSc, and postgraduate degree awarding government institutions respectively.

The education system in the Southern Region is also characterized by limited access to schooling and lower internal/external efficiency. The regional average primary school enrolment was about only one-half of the school age population in 2001.

The drop out rate in that same year shows 35.85% in grade one. There is also a significant variation in enrolment between zones where Bench Maji and Sidama Zones account for 56.9% and 56.6 % whereas Konso and South Omo have 27% and 20% respectively. However, problem of gender disparity persists in Sidama and Bench Maji even where relatively better enrolment rate is achieved.

In the year 2000 only 40% of school age female children were enrolled in primary schools while the participation for boys was 74%. When seen from gender equity perspective, there were only 34 girls to every 100 boys in primary and 30 to every 100 boys in secondary schools in the region. Even though improvement was revealed in primary school enrollment in the region in the year 2002, the gender gap still remains wide. According to South

Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional (SNNPR) Education Bureau (2002), GER for primary school has reached 67.2%. Despite the increase in GER, only 50.6% of school age girls were enrolled where as 83.6% of the boys have got access to go to school. The national average for secondary school enrollment is 17.1% (MoE, 2002). It is only 12.6% for SNNPR in 2002 (Regional Education Bureau/ REB, 2002). Even then the lowest share of secondary school places goes to females. In this case the secondary school age females were represented only by 7.9%, whereas the proportion for their male counterparts has reached 17.2%.

Yet the worldwide experience proves that even in situations where other things remain constant, countries with a wider gender gap in education have a lower economic productivity compared to countries with similar per capita incomes and patterns of expenditure (Kane, 1995).

Thus, this study attempts to identify impediments of universal primary enrollment as applied to primary school age children in general and female school-age children in particular. The study also focused on the relationship between females' under representation in primary education and its impact on the region's endeavor for poverty reduction.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to identify the significant factors that perpetuate gender inequity in participation in education in the Southern Nations Nationalities and People's Region. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- examine the problems of gender disparity from both demand and supply sides;
- assess the determinants of female participation in primary education from socio- cultural, socio-economic, and geographic perspectives;
- compare and contrast barriers of girls' education between urban and rural settings; and
- recommend policy options to all stakeholders.

Significance of the Study

It is about four decades since Universal Primary Education (UPE) has been claimed to be a priority in Ethiopia. Unfortunately almost one-half of primary school age children are out-of-school to date. This is the case in south as well. Female children constitute the majority of the out of school population. With this wide range of gender gap in school enrolment rate, it is hardly possible to think about of development in the country in general and in the region in particular. Therefore, the study is expected to be significant for the following reasons.

1. The findings of the study are hoped to give the stakeholders insight into the challenges that hamper the 'universalization' of access to primary schooling in the region.
2. It may discover the underlying factors that keep female children out of school and suggest alternative strategy to promote girls' education.
3. It may shed light on gaps to be bridged between policy formulation and implementation regarding efforts being exerted to attain universal enrollment in the Southern Region.

Scope of the Study

The Southern Region's climatic condition can broadly be classified into highland and lowland based on topographic features. About 90 percent of the region's population is living in rural area. Dominant economic activity in the highlands is crop production. The lowlanders are mostly known for their pastoral activities; they move from place to place with their livestock in search of grass and water. The study considers one district from the highland, one district from the lowland, and one urban setting in order to compare cases between lowlands and highlands as well as rural and urban contexts. The expected finding, therefore, represents the regional trend about under representation of females in primary schools.

Conceptual Framework

Scholars in the field of education approach the problem of female under representation in education in different but complementary ways. Some treat the case in a gender-segregated view; others assess the situation in its entirety, as applied to the education system.

For instance, Garrido (1986) asserted that problem of attainment of universal primary enrolment in the developing countries is highly attributed to five profound determinants. These are: task complexity of universal enrolment, economic setbacks, socio-cultural inhibitions, demographic and geographic hurdles and school inefficiency syndromes.

On the other hand, World Bank (1990, Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) Otieno (1998) reported that the problem of gender inequity in educational participation solely depends on the following hindrances: negative stereotypes such as textbooks portrayal of women in passive and powerless roles and teachers discrimination of females as incompetent; lack of schools in sex-segregated systems; reluctance among female teachers to work in remote areas; the primary school curriculum that does not meet the work interest for employment possibilities; need for girls' household labor; and restrictions related to physical mobility, possible happening of pregnancy and/ or preparation for (early) marriage.

In another version, Odaga and Heneveld, (1995) discuss and classify drawbacks of female participation in primary education in three major categories of factors. These are factors related to socio-economic and socio-cultural, school environment, and political and institutional factors. Therefore, the study used a blend of these three approaches: demographic and geographic analysis (Garrido, 1986), political and institutional aspects (Odaga and Heneveld, 1995), and other factors (World Bank, 1990; Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991; Otieno, 1998).

Review of Related Literature

“Everyone has the right to education” is a 56 years old motto that has been taken as an integral part of the Universal Declaration of Human Right. Even today, after more than half a century of the declaration, basic education seems to be a luxury for millions of children in developing countries like Ethiopia. Sadly, the majority of the children who are denied access to basic education are females.

The failure to universalize primary education is attributed to some six barriers (Garrido, 1986). The first one is task complexity. Complexity in this case refers to the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of ‘universalization’. ‘Universalization’ of primary education is not synonymous with or equated to simply creating access to education. Rather, it comprises three dimensions, namely, access, retention/ completion, and achievement. Access denotes provision of educational opportunity or creation of school places. Retention is the holding power of the school system until a child completes all grades of the first level of education. Achievement is about ensuring that the acceptable standards are acquired. No matter how hard governments work toward ‘universalization’, the effort becomes a futile exercise unless these three dimensions are equally dealt with.

The second factor goes to economic determinants. Education is an investment that needs sizable financial, human, and material input. Hence, both families’ low-income backgrounds to support schooling of their children and weak economic situation of a country at large affect the entire activity in education.

The third barrier is socio-cultural by nature. Religious sanctions on female education (particularly in most Islam countries), and language of instruction in the countries comprising many ethnic groups place a significant pressure on efforts toward universal enrollment. In this connection, Lockheed and Verspoor (1991, p.153), stat that especially “in the crucial, early grades when

children are trying to acquire basic literacy as well as adjust to the demands of the school setting, not speaking the language of instruction can make difference” between failure and success as well as dropping out and persistence in the school. Yet, trying to use all ethnic languages for instruction may not be affordable to the already fragile economies of the developing nations.

Demographic and geographic determinants are considered as the fourth constraints. These include problem of rapid population increase, size of the country and topography coupled with the widespread dispersion of population in areas which are not easily accessible.

The fifth factor is related to school inefficiency. ‘Universalization’ cannot be addressed only by the supply side intervention. It also calls for the demand side provision. In other words, inefficient schools that merely operate with the curriculum that doesn’t meet the real need of the population will fall into lack of attraction and holding power.

The sixth barrier is regarded as legitimacy gap (Shimelis, 2002). Legitimacy gap refers to the difference between resources implicitly promised by the state for education in a given year and the amount delivered. Financial legitimacy gap can be measured in terms of the annual percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that the government has to add to present (future) educational expenditure to provide promised education. The preceding barriers to universal primary education indiscriminately affect the entire process of educational provision. In this case both boys and girls may not be able to escape. When we think of females’ education in the developing countries, we understand that beyond suffering from all setbacks that keep school age children out of school, girls face critical problems that are peculiar to their being female.

In principle, one may not debate on the importance of females’ education, for it paves a way to personal, family, and community development. Some of the benefits are minimizing maternal and infant mortality; reducing fertility rate;

and promoting health and well being, as well as perpetuating literacy of the generation to come. For instance, a literate mother with more than four years education has a 30% reduced fertility rate compared with her illiterate counterpart. Literate mothers have only half of child mortality rate compared with those who have no access to education. Moreover, children whose mothers are educated have more access to schooling, higher retention in the school, and better achievement than children of uneducated mothers, (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991). Despite the perceived advantages of educating girls, their share in participation is lagging far behind that of school age boys.

According to a report released by the World Bank, one- fifth of the World's population cannot read and write, 180 million school age children are denied access to education. Two third of those who cannot read and write were women and 60 percent of the out of school children were girls. In Africa, girls' participation in primary school accounts for only about 57 percent of female school age children with significant down ward variation from region to region. The rate of participation for boys reaches 75 percent. Even then, girls in Africa are more likely than boys to drop out of primary schools and to achieve lower results in examinations. This in turn limits their participation in the post primary levels (World Bank, 1990; Kane, 1995).

Education plays a pivotal role in a country's economic development. In other words, there is a clear connection between education, development, and improved standard of living. For instance, Rahman and Hossain, (1992) cited in Prather (1993), underlined that literacy promotes worker's productivity as a result of which one's earnings and the quality of life will be improved. In further argument, the authors stipulated the irreplaceable role of education to bring about development in low- income countries as "*... the poor are the ones without effective access to schooling*". Magnen (1993, p. 25-26) also strengthens this position as follows "*... the relationship between education and development in the world has emphasized the essential role of primary education in increasing productivity and its high social rate of return.*"

In line with dependence of development on education, the World Bank (1990) reported that the *capacity to acquire, adapt, and advance knowledge* is becoming a more significant factor that affects development than many other factors. This is evidenced in success stories of the newly industrialized economies of Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, Korea, and Singapore. These countries did not achieve rapid economic growth before attaining Universal Primary Enrollment. That is why Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) insisted on saying that education is a corner stone of economic and social development; primary education is its foundation.

Given the strong private and social benefits that are reaped from primary schooling in general and girls' participation in particular, it seems to be a paradox to fail to attain at least the level of gender equilibrium. Since women constitute one half of the Ethiopian population, it is hardly possible to aspire for development of the nation without women's full-fledged participation. Education is considered an essential condition for meaningful contribution to development. On the other hand, insignificant women's participation in higher posts is attributed largely to their under representation at all levels of education (Seyoum, 1986).

Nowadays, even agriculture, which is traditionally labeled as the uneducated person's business, necessitates skills pertaining to increased labor and land productivity (Tefera, as cited in Negus and Workneh, 2003). This skill can be acquired from nowhere other than education. Provided that all other variables are kept constant, the efficiency of literate farmers was found to be absolutely higher than that of their illiterate counterparts (Abay as cited in Negus and Workneh, 2003). But many poor families give priority to their sons' education, for they consider educating boys as an investment in security for old age (Amanuel and Mulugeta, 1999). It is in this context that this study was planned to be carried out.

Methodology

The intent of this study was to examine factors that constrain 'universalization' of primary education in general and the impediments of females' participation in particular. In order to achieve this objective the descriptive survey method was employed.

Sampling Technique and Procedure: Three representative districts: one from rural highland, one from rural lowland and one from urban areas of the region were purpose fully selected and used in the study. Purpose sampling technique was also employed to select the district education officials who were used as data sources.

Thirty (10 from each district) parents were selected using stratified sampling. The need for the parents' inclusion arose from the need to get their perception of equality of educational opportunity for both sexes.

Thirty educational officials and 30 female teachers in the sample districts were also contacted to get their views and experiences regarding the case in point. Furthermore, 30 young women who were forced to drop out their schooling during their childhood also participated in the study. All of the participants were selected on the basis of random sampling technique.

Instruments and Procedures of Data Collection: Different tools of data collection were used to maximize the quality of data used in the study. Questionnaire, (open- and closed- ended for teachers, and district education officials) and interview coupled with focus group discussion with parents and female school dropouts were used to gather relevant data for the study. Documents and printed materials were also reviewed as secondary sources data for trend analysis. Relevant regional and zonal education officials were interviewed to get their opinions regarding challenges of universal enrollment and hindrances to female participation in education.

Instrument Testing: Prior to its actual administration the questionnaire was tested for clarity and internal consistency. The pilot testing took place by distributing the questionnaire to education faculty members of the Addis Ababa University for comment.

Methods of Data Analysis: Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed for data analysis.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The primary objective of this study was to identify challenges to attain universal primary education in the region under study. The investigation was done on the basis of views obtained from the education service providers and service recipients. To this end, data were collected from education officials, school level administration, teachers, parents, community representatives, as well as students, (including dropouts). Data obtained from the different sources were examined against practices around the globe. This section, therefore, presents findings of the study consolidated from various respondent categories.

Determinants of UPE as Perceived by Education Officials

Education officials who participated in the study were asked to reflect on factors that determine attainment of universal primary education in the context of SNNPR with corresponding degree of impact of each of the determinants. Table 1 below displays the data obtained in this regard.

Table 1: Determinants of UPE in SNNPR (Education Officials' View)

No	Determinants	Degree of Impact				
		1*	2	3	4	5
1	Task Complexity of 'Universalization'					
	1.1 Problem of expanding access	-	-	5	10	15
	1.2 Problem of retaining students	1	1	7	13	8
	1.3 Problem of low achievement	-	2	7	11	10
2	Economic Setbacks					
	2.1 Need for child labor	-	2	6	13	9
	2.2 Low income family background	2	1	2	5	20
	2.3 Weak economic situation of the region	-	2	7	11	10
3	Socio - Cultural Barriers					
	3.1 Religious sanction on female education	5	10	6	8	1
	3.2 Vernacular as medium of instruction	12	9	2	1	6
	3.3 Non-mother tongue language of instruction	13	8	3	4	2
	3.4 Discouraging community attitudes to female education	-	1	8	14	7
	3.5 Violence against females' right	5	7	8	7	3
4	Demographic & Geographic Constraints					
	4.1 Rapid population growth	3	-	1	6	20
	4.2 Vastness of the region	5	5	9	9	2
	4.3 Difficult landscape to be accessed	8	4	9	8	1
	4.4 Widespread dispersion of population	9	5	4	7	5
5	School Inefficiency					
	5.1 Curriculum that does not meet the real need of the population	6	4	7	6	7
	5.2 Deterioration in quality of education	4	2	1	13	10
6	Legitimacy Gap					
	6.1 Mismatch between resources promised and allocated for education	2	1	3	10	13
	6.2 Unrealistic planning and concomitant underachievement	-	4	5	9	12

Where: 1= very low negative impact; 2= low negative impact; 3= moderate negative impact; 4= high negative impact; and 5= very high negative impact

Task Complexity Factors

Attainment of universal enrolment is not a single dimensional task. Rather 'universalization' of primary education comprises three aspects, namely, access, retention and achievement (UNESCO, 1994). In this case, universal enrolment should not be equated with only provision of school places. Schools that are built to overcome problems of access need to retain students until the students complete the grade level they need to become literate. For example, unless the schools manage to retain their students through completion of primary grades, the likelihood of relapse of illiteracy is high. Moreover, admission and retention need to go with achievement to ensure the attainment of universal enrolment. Achievement is about meeting the minimum standard set for completion of a given level of primary education.

Seen from the task complexity perspective, problem of attainment of universal primary education in the region under study is attributed to the three dimensions with a minimum degree of variation. For example, 83.3% of the education officials participated in the study reported that access is the major hindrance. Problems related to school retention power and low achievement of the primary complete students are rated second by 70% of the respondents.

Economic Factors

Education is an investment that needs sizable financial, human and material input. Hence the economic situation of a given nation has a direct bearing on its education system. Resource constraints in education, as noted by Garrido (1986), have their roots both in weak economic background of families to support schooling of their offspring and in the general economic performance of the country as a whole. The result of this study confirms the above premise. This means that low-income family background (73.3%) and weak regional economy (70%) have a great negative impact on the effort made to attain UPE in the region considered in this study.

Socio-Cultural Factors

Failure to reach universal enrolment can also be influenced by problems related to the socio-cultural condition of the society. At its face value, it might seem that the socio-cultural aspects would have predominance over other factors in hindering the attempt made to achieve 'universalization' in this particular region. This assumption may have a strong hold in regions (like SNNPR) where more than 50 ethnic groups have established constituency. Ethnic diversity also results in linguistic, cultural and/or religious variation. Thus, religion, medium of instruction, community attitude towards education, and violence against females' right are the variables that were presented to education officials to be rated in accordance with their degree of impact. From among the 5 listed socio-cultural determinants, only the variable discouraging community attitude to female education was rated by 70% of the respondents as having a very high negative impact. Violence against females' right, religious sanction on female's education, vernacular as a medium of instruction stand second to fifth with 33.3, 30, 23.3, and 20 percentage, respectively. This result assures that the negative impact by the four factors is not as high as the compact of the attitude of the community to females' education in the Region.

Demographic and Geographic Factors

The size of the region vis-à-vis its topographic nature and demographic characteristics can determine actions towards UPE. Widespread dispersion of population, difficult landscape to be accessed, vastness of the region, and rapid population growth are said to be major challenges in this regard. However, only a *rapid population growth* is considered as a serious problem by 86.7 percent of the respondents. This is followed by widespread dispersion of population (40%), vastness of the region (36.7%) and difficult landscape to reach (30%).

School Inefficiency Factors

School inefficiency factors are classified into internal inefficiency and external inefficiency. Internal inefficiency refers to the in-school attributes like high rate of dropping out, high rate of repetition, and problem of completion. External inefficiency mainly focuses on issues related to out of school settings. It is related to the demand side problem. Curriculum that does not meet the work interest of the population and quality-compromised education can be mentioned as examples of external inefficiency.

In response to the question of school inefficiency, 76.7% of the participants indicated their worry about deterioration in the quality of education. This issue of quality also has a mutually reinforcing nature with the problem of low achievement, which has been rated to have a very high negative impact by 70% of the respondents in this study.

Legitimacy Gap as One Factor

Legitimacy gap in this context refers to the unfulfilled promise in the financial allocation and disbursement. It is measured as the annual percentage of GDP that a government would have to add to present/future educational expenditure. The other dimension of this legitimacy gap is seen in the planning process. Ambitious planning and its concomitant underachievement can best describe the gap.

In both cases the education officials disclosed that legitimacy gap is one of the major obstacles in the Region's effort to universalize primary education. The gap between resources promised and allocated for education was rated as having high negative impact by 76.7%. Ambitious planning and its resulting underachievement was rated by 70% of the participants as having a high negative impact the efforts made towards achieving UPE in the Region.

Determinants of Female Participation as Perceived by Female Teachers

Female teachers were among the important sources of data used in the study. In the questionnaire, 17 determinants were presented to the respondents for their opinion of the extent to which the determinants affect the education of both girls and boys. Table 2 below reveals the data obtained in this regard.

Table 2: Determinants of School Participation and Their Corresponding Influence on Girls and/ or Boys (Female Teachers Views)

S/No	Suggested Determinants	Extent of Influence					
		Female		Male		Both F&M	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1	Textbooks portrayal of passive and powerless roles	30	100	—	—	-	-
2	Lack of role models in schools	30	100	—	—	—	—
3	Teachers' perception of incompetence	30	100	—	—	—	—
4	Curriculum that fails to meet the work interest for employment	6	20	—	—	24	80
5	Family need for household labor	21	70	—	—	9	30
6	Restrictions on physical mobility	30	100	—	—	-	-
7	Possible happening of pregnancy	30	100	—	—	-	-
8	Preparation for early marriage	30	100	—	—	-	-
9	Forced marriage /abduction	30	100	—	—	-	-
10	Higher repetition rate	21	70	—	—	9	30
11	Higher dropout rate	21	70	—	—	9	30
12	Sexual harassment by fellow students	30	100	—	—	—	—
13	Gender bias in academic performance	30	100	—	—	—	—
14	Sexual harassment by teachers	30	100	—	—	—	—
15	Sexual liaison with teachers	30	100	—	—	—	—
16	Risk of traveling long distance to the school	30	100	—	—	—	—
17	Interest in bride price	30	100	—	—	—	—

As shown in the Table, 10 of the 17 suggested determinants were reported by the respondents to have an exclusive effect on girls' participation in education.

These factors are:

- lack of role models in the school;
- teacher's perception of incompetence;
- possible happening of pregnancy;
- early and forced marriage/abduction;
- sexual harassment by fellow students;
- gender bias in academic performance;
- sexual harassment by teachers;
- sexual liaison with teachers;
- risk of traveling long distance to the school; and
- interest in bride price.

As regards factors like preparation for early marriage (96.7%), restriction on physical mobility (96.7%), and textbooks portrayal of passive and powerless roles (93.3%), the nominal share, [that is, 3.3 and 6.7 percents respectively] seems to go to both boys and girls. On the other hand, determinants such as higher dropout rate, higher repetition rate, and need for child labor are rated 33.3, 40, and 43.3 percents respectively in a way that they apply to both sexes. Even then, the intensity lies on the females 66.7, 60, and 56.7 percents of respondents believe that it is the female who is going to be highly affected. The problem related to the curriculum that fails to meet the work interest for employment is responded to by 80 percent of the participants as a constraint that affects both sexes.

Determinants of Female Participation as Perceived by the Dropouts and Parents

Females' responsibilities for domestic chores are among the factors that result in under representation of girls in the primary schools. Efforts have been exerted to examine whether this is the case in the region under study.

First, 17 commonly practiced household activities were identified and tested for relevance. Secondly, all the activities have been presented to the dropout girls and parents groups. The intention was to know dropouts' and parents' opinion related to who the listed activities are performed by. Table 3 below reports the result.

Table 3: Responsibility for Domestic Chores (Female Dropouts and Parents)

No	Selected Domestic Chores	Responsible											
		As Perceived by Dropouts						As Perceived by Parents					
		Boys		Girls		Both		Boys		Girls		Both	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	House cleaning	-	-	27	90	3	10	-	-	21	70	9	30
2	Washing	-	-	11	36.7	19	63.3	-	-	13	43.3	17	56.7
3	Bed making	-	-	21	70	9	30	-	-	23	76.7	7	23.3
4	Chopping	-	-	28	93.3	2	6.7	-	-	29	96.7	1	3.3
5	Table making	-	-	28	93.3	2	6.7	-	-	29	96.7	1	3.3
6	Milking	-	-	15	50	15	50	-	-	21	70	9	30
7	Water fetching	-	-	17	56.7	13	43.3	-	-	19	63.3	11	36.7
8	Firewood collection			20	66.7	10	33.3	-	-	23	76.7	7	23.3
9	Caring for younger siblings	-	-	30	100	-	-	-	-	25	83.3	5	16.7
10	Helping grand parents	-	-	26	86.7	4	13.3	-	-	24	80	6	20
11	Representing mothers in social activities	-	-	30	100	-	-	-	-	29	96.7	1	3.3
12	Cooking	-	-	29	96.7	1	3.3	-	-	29	96.7	1	3.3
13	Baking	-	-	24	80	6	20	-	-	22	73.3	8	26.7
14	Shopping	-	-	20	66.7	10	33.3	-	-	22	73.3	8	26.7
15	Grain grinding	-	-	30	100	-	-	-	-	30	100	-	-
16	Cattle dung removing	-	-	26	86.3	4	13.3	-	-	22	73.3	8	26.7
17	Spices blending	-	-	29	96.7	1	3.3	-	-	30	100	-	-

*N=30 for each group of respondents

As shown in the table above, seventeen routinely executed domestic activities were presented to both female dropouts and parents. Neither the dropouts nor the parents hold the opinion that none of the activities is taken

care of solely by boys. With the exception of washing and fetching water, the remaining 15 activities are considered by 70 to 100 percent of the respondents to be the responsibility of females. In the case of water fetching and washing, 63.3 and 43.3 percents of parent respondents assume that it is the sole responsibility of girls. Whereas, some 36.7 and 56.7 percents of the participants agreed that both male and female children are responsible for the tasks.

Female dropouts recognize the issue in almost a similar way too. They reported that 12 out of the 17 household chores were nearly the exclusive responsibilities of females. Unlike the parents group, female dropouts responded that some activities such as shopping, firewood collection and milking are performed by both sexes with varying degree of responsibility. However, 70-100 percent of the participants from both sides depict the following as exclusive females' domestic engagements.

Table 4: Girls' Household Responsibilities

Activities	Respondents	
	Dropouts	Parents
Caring for younger sibling (D)	100	83.3
Representing mothers in social activities (O)	100	96.7
Grain grinding (S.I)	100	100
Spices blending (S.I)	96.7	100
Cooking (D)	96.7	96.7
Table making (D)	93.3	96.7
Chopping (D)	93.3	96.7
House cleaning (D)	90	70
Helping grand parents (D)	86.7	80
Cattle dung removing (D)	86.7	73.3
Baking (S.I)	80	73.3
Bed making (D)	70	76.7

Note: D =Daily S.I=Specific Interval O=Occasionally

As can be observed from the table shown above, a given school girl, unlike her brother, accomplishes 8 tedious and tiresome chores on a regular basis. Male children are exempted from most of these activities by patriarchal rule that reins over women from remote pasts. Females also admit that they are destined to do fewer activities

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

The Educational Officials' View

This group consists of respondents from district education office and regional educational bureau levels. The education officials identified the nature of the task of 'universalization', economic problem, and legitimacy gap as the salient hindering factors of UPE in the region.

With reference to task complexity of the 'universalization' process, both the demand and supply side problems come to surface. Problems of expanding access or inability to create enough school places for all school age children go to the supply side gap. Supply related gap has its root in the weak economic situation of the region as is for the nation at large. The next highly rated variables are problems of retaining students in the school and low achievements of students. These two drawbacks reflect the demand side problem as a result of which parents may lack interest to send their children to school.

The impact of poor economic situation is the second and equally important factor that determines the move ahead with UPE plan. As noted by the respondents, nearly one half of the school age children especially the rural ones lack access to primary education due to low-income family background, need for child labor, and weak economic situation of the region.

The third major barrier arises from legitimacy gap. This gap is described as a mismatch between resources promised and allocated for education and unrealistic planning and its concomitant underachievement. Rapid population growth, (demographic barrier), and deterioration in the quality of education (school inefficiency barrier) are factors that place high negative impact on the case in point. Particularly the concern about the quality of education consistently goes along with problem of school retention power and low achievement.

The Female Teachers' View

Female teachers noted that a wide range of factors keep girls from schooling. This group of respondents rated 13 out of 17 suggested determinants of school participation to be exclusively (100%) affecting girls. Even though determinants such as higher dropout rate, higher repetition rate and need for child labor are identified as common to both, the intensity lies on females. For example 70 percent of the respondents indicated that, need for child labor, dropping out and repetition are more critical with females than with male children.

According to this group, the 13 suggested determinants that exclusively limit females' participation in education are presented as follows in their respective categories:

- **School factors**

- Textbook portrayal of passive and powerless roles.
- Teachers' precipitation of incompetence.
- Gender bias in academic performance.
- Sexual harassment by teachers.
- Sexual liaison with teachers.

- **Societal factors**

- Lack of role models in school
- Preparation for early marriage
- Forced marriage (abduction)
- Sexual harassment by fellow students & others
- Interest in bride price
- Restriction on physical mobility

- **Home-school distance factor**

- Risk of traveling long distance to the school

- **Personal factor**

- Possible happening of pregnancy

The Dropouts' and Parents' View

All the female dropouts included in this study agreed that poverty, higher responsibility in household chores, and early marriage are the three major factors that forced them to discontinue their education. In fact it is difficult to see these three factors as independent factors. Rather they are connected to each other. Poverty limits children's opportunity of getting necessary support for schooling. Inability of parents to provide their children with at least school supplies, uniform, and food has a clear implication for the extent of the success of students at school.

On the other hand, poor parents mostly resort to engaging their female children in intensive household work for the benefit of the entire family. This temporarily relieves parents from the direct and opportunity costs of schooling.

The tragic chain does not end at this stage. As noted by female dropouts, it is followed by another crippling event-early marriage. A young girl is doomed to lifelong illiteracy when she is exposed to early\forced marriage. In so doing the family at most earns bride price or at least the girl's living expense

is taken care of by her husband. That is why poverty, the need for child labor and early marriage can be regarded as interdependent factors that influence each other.

Despite sharing the same idea with female dropouts, 70 percent of parent respondents view female performance in education to be inferior males. This can be explained by the fact that 93.3 percent of the parents of the female dropouts witness that their daughters have no time for study at home.

Furthermore, parents especially the illiterate ones seem a bit reluctant to send their daughters to school when compare to their interest to do it for their sons. The underlying reason for this as grasped from the focus group discussion, is that they give considers educating boys as an investment in the future of the family. Educating boys is particularly taken as security for old age.

Conclusion

The analysis of the data revealed that access to education in general, and female's participation and persistence in particular is negatively affected by various factors in the region under study. Though some of the challenges were faced by both boys and girls, females bear such multiple burdens as lack of role models in the school and their vicinity, gender bias in academic performance and pregnancy. In addition, early marriage, sexual harassment, feeling of insecurity to travel long distance, and interest in bride price are among the hindering factors related to females' participation and persistence in school. These, coupled with the received irrelevance of girls' shat by the local communities tend to be persistent constraints in the effort to attain the goal of education for all.

Parental, particularly maternal illiteracy was also found to be pertinent setback for girls to enroll as well as advance in their education. Illiterate mothers have more children than their literate counterparts. This makes it very difficult for them to respond to all needs of their family members without

active support of their female children. Hence, girls usually engage in family matters beginning from early years of their age. Female illiteracy perpetuates this way. Furthermore, a significant number of children are forced to dropping out due to competition between the familial obligation of children and the inflexible school calendar.

To put it in a nutshell, despite all the efforts made and gains achieved so far by the regional government and non-government actors to bridge the gender gap in both enrollment and persistence, a tough task seems to remain ahead to reach the desired end. Evidently, the assessment revealed that all stakeholders in education need to integrate their resources and synchronize their actions in a way that eliminates gender disparity in at least primary school level.

Recommendations

In line with the major findings of the study the following recommendations are forwarded to mitigate the problem of female under representation in primary education in SNNPR.

Alternative Basic Education Provision

Traveling long distance between home and school, direct cost of schooling and opportunity cost of educating girls are considered prohibitive factors to females' education. These problems can best be addressed through provision of quality alternative basic education in the neighborhood of children. This scheme is preferred for its comparative cost advantage. It is not capital intensive to create school places. Most of the materials to be used in the process of construction are locally available. Secondly, the beneficiaries in the form of material and labor contributions share the substantial part of the construction cost. Thirdly, security problem that may arise from sending female children to a distant school gets solved, for parents can keep eyes on their daughters learning in a close proximity to their home. Fourthly, flexibility of the learning timetable designed to suit the

local communities interest alleviates problem of time spent traveling long distance back and forth between home and school.

Awareness Raising Campaigns on Importance of Female Education

Attitude towards female education in general and performance in particular seems to be not well nurtured. Teachers label females as incompetent. Parents feel not at ease to send their daughter to school, for they underestimate the potential of females in being successful in their study. Male students in the school perceive females as academically inferior. Sadly, females themselves have become victims of the stereotype and are accustomed to echoing the same tradition.

Nevertheless, the truth is quite different from the prevailing conviction. Educating a boy is educating one person, educating a girl is educating the entire family. Especially female education warrants perpetuation of intergenerational literacy. Hence advocacy groups need to design strategies that help to gain the battle over the negative attitude to females' education.

Arranging School Visits by Role Models

One of the crucial hindrances of females' education in the region is reported to be lack of role models in the schools. The best solution to this problem is increasing the number of female teachers in the schools. However, it is not an easy task to recruit, train, and deploy thousands of female teachers into schools at once. Obviously it needs rigorous planning and mobilization of huge resources. Time dimension is also an issue of concern. Therefore, it seems wise to devise an alternative mechanism that enables concerned bodies to withstand the challenge. Arranging visits to primary schools by role model females is said to be an instrumental in this regard. This approach helps the rural female primary school students to have some successful women a girl can identify herself with and aspire to be like. This can be done in cooperation with government and non government organizations which work on issues of gender equity. A one-day experience-sharing with a role

model may mark a turning point in one's destiny. This could also mean many things for a rural female child who might be thinking of her schooling as a futile exercise that may lead her to no where beyond becoming a house wife like her predecessors.

Working with Community Groups (CBOs)

Community attitudes can more easily be shaped when initiatives come from the community itself than effort from outside. Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are ideally closer to that particular community. Thus, attitudinal problems related to females' education can best be tackled by leaders and proactive members of social institution, like *Idir*, *Tsiwa*, *Senbete*, *Meredaja*, peasants', women's and youths' associations. Religious leaders and institutions are also vital sources of support as long as they are approached in a way that does not offend them. In attempts like these, it would be easier to reach the desired end in shaping the community's attitude and solicit support. Here the community is viewed as not just the source of the problem but also part of its solution.

Promoting Community Participation in the School Affairs

In principle, schools serve the community in which they are established. Therefore, the community as a proprietor of the school needs to be contributing to strengthening the school. In this context, community participation should not be equated to labor, material and/or financial contribution. It needs to go beyond 'contribution' and reach the level of involvement. The role of education and training boards as well as that of teacher-parents committee has to be internalized and fully implemented in order to circumvent the problems of gender disparity.

Revisiting Contents of Textbooks

Textbook portrayal of females in passive and powerless roles is one of the frequently heard and long-standing constraints of females' education. In the

first place, it is unfortunate to publish textbooks that convey distorted image of one half of the society. Secondly, it is still possible to take corrective measures on such parts of textbooks. The simplest to obtain feedback on this issue is sending out questionnaires to schools with quarterly activity reporting format to be filled in and returned to the regional education bureau for analysis and action.

Minimizing Females' Domestic Workload

Traditional gender role classification that puts females in charge of carrying out all or most of the household chores has overburdened them so that they had no time to spare for studying at home. Consequently, their educational performance gets frustrated and ends up with discouragement to continue learning.

In this case, parents unintentionally disfavor their daughters. Boys are also winning the race at the expense of the failure of girls. Naturally, neither parents nor boys deliberately want to hurt their daughters and sisters. If this is a biologically, socially and legally accepted norm, sympathy needs to go beyond a lip service. Thus, burden sharing should be thought of as the first and foremost positive reaction to relieve them from excessive workload. This intention can be communicated through hierarchies of government structures down until it reaches each household.

On the other hand, NGOs and CBOs need to revitalize their intervention to focus on introducing time and labor saving technologies to the rural communities to help girls whereby girls could get enough time to go to school and to study at home.

Literacy as a Vehicle for Family Planning

The fast population growth in the region is reported to be a profound challenge to attain UPE. Statistics revealed that only 35.1% of the rural women have knowledge of family planning. Only 2% of the total women

population is currently using one or the other method of birth spacing or control in the region. The adult illiteracy rate among women also has reached over 80 percent in almost all rural parts of the region.

And yet, literature on social payoff to primary education uncovers that literate mother with more than four years of education have 30% reduced fertility rate compared to her illiterate counterpart. Hence, the interdependence between literacy and promotion of family planning schemes should not be underestimated.

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