

Barriers Affecting Retention of Girls in Schools in the Amasaman Circuit in the Ga West Municipality of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana

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Abstract

This research sought to explore the barriers to the retention of girls in school at the basic level in the Amasaman Circuit in the Ga West Municipality of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It focused on the background characteristics of girls who drop-out from schools and the causes of school drop-out among girls in the Amasaman Circuit. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches (mixed method). The specific method adopted by the study was concurrent nested. The purposive sampling and snow balling methods were used to select 30 drop-out girls, 60 regular pupils, 12 parents of drop-outs, 12 parents of regular pupils, 12 teachers from selected schools, 4 assembly members and one officer from the girl-child of the Ga West Municipality for the study. The main instruments used to collect data were interviews and academic records. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data. It was realized that the major barriers affecting retention of girls in school include teenage pregnancy and financial problems. The study recommends that stakeholders should establish mechanisms to prevent teenage pregnancies in basic schools since it is the main cause of school dropouts among girls.

Keywords: Dropout, financial problems, girl-child, retention, teenage pregnancy.

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Introduction

Globally, tradition and religion are deeply rooted in the life of people which threaten the inclusiveness of education. This consequently excludes mainly girls and women (King, 2011). In addition, globally, there was a time when a lot of people believed that it was not important to educate females. In some societies, some people still believe that the proper place for a girl is the home. Based on this belief, they argue that it is a waste of resources to educate females. Some also believe that girl's education can bring about a revolution in the society (Rodríguez et al., 2007). In recent times, there has been a lot of efforts to promote girls' education. Some global conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) indicate that education is a basic human right (UNESCO, 2016). CEDAW, for instance, is an international agreement, which requires that all nations eliminate all forms of discriminations against females in all areas of life including education and also promote equal rights of female. Education is one of the ways for women emancipation and empowerment, as was affirmed in both the Cairo and Beijing women's conferences. Despite these global efforts, there is still wide spread of disparity in education in terms of gender. Women account for two-third of the world's illiterate adults, and girls account for the same two-third of the world's children without access to education. Globally, more females are illiterate as compared to males (Puri, 2016). This is a critical situation, which calls for the serious attention of global policymakers. It has been observed that the global gender gap in school enrolment is narrowing, however, girls continue to face serious obstacles in their progress along the education continuum. According to recent data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), drop-out rates remain for girls as they struggle with gender disparities at every level of education.

In most African societies, the patriarchal system is the major source of discrimination against women. This system has determined and shaped the evolution and sustenance of some social and cultural practices in relation to gender in Africa. For instance, this system has created different roles for males and females. The outcome of this system is the endorsement of child marriage, a phenomenon that affects the education of female students. It has been established that, if current trends of child marriage in Africa continue, the continent will become the region with the largest number of child marriages globally by 2050 (UNICEF, 2015).

In Ghana, just like other African countries, there are traces of the patriarchal system. This system implicitly influences the policies and measures of various governments of Ghana since the colonial era. Though successive Ghanaian constitutions have accorded women the rights of citizenship, Ghanaian women are yet to enjoy full citizenship rights because their rights are undermined daily by discriminatory policies and practices in public and private, and within the state and society (Tsikata, 2007: 163). Since independence to date, the informal economy of Ghana, the livelihood-base of many women, has become the largest source of employment in urban Ghana, second only to agriculture for the country as a whole (Tsikata, 2007: 165).

Narratives of Ghanaian history have deliberately sidelined the female dimension, particularly the local exigencies within which women operate. Few women have been appointed to occupy high political positions in Ghana. The narratives of Ghanaian history hardly delineate the socio-cultural milieu of women and how it has impacted on them economically and psychologically. In recent times, however, attention in both public and private circles has been given to issues about women in Ghana. In the academia in Ghana, women issues have received special attention over the past four decades. As Yeboah et al, (2014: 287) noted:

WGS [Women and Gender Studies] in Ghana, like in many Sub-Saharan African countries, has seen exceptional growth since the 1980s. These studies have evolved from specific women's issues and concerns to the establishment of research groups and bodies for the advancement of these issues; the taking on of a wider feminist framework and gender perspectives; and the inclusion of WGS in the curricula.

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Women's education in Ghana has appreciated over the years. This was due to the evolution and implementation of a number of educational reforms which focused on girls' education. One of the educational reforms was the Free, Compulsory, Universal, and Basic Education (FCUBE), which was introduced in 1995. According to the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana under Article 25(1), all persons including females and males shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and that basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all. With this, the government of Ghana re-launched the policy of Free Compulsory Basic Education (FCUBE) in 1995 supported by the World Bank Primary School Development Project (PSDP). This programme was aimed at getting all children into school. The FCUBE programme was to increase enrolment of girls in basic education to equal that of boys and reduce the drop-out rate of both boys and girls and increase the transition rate from basic education to senior high secondary (Akyeampong, 2009).

According to Apusigah (2003), other strategies to improve girls' access to education in Ghana included scholarships for girls from poor families; promoting gender issues in curriculum, and intensifying science, technology and mathematics education for girls. These innovations and gains, notwithstanding, there are still concerns about the education of females in Ghana. For instance, the multiple indicator survey of the Ghana Statistical Services (2017/18) revealed that as high as 25 percent of youth who should be in Senior High School are not in school. The report further indicated that as of 2010, 38 per cent of females aged six years and above were attending school, but by 2012, it had dropped to 24 per cent 15 per cent of girls are at risk of dropping out of primary school (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019).

Most studies have focused on comparing enrolment figures of boys and girls with less emphasis on retention. Most strategies have also focused mainly on enrolment. However, most of the girls enrolled in schools dropped out as a result of early marriage, pregnancy, poverty, sexual harassment and other varied barriers. Adolescent pregnancy statistics from 2017 show that 14

percent of girls in Ghana aged from 15 to 19 have at least one child (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). Retention of girls in school has been a major challenge because of certain barriers.

This study seeks to examine barriers that hinder the retention of girls in schools at the basic level in the Amasaman Circuit in the Ga West Municipality. The main purpose of the study is to provide recommendations to improve retention of girls in school in the Amasaman area.

Theoretical Framework

This study is contextualized within the framework of the social learning theory. This theory postulates that behaviour is learnt from the environment through the process of observational learning (Bandura, 1977). The thrust of this theory is that the extent of children's learning is a function of observation; that children are more likely to imitate those they admire (Bandura, 1977). The environment is made up of a number of variables and events, which contribute to the general behaviour of individuals in it. In general, this theory underscores that the social environment, largely the individual behaviours of key people in a society, shape and determine what a child learns and the child's attitude towards learning. Children pay attention to models in society, be it their parents or other characters and encode their behaviour, which eventually shapes theirs. The adaption of this theory is significant because it will help to measure the extent to which the social characters and background of children determine their learning behaviour at the basic level in the Amasaman Circuit. For instance, most women in that area are into informal activities and childbirth, the reason for which most girls do not seem to embrace higher education (Fox & Alldred, 2016). With dropout among girls been a common phenomenon as observed by pupils, they are likely to imitate what they observe. Again, when a girl child in an area dropped out of school and efforts are made for her to return to school, others see nothing wrong with following same. The social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that observational learning can have a powerful effect, and that the effect is enhanced

when the observers believe that the person demonstrating the behaviour is similar to themselves. The social learning theory is also relevant to this study because gender is socially constructed through experiences. This implies individuals assume gender roles from experiences they acquire through observation and interactions. Indeed, Fox and Alldred (2016) conclude that gender is perceived as a social construct and therefore individuals assume gender roles through their engagement with the social world.

Another theory that supports this study is the socialization theory. Socialization theory explains the process by which individuals acquire language, values, habits, norms, customs, attitudes, social skills and knowledge in the society. In other words, it explains the process of human personality development within a given social environment with specific living conditions (Hurrelmann, 2009). Socialization is a combination of externally imposed rules, roles and expectations on individuals to conform. Gendered socialization trains boys and girls to conform to roles they see males and females performing. Thus, socialization influences how males and females behave in the society (Fox & Alldred, 2016). The socialization theory is relevant to this study because girls observe and imitate other females in the community. If they observe that most women are in the informal sector and childbirth with no or low education, they may not see the reason for staying in school.

In addition, with socialization theory, the society expects different roles, behaviours and attitudes from females and males. Gendered Socialization has the tendency for females and males to be socialized differently. Girls are socialized to conform to traditional female roles and boys are socialized to conform to the traditional male roles. During childhood, parents select different games and toys intended to socialize both females and males into their appropriate gender roles (Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011). Females are given dolls in an attempt to socialize them into future roles as mothers (Adu-Yeboah & Forde, 2011). This preparation for gender roles continues with females always closer to their mothers by assisting them in

performing their motherly roles. By the time girls enter the Junior High School, they have acquired enough knowledge on their roles as mother, and hence, they do not see the essence of further education. The socialization theory explains the expectations of females and males and this forms the basis of education provided for both females and males. The expectation is that females' roles do not need higher education hence the females drop out from school to begin their occupation which they already have enough knowledge about through the socialization provided for them.

Girl child education in Ghana

The term, girl-child, is used to refer to the biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years. In other words, any girl who is yet to attain the adult age of 18 years is regarded as a girl-child. Given the age brackets of the girl-child, it is obvious that the education of the girl-child spans from crèche to the high school.

Literature on gender and girl-child education in Ghana has shown a lot of challenges confronting the education of girls. Some of these barriers include poverty, cultural mind-set about gender, early marriage, pregnancy, school infrastructure, transportation and safety (Lambert et al., 2012). In her manuscript on the barriers to girls' education in Ghana, Bardley (2000) identifies cultural factors as the main hindrance to a girl's education in Ghana. Similarly, Arku et al. (2014) also identify poverty and socio-cultural factors as the main barriers to a girl's education in Ghana. Walsh (2018) claims that cultural practices against women affect all aspects of women including education of the girl child. Among poverty and school conditions, the discrimination that girls face in the school is a powerful reason why girls drop out of school more than boys (Agamesie-Grooms, 2011). Lambert et al. (2012) further indicate that "teenage pregnancy remains a big problem for female education, especially in the poorest communities" (p. 14). According to Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011) anytime a girl becomes pregnant she ought to leave the school because it is an offense to be pregnant while in school,

so after the delivery most of the girls do not go back. Yidana (2000) has also examined the factors that influence female enrolment in educational institutions in the Mamprusi District of present-day North-East Region. He established that Islamic beliefs, the desire of parents to instil Islamic teachings and values in their children and their abhorrence of Western civilization, which is associated with Western education, forces Muslim parents to send their children to Koranic schools. On decisions about sending children to school, parents make varied decisions depending upon the sex of their children. In Ghana, most parents generally made favourable decisions about sending their male children to school compared to their female counterparts (Adu-Yeboah & Forde, 2011).

Beyond the socio-cultural settings, some scholars have examined girl-child education in Ghana within the perspective of economic considerations. Sekyere (2002) establishes that some parents have the obnoxious and erroneous notion that the education of girls is a waste of resources. Consequently, they prefer to enrol their male children in school; their female children are made to stay home to learn the science of the home economy and traditional values of womanhood. Similarly, Boateng (2005) identifies the lack of financial support as the main factor responsible for the dropout of girls from public schools in the Awutu-Senya District of the Central Region of Ghana. Many studies indicated that poverty leads to lower academic achievement, which also leads to high drop-out rates (Borg et al., 2012). Other scholars also identified poor academic performance and high cost of education in Ghana as sources of school drop-out of girls (Oduro, 2000). In other words, the financial problems of parents directly determine the enrolment and retention of girls in school (Lambert et al., 2012). When poverty strikes a home, girls tend to suffer more than boys in education which could affect their academic performance. There is, however, little knowledge on whether females drop-out is as a result of poor academic performance. This research also intends to find out whether academic performance is a factor by comparing the performance of girls to boys.

The school facilities, their environments and location have also received attention in the discourse on girl-child education. Hunt (2008), opines that the distance that children have to commute from home to school and the nature of a school's facilities can serve as disincentives for children, particularly girls, to attend school. Nyarko (2011) contends that the lack of separate toilets for girls is a major cause of absenteeism of girls in schools.

Many girls are forced to drop out because they perform multiple duties and responsibilities at home. Young girls have to perform many domestic activities before and after school. This limits their quality time to study leading to poor academic performance (Adu-Yeboah & Forde, 2011).

This study builds on the existing discourse on girl-child education in Ghana. Using the Amasaman Circuit as a case study, this study seeks to dissect the socio-cultural and economic settings of parents and girls of school-going age to determine the extent to which local exigencies influence the enrolment and retention of the girl-child in school.

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Research questions

1. What are the background characteristics of girls who dropped out from school in Amasaman Circuit?
2. What are the barriers that hinder the retention of girls in schools in Amasaman Circuit?
3. What difference exists between performance of males and females in basic schools in Amasaman Circuit?

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistical difference in the academic performance of boys and girls in Amasaman Circuit.

Methods

The transformative paradigm was adopted by the study. The transformative paradigm adopts the stance that social reality is historically bound and is constantly changing, depending on social, political, cultural and power based factors (Mertens, 2009). This paradigm is used because the researchers believe that knowledge is true, which can be put into practice to empower and transform the lives of the people (Issaka et al., 2022).

This study adopted the mixed method approach. Greene (2007) defines mixed method research as the type that uses both quantitative and qualitative research approaches for broad in-depth comprehension and justification. This research used mixed method approach so that quantitative data collected could be used to test hypothesis and also use qualitative data to explain the barriers affecting retention of girls in schools in the study area.

For the purpose of this research, the concurrent nested design was found appropriate. This is because the concurrent nested design gives precedence to one stage of data collection which controls the project, while the second stage is embedded or nested into the project and plays a supporting role. Creswell et al. (2011) posit that the term ‘concurrent’ indicates that both qualitative and quantitative data are being collected at the same time. However, in concurrent nested studies, one of the methods dominates whilst the other one is embedded, or nested. The dominant method for this study is qualitative and this is supported by quantitative data. The qualitative data were collected through interviews while the quantitative data were obtained from the students’ academic records.

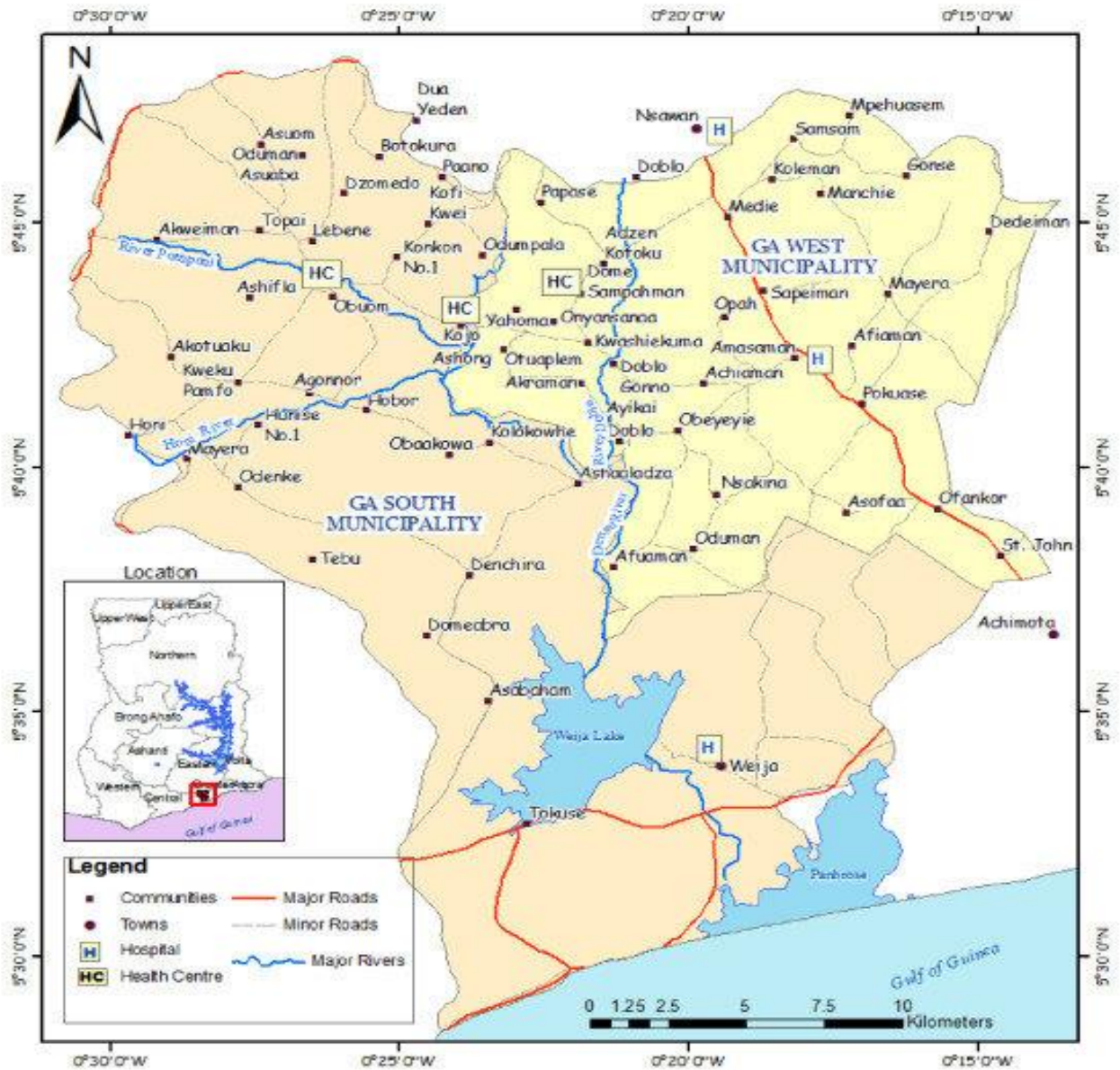
The Study Area

The study was carried out in three basic schools namely, Amasaman MA2 JHS, Anglican JHS, Famwak JHS in the Amasaman Circuit. Amasaman Circuit is part of the Ga West Municipality, a municipal, which was established in 2008 by a Legislative Instrument (L.I.) 1858 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014: 1). The Ga West Municipal Assembly was carved out from the Ga District when the district was divided into Ga West and Ga South Municipalities in 2008 with Amasaman as its administrative capital. It is bordered to the East by the Ga East and Accra Metropolitan Assembly, to the south by the Ga South District, Akwapim South to the north, and Ga Central to the north-south. The Ga West Municipality covers a landmass of 299.578 kilometres (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014: 1). According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census in Ghana, the population of the Ga West Municipality as of 2010 was 219,788 “with relatively more females (51.0%) than males (49.0%) ... with 33.4 percent of the population aged below 15 years ...” (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014: x). In terms of education, though literacy is high, the dropout rates are disturbingly high. The Ghana Statistical Service has provided a statistical breakdown of the rates of literacy and education in the Ga West Municipality. The report indicated that of the population, 11 years and above, 92.3 percent are literate and 7.2 percent are not. Of the literate population, 34.9 percent are able to read and write in English language only while 56.3 percent indicated they could read and write in both English and Ghanaian language. Of the population aged 3 years and older in the Ga West Municipality, 6.7 percent has never attended school, 55.9 percent have attended school in the past and less than two-fifths (37.4%) are currently attending school. Of those currently attending school, 13.8 percent were in Kindergarten, 41.3 percent were at primary level and 17.7 percent in Junior High Schools (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The Ga West Municipality is made up of six circuits, namely, Pokuase, Mayera, Ofanko, Ayikei Doblo,

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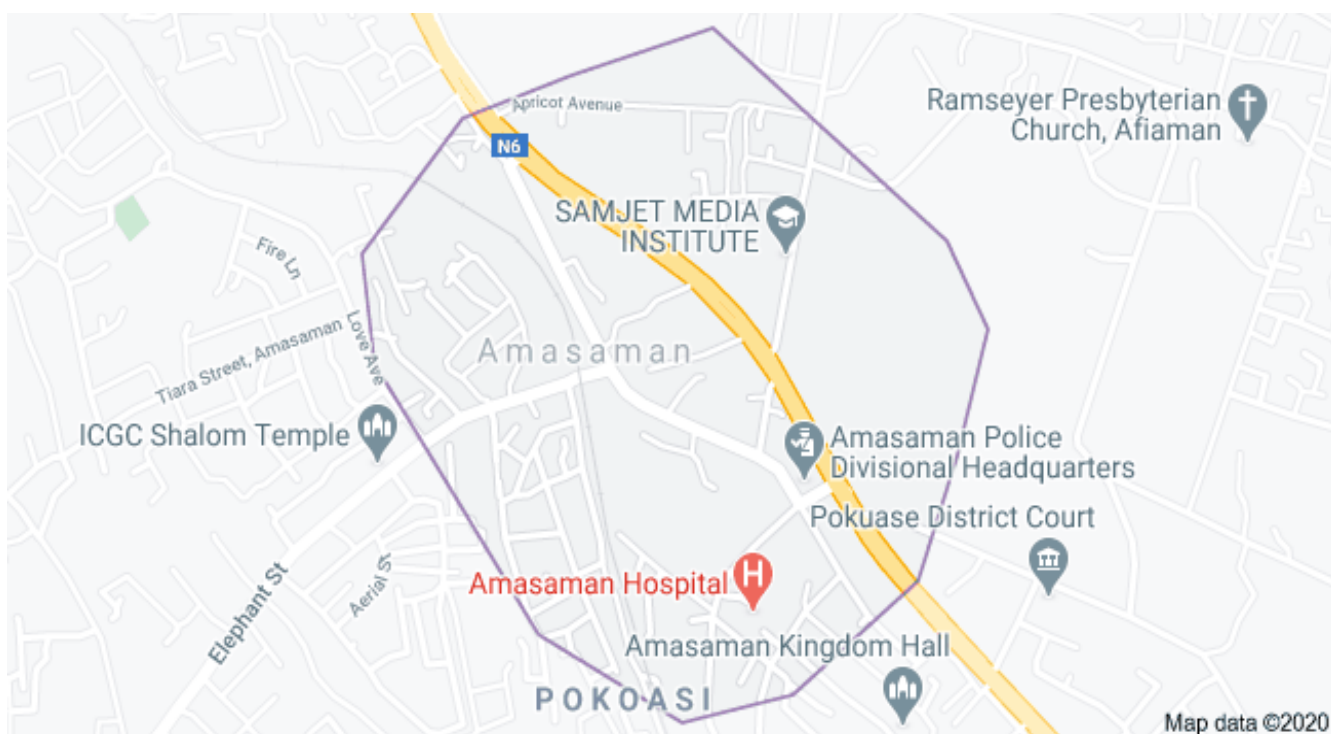
Kotoku, and Amasaman. Each of the circuit has several public basic schools with the Amasaman Circuit having six basic public schools.

Map 1: Map Showing Ga West Municipality



Source: Ackumey, M.M., et al. 2012. “Socio-Cultural Determinants of Timely and Delayed Treatment of Buruli ulcer: Implications for Disease Control.” *Infectious Disease of Poverty*, 1(6): 3

Map 2: Map of the Amasaman Circuit



Source: Map data (2020)

The accessible population for the study included all the female students in the Amasaman MA 2 JHS, Amasaman Anglican JHS and Famwak JHS. The total female population for the three schools was... as at the time of data collection. The sample for the study includes 30 JHS dropouts, 60 JHS regular students, 12 parents of dropout children, 12 parents of selected students, 12 teachers of selected schools of the study, 4 Assembly members, and 1 officer from the girls' desk of the educational directorate of the Municipality. Three schools in the Amasaman Circuit were purposively selected because the prevalence of drop-out rates of girls were high in those schools. This study found it expedient to use purposive and snowball sampling techniques to select the participants. Purposive sampling enables particular settings, persons or events to be deliberately selected for information, which otherwise could not be obtained elsewhere (Welman and Kruger, 1999; Maxwell, 1998). In addition to the selection of the schools, the purposive sampling was used to select assembly members, teachers of the

selected schools and the girl child officer. Purposive sampling was used because the selected people were considered to have more knowledge on the subject under study.

In identifying and selecting the dropouts and their parents for this study, the snowball technique was used. The snowball technique was considered because of the lack of sample frame of dropouts and the sensitivity and stigma associated with dropping out of school. With the snowball, pupils were asked to provide clues of some of their female colleagues, who had dropped out from school. Similarly, the Assembly members, opinion leaders and traditional authorities were asked to identify some female dropouts in their communities for interviews. Beginning with the few that were identified, the researchers interviewed them after seeking their consent and those of their parents. The first batch of dropouts identified also identified other dropouts for the research. At the end of the research, over forty female dropouts were identified in the Amasaman Circuit but 30 of them were selected for the study. Data collection was done in October-December, 2021, and January-February, 2022 of the 2021/2022 academic year. The main instruments used for data collection were semi-structured interview guide and academic records. The drop-outs, the selected parents, the selected teachers, assembly members and the Girl-Child Officer were interviewed using semi-structured interview guide through face-to-face interviews. The academic records of the pupils were also collected and analysed to see if there is support on the claim that school dropouts are linked to academic performance. The data gleaned from the field was supported with existing literature. Qualitative data were analysed using charts, tables and narratives while quantitative data were analysed using frequency tables and independent sample t-test.

Results

Background characteristics of girls who dropped out from school

To answer the Research Question (1), the pupils were requested to provide certain background information about themselves. Eighty-five percent of the drop-outs interviewed indicated that their parents or guardians were in the informal sector with the rest of the 15 percent being in the formal sector. Out of the thirty (30) pupils interviewed, twenty-one (21), representing 70%, said they were staying with both parents, who share the cost of their education; five (5), representing 16.7%, said they were staying with a single parent, who bore the burden of financing their education; and four (4), representing 13.3%, said they were staying with other relatives or guardians, and that their guardians finance their education. The responses are presented in the Table. 1.

Table 1: Background characteristics of respondents (students)

		Frequency	Percentage
Status of respondents (students)	Regular students	30	50
	Drop-outs	30	50
Parental Occupation of respondents	Informal	51	85
	Formal	9	25
Where drop-outs stay	Both parents	21	70
	One parent	5	16.7
	Others	4	13.3
Reason for not staying with parents	Loss of both parent	2	22.2
	Loss of one parent	2	22.2
	Separation/divorce	4	44.4
	Others	1	11.1
Siblings and their influence	No siblings	10	16.7
	Siblings but no influence	23	38.3
	Siblings with influence	27	45.0
Male siblings	Respondents with male siblings	40	66.7
	Respondents without male siblings	20	33.3

It was also found from Table 1 that of the 9 pupils that were not staying with both parents, 2 (representing 22.2%) said they have lost one of their parents; 4 (representing 44.4%) said their parents were divorced or separated; 2 (representing 22.2%) said they were orphans; and 1

(representing 11%) said that although her parents were alive, she was brought to Accra as maid to their guardians.

Number of siblings and their educational levels

The researchers wanted to determine the extent to which the number and character of siblings contribute to the character formation of the girl-child. Of the total of 60 respondents (30 drop-outs and 30 regular pupils), 23 representing 38.3%, said they did not have senior siblings and that their junior siblings do not influence their behaviour both in school and at home. Ten (10) of the respondents, representing 16.7%, said they did not have siblings at all. Hence, their actions both in school and at home are not determined by siblings. Twenty-seven (27) of the respondents, representing 45%, indicated that they had senior siblings, and that the actions, inactions and the influences of their senior siblings contribute in shaping their character. As one of the drop-out respondents put it:

It is impossible to think that my senior siblings do not influence me. I look up to them, and sometimes, I behave in a certain way because they want me to do so. Other times, I deliberately model my behaviour along theirs. In short, my siblings are second after my parents when I rank the people that influence me at home and my social environment (#participant 1; February, 2021).

Interestingly, all the pupils who indicated that they have siblings both senior and junior siblings indicated that their parents have unflinching interest in their progress in life. As indicated in Table 1, of the fifty pupils who had siblings, seventeen (17), representing 34% indicated that they did not have male siblings. As far as the educational choices of the parents are concerned, the pupils indicated that their parents did not show any preferences; all their siblings are given equal opportunities for education. The remaining thirty-three (33) of the respondents, representing 66%, however, indicated that they have male siblings and that their parents do not prioritize the education of their male siblings over theirs; all of them are given equal attention and opportunities. One respondent in JHS2 claims that the reverse in the case in her situation

as her parents are giving her far more attention than her male siblings because her brilliance in school compared to her male siblings. She said:

My parents give me more attention than my two male siblings and my other final sibling. We both attended the same basic school, but since Class One to JHS2, I was first throughout in all the end of term examinations. Due to my academic excellence, I have had so many awards in school. I have also represented my school in inter-school debates and quizzes. On the contrary, my two male siblings and one female sibling, in comparison, are not exceptionally good academically. Owing to my academic brilliance, my parents would not mind giving me preferential treatment in matters of education. Indeed, all my siblings would readily accept any preferential treatment in education given me by my parents. They are all proud of me. (#participant 4; February, 2021).

From Table 1, it is obvious that most of the female pupils have male siblings. From the responses of the participants, there was no evidence to show that the education of the female pupils was sacrificed for the education of their male siblings for cultural reasons. This might be due to the influence of urban life on the cultural beliefs of parents. Hence, parent's decisions and educational choices for their children is not determined for cultural considerations.

Barriers that hinder the retention of girls in schools

Reasons why girls drop out from school

As stated earlier, thirty (30) dropouts were identified through the snowball method. Of the 30 dropouts who were interviewed on why they dropped out from school, six (6) of them representing 20%, dropped out because of financial problems; two (2), representing 6.7%, dropped out because of poor intellectual acumen; eleven (11), representing 36.7%, dropped out due to pregnancy; four (4), representing 13.3%, dropped out because they wanted to undertake entrepreneurial skills or to engage in trade; three (3), representing 10%, dropped out because they had lost their parents and that their relatives refused to sponsor their education; and four (4), representing 13.3%, dropped out for two or more of the above reasons.

It could be realized that the main reasons why girls drop-out of school include pregnancy, single parenting and financial problem. This is confirmed by one the drop-outs who said:

I have financial problem. I am staying with my grandmum and she is not doing any work. Getting money to buy food is even a problem. I have to go round and sell provisions before we get money for food. Sometimes I go round without selling anything. It was very difficult for us in getting money for my education. I go to school without eating and with no money. Things were so hard so I took a boyfriend and I became pregnant so I have to stop my education (#participant 4; February, 2021).

Another girl also lamented about financial problem, attributable to single parenting as the reason why she dropped out of school when she said:

Money is my main problem. We are five children and it is only my mom who is taking care of us. She doesn't have money because she is not doing any work. We only have a small kiosk around our house where my money sell. I don't even know where my dad is and he doesn't send money to us. I don't have money to buy food when I go to school. I therefore stop school to help my mom to sell so that we can get some money for the education of younger brother and sisters. If I get money I will go back to school (#participant 4; February, 2021).

The responses from the respondents on the reasons for their dropouts are summarised in Table

2

Table 2: Reason why girls drop-out of school

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Financial problems	6	20
Poor academic performance	2	6.7
Pregnancy	11	36.7
Engage in work	4	13.3
Broken homes	3	10
Multiple reasons	4	13.5

This same question on reasons why girls drop-out of school was posed to twelve (12) parents or guardians of drop-outs, twelve (12) parents of selected students, twelve (12) teachers of selected schools of the study, four (4) Assembly members and an officer from the girls' desk of the educational directorate of the Municipality. Their responses were similar to those of the dropout students. Of the 12 parents of the dropout students, eight (8) alluded to teenage

pregnancy as the reason why their children dropped out of school; the other four (4) attributed the situation to poor academic performances of their children. Similarly, eight (8) out of the twelve (12) teachers interviewed mentioned teenage pregnancy as the main cause of the dropouts of the girl-child from school while the rest mentioned poor academic performance. In another scenario, all the four Assembly Members, as well as the officer from the girls' desk of the education directorate of the Ga West Municipality indicated that teenage pregnancy ranks high among the causes of the drop out of the girl-child from school.

Academic performance of males and females in schools

To establish the difference in academic performance of males and females in the study area, the scores of the selected students in all the subjects for term one of the 2021/2022 were collected and calculated. The subjects included English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Social Studies, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Basic Design and Technology (BDT), Religious and Moral Education (RME), Ghanaian Language and French. This was done to compare the academic performance of females and males and see if performance could be a strong factor responsible for school drop-out of females. Table 3 shows the mean performance and standard deviation of males and females.

Table 3: Group Statistics: Comparing the performance of males and females

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	Male	37	598.00	95.822	15.753
	Female	32	558.02	137.471	24.302

Table 3 shows that the mean scores of males and females were 598.00 (SD=95.82) and 558.02 (137.47) respectively. Table 2, thus, shows that the mean performance of males (M=598.00) is better than that of females with a mean of 558.02.

Testing of Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of males and females in Amasaman Circuit.

To determine if there is significant difference between the performance of males and females in the Amasaman Circuit, an independent sample t-test was performed. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Independent Samples Test: Comparing the performance of males and females

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Score	Equal variances assumed	1.858	.177	1.416	58	.161	39.984	28.233	-16.368	96.337
	Equal variances not assumed			1.381	54.274	.173	39.984	28.961	-18.072	98.041

An independent t-test was conducted to compare the performance of males and females. Table 3 shows that there was no significant difference in scores for males (M=598.00, SD=558.02) and females (M=558.02, SD=137.47: $t(58) = 1.416, p = .161$, (two-tailed) at a critical value of .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained.

Discussions

The study revealed that the background of children contributes in shaping and influencing their behaviours. It was realized that most of the parents or guardians of the drop-out girls were in the informal sector. This tallies with data from Ga West Municipal Assembly (2019) that most women in Amasaman area were into the informal activities. Most of the girls may not see the

activities in the informal sector to require much higher education. This revelation is in line with findings of existing scholarship. The finding dovetails into the social learning theory that the environment is made up of several variables and events, which contribute to the general behaviour of individuals in it (Bandura, 1977).

It was also found out that the reason why some of the girls were not staying with both parents were separation or divorce and the death of one or both parents. Parents play an essential role in the growth of their children. In agreement to this, Heintz-Martin and Langmeyer (2020) indicated that parents play a very important role in all aspect of child's development including the education of the child. It is the responsibility of parents to provide the child with basic needs and resources in the home and school. This is easier when parents are married and live together because in addition to providing the basic resources, it helps to provide love and discipline to the children.

Schooling of girls may be affected by several factors including parental status, that is whether the child is from single or both parent homes. The socio-economic background of parents and their perception and attitudes towards girl child education may accelerate or impede the child's performance in school. It is therefore not surprise that children from single-parent families are at high risk of having lower school performance and exhibiting more negative behaviours compared to children from both families (Heintz-Martin & Langmeyer, 2020). Children from single parent homes have the high risk of dropping from school.

The study also found that pregnancy and financial problems were the major barriers affecting the retention of the girl-child in school. This is in line with Boateng (2005) when he opined that lack of financial support is the main factor responsible for the dropout of girls from public schools in the Awutu-Senya District of the Central Region of Ghana. Many studies have indicated that poverty leads to lower academic achievement, which also leads to high drop-out rates (Borg et al., 2012). It was established that the financial cost of education relative to the

income levels of parents has made it difficult for some parents to finance the education of the girl-child. This finding correlates with earlier findings on the discourse on the girl-child education. Financial challenges of parents directly affect the enrolment and retention of girls in school (Lambert et al., 2012). It also feeds into the argument of Boateng (2005) that the lack of financial support is the main factor responsible for the dropout of girls from public schools in Ghana. Similarly, the finding adds weight to the prevailing argument of Oduro (2000) that the high cost of education in Ghana is the major cause of the failure of parents to enrol their female children in schools.

The study further established that parents do not make preferential and favourable decisions about the education of the male children to the detriment of those of their female children. In fact, the finding established in this study runs counter to the finding of Heintz-Martin and Langmeyer, (2020) that parents generally made favourable decisions about sending their male children to school compared to their female counterparts.

It was revealed that on an average, males performed better than females. However, there is no significant difference between the performance of males and females. Even though some of the respondents indicated that some cases of the drop-out was caused by poor performance, it was realized from an independent sample t-test that poor academic performance cannot be said to be a major factor for non-retention of girls in schools. Even though, most studies argued that the main reason why female drop out from school is poor academic performance (Oduro, 2000), the statistical results from this study do not support such assertion

Recommendation

The study examined the retention of the girl-child in school in the Amasaman Circuit in the Ga West Municipality of the Greater Accra Region. The findings revealed that teenage pregnancy is one of the main causes of the drop-out of the girl-child from school. It can be concluded that

teenage pregnancy is the major cause of the girl-child dropping out of school in the research area. Teenage pregnancy might be as a result of the socialization theory. Thus, girls observe that most women in the area are in the informal sector and childbirth with no or low education. Therefore, they may not see the reason for staying in school and this could lead to teenage pregnancy (Fox & Alldred, 2016). Girls observe and imitate other females in the community through socialization process.

Since teenage pregnancy is a major cause of school drop-out in the Amasaman Circuit of the Ga West Municipality, it is recommended that the Municipality should establish a monitoring unit for the girl-child; the girls' desk alone is not enough. This monitoring unit should provide periodic reports on the girl-child and establish mechanisms to prevent teenage pregnancies among school girls. In addition, the Municipality or the State should institute legal sanctions against the men who impregnate these pupils. Sex education should also be intensified to create awareness on the consequences of teenage pregnancy.

It is recommended that government must address the financial problems of students from poor home. It is true that the FCUBE was introduced in 2005 and that the government of Ghana absorbs the fees of pupils at the basic level. Similarly, the introduction of the School Feeding Program has ameliorated the burden of some parents who are in the poor income bracket. Despite all these social interventions, there are other accidental costs, which make education in Ghana expensive. Buying of exercise and textbooks by parents is still the norm in Ghana. Apart from the cost of the clothing of the pupils, parents also bear the cost of paying transport fares of their children to school. Though relatively little, the accidental costs have become an albatross on the necks of some poor parents, thus making it difficult for them to finance the cost of education of their children. To overcome this menace, the Municipality, through the various schools, the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA), the Assembly Members and the traditional authorities, should undertake a survey of parents of pupils to determine their

financial strength. This will avail to the Municipality, information about parents, who are in dire financial straits and need financial support.

Furthermore, though, it is important for schools to keep the biodata of the female pupils that have dropped out of school, it is not enough. The biodata must necessarily include the reasons why the girls dropped out from school. This is important for policymaking and implementation since the reasons accounting for the dropouts would help individuals, institutions and the state to determine the corrective measures to employ. In addition, indicating the reasons why female pupils drop out from school would enable philanthropists and institutions to determine the best ways to offer assistance.

Finally, parents should be tasked to monitor their adolescent female children carefully to preempt or reduce the rates of teenage pregnancies that have led to some pupils dropping out of school. It should be pointed out that monitoring the adolescent female pupils is a shared responsibility.

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