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### Assessing Awareness and Implementation of School Re-entry Policy in Primary Schools: A Study of Practices and Perceptions in Kuria East Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya

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*Awareness,  
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This study investigated the awareness and implementation of school re-entry policy in primary schools within the Kuria East Sub-County, located in Migori County, Kenya. School Re-entry policies are crucial in facilitating the smooth return of learners, particularly girls, who drop out of school due to various reasons such as pregnancy or early marriage. The study employed a quantitative approach to gather comprehensive data. Data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed among learners. These questionnaires aimed to assess the level of awareness of existing school re-entry policy among learners and to gauge the extent to which these policies were implemented in practice. Findings from the study reveal varying levels of awareness among learners regarding school re-entry policy, with some demonstrating limited understanding of the provisions and procedures outlined in these policies. Moreover, while there is recognition of the importance of school re-entry policies in promoting educational equity and inclusion, the actual implementation faced numerous challenges. These challenges included societal attitudes towards school dropouts as a result of various factors not limited to early pregnancies and marriages, and gaps in coordination between schools, communities, and government agencies. The study also highlighted promising practices and innovative approaches adopted by some schools and community organizations to support school re-entry and retention of learners who have dropped out. These include the establishment of financial support, mentorship programs, and advocacy initiatives aimed at changing community perceptions and attitudes towards education, particularly for girls/boys. The findings underscored the need for concerted efforts by education stakeholders, government agencies, and community organizations to enhance awareness and implementation of the school re-entry policy in primary schools. Addressing the identified challenges and building upon successful practices can contribute to creating a more supportive educational environment for all learners in Kuria East Sub-County and similar contexts across Kenya. The study recommended enhanced training and sensitization programmes, community engagement, policy monitoring and evaluation among others, the school re-entry policy can be more effectively implemented, thereby enhancing educational opportunities for learners in Kuria East Sub County.

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## INTRODUCTION

Access to education is a fundamental right for all children, yet in many contexts, this right is hindered by factors such as poverty, cultural practices, and gender discrimination. Further, education is one of the most significant ways to address societal inequality. However, the vice of inequality always trickles into the education system. In the Kenyan education system, this manifests in different ways. One of them is the lack of proper policies to dictate and direct how school re-entry occurs after a student drops out, especially in the lower levels of education, that is; the primary school system. This is a significantly important problem worth studying because the lack of school re-entry programs and policies mostly affects girls compared to boys due to different factors such as gender roles, and a patriarchal culture that values the education of males over females (Nisak & Sugirhati, 2020). In spite of this, efforts have been made to promote access to education for all children, including the introduction of the re-entry policy in 1994 in Kenya. The re-entry policy allows girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy to return to school after giving birth. This policy is aimed at reducing the barriers that prevent girls from completing their education and improving their future prospects (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

Despite the existence of the re-entry policy, there are concerns about its awareness and implementation in primary schools, particularly in rural areas such as Kuria East Sub-County in Migori County, Kenya. Studies have shown that there is often a lack of awareness about the re-entry policy among key stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community members (Achola, 2017). Furthermore, even when the policy is known, its implementation is often poor, with girls facing stigma and discrimination when they attempt to return to school after giving birth (Odhiambo, 2018).

The implementation of the re-entry policy is crucial for achieving the goals of education for all and gender equality. It is therefore important to assess the awareness and implementation of the re-entry policy in primary schools, particularly in rural areas where access to education is often more challenging. By understanding the current practices and perceptions surrounding the re-entry policy, it will be possible to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to ensure that all children, regardless of gender or circumstance, have access to quality education.

A study conducted in 2017 established that Migori County had a total percentage rate of 43%, with Kuria recording a 23% dropout rate, making it among the highest dropout rates in Migori County and neighboring counties. The study noted that,

among other reasons, one of the greatest reasons why the dropout rates were high in these areas is peer pressure and the lack of systems put in place by the education ministry to motivate school retention (Omollo & Yambo, 2017). Moreover, a common factor that was critical in the study was that upon being sent home to seek resources such as financial resources to sustain and facilitate education, most learners did not come back to school and this leads to a disengaging process as explored by (Archambault, Janosz, Olivier & Dupéré, 2022) hence dropping out school. The school did not follow up with the students; the result was mainly students dropping out. Many ended up in marriages and teenage parenthood.

Sending students home for different reasons, including financial and discipline factors, is a common event and occurrence in schools. Besides these demographic factors, institutional policies such as following up and intervening to retain students in school do not exist (Pusztai, Fényes & Kovács, 2022). Following up is, however, not common, especially at the primary school level. Looking at these elements, the study will explore how policies that govern reentry to school will be critical in ensuring that school heads and leadership can follow up on constitutions, educate them, encourage them, and facilitate their entry back into the system. This is a critical consideration because policies on reentry will first spell out the role of the school, the leadership, and the parent (Chiyota & Marishane, 2020). Thus justified this study.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to assess the awareness and implementation of the school re-entry policy in primary schools in Kuria East Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya. Specifically, the study aimed to:

- Establish the level of awareness among key stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community members, about the school re-entry policy.
- Determine the level of implementation of the school re-entry policy in primary schools,

including the support mechanisms in place for girls who wish to return to school after giving birth.

- Identify the challenges faced in the implementation of the school re-entry policy, including stigma and discrimination against girls who seek to re-enter school after pregnancy.
- Explore the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the re-entry policy and its impact on girls' education and future prospects.
- Provide recommendations for improving the awareness and implementation of the school re-entry policy in primary schools, with a focus on promoting gender equality and access to education for all children.

### **Specific Objectives of the Study**

The study sought to:

- To determine the level of implementation of re-entry policy in primary schools.
- To investigate the stakeholders' involvement in the implementation of re-entry policy in primary schools.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed method strategy using cross-sectional survey for the quantitative method. According to Creswell (2014) this design combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to answer research objectives or questions. In this study, the design used the quantitative phases to inform the qualitative phase and each phase was to be undertaken independently. Cross-sectional survey was used for the quantitative method. The quantitative phase was followed to inform the qualitative phase (Othman, Steen & Fleet, 2021) which was to be carried out later. According to Omariba (2023); Bell, Warren and Schmidt (2022) and Hirose and Creswell (2023), a study can be carried in any locale and generalizations made. The study was therefore conducted in Kuria East Sub-County to develop an understanding of school re-entry policy in primary schools guided

by the objectives outlined earlier. Kuria East Sub-County has been selected for the study because of its gender inequalities in education as the sub-county has the highest share of residents with no formal education at 24% (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The target population was 1868 learners in primary schools and the study used the Yamane formula  $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$  where “n” is the sample size, “N” is the population and “e” is the error margin, while taking confidence level of 95% (Israel, 1992; Yamane, 1967) to select representative sample from the schools purposively selected 10 primary schools for the quantitative data collection, thus 328 learners were used for the study (Yamane, 1967; Hirose and Creswell; 2023 and Omariba; 2023). A structured questionnaire with some questions

rated on a Likert scale which had been approved by institutional ethics research committee was used for quantitative data collection (Cheung, (2021). A questionnaire was ideal because the study had adopted a sequential explanatory mixed method strategy using cross-sectional survey (Chali, Eshete and Debela; 2022; Mills, 2022 and Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Data was analyzed descriptively and the results discussed as follows.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The sought to investigate information about the girl/boy in different elements of the home environment, such as the language used at home, chores they were engaged in and established the following as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Information about Girl/Boy’s Home Environment**

Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Main language spoken at home	English	6	1.9
	Kiswahili	162	51.1
	Other	149	47
	<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100</b>
Spending time caring for younger or older family members	Yes	247	78.2
	No	66	20.9
	Don’t know	3	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>100</b>
Spending time doing housework (e.g. cooking or cleaning)	Yes	308	97.5
	No	8	2.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>
Help with fetching water	Yes	302	95.6
	No	14	4.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>100</b>
Help with farming work (e.g. guarding livestock; planting, watering or harvesting crops)	Yes	292	91.8
	No	24	7.5
	Don’t know	2	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>
Help with a family business or work outside the home (non-agricultural)	Yes	145	45.6
	No	170	53.5
	Don’t know	3	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>

The study established that out of 317 respondents 51% used Kiswahili as the main language at home, 47% used other languages whereas 19% used English as the main language. The purpose of this was to help the study get insights on language as it impacted performance given that the medium of instruction in Kenya schools is

English. The study concluded that the lack of proficiency in the English language can significantly impact the academic performance of students, particularly in primary schools in Kuria East sub County. In Kenya, English serves as the medium of instruction in most schools, making it crucial for students to grasp the language to excel

academically. When learners struggle with English, it can hinder their ability to comprehend lessons, participate in classroom activities, and perform well on examinations. This issue is particularly acute in marginalized communities especially Kuria East sub-county where access to quality education is limited. This concurs with a study by Mutai and Kimemia (2016) "Language Policy and Practice in Kenya: The Challenges of Implementing Language Policy in Public Primary Schools in Bungoma County which established that many students in marginalized communities struggle with English, leading to poor academic performance.

Furthermore, the issue of language proficiency intersects with broader education policies, including school re-entry policies. In Kenya, school re-entry policies aim to facilitate the return of learners who have dropped out of school due to various reasons, including poverty, early marriage, or pregnancy. However, students who lack proficiency in English may face additional challenges upon re-entering school, as they may struggle to catch up with their peers academically. This concurs with a study by Wanyama and

Khamala (2017) titled "Education Re-Entry Programmes for Girls in Kenya: A Case of Uwezo Fund Programme" investigated the effectiveness of re-entry programmes for girls who had dropped out of school. The study highlighted the importance of providing additional support, including language remediation, to help returning students reintegrate into the education system successfully.

Further, the study sought to establish the various chores the respondents were engaged in at home. Out of 316 respondents, 78% spent time caring for younger or older family members whereas 21% did not spend time caring for younger or older family members, 96% of the respondents helped in fetching water whereas only 4% did not help in fetching water. Out of 318 respondents, 92% helped with farming work such as guarding livestock, planting, watering or harvesting crops and whereas 46% of the respondents helped with family business or worked outside the home such as non-agricultural activities while in minimal percentages didn't know. The study further established whether the chores stopped them from going to school as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Information about Girl/Boy Opinion about home chores and schooling**

Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Time spent doing the above mentioned activities in a day	Whole day	17	5.3
	Half day	90	28.3
	Quarter day/a few hours	118	37.1
	A little time/an hour or less	78	24.5
	Don't know	15	4.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>
Have these activities ever stopped respondents from going to school?	Yes, am not enrolled because of this	4	1.3
	Yes, stops me often	2	0.6
	Yes, stops me sometimes	270	84.9
	No, does not stop me	41	12.9
	Don't know	1	0.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>
What level of schooling would you like to achieve?	None	3	0.9
	Primary	2	0.6
	Secondary	16	5.0
	College university	296	93.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100</b>
Given opportunity, what alternative education pathway will you join?	TVET	48	15.4
	Apprenticeship/Traineeship	57	18.3
	Secondary	207	66.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>100</b>



Out of 318 respondents, 85% of the respondents pointed out that the chores stopped them from going to school whereas 13% reported that the chores do not stop them from going to school. Moreover, an item in the questionnaire sought to establish the level of schooling the learners would like to achieve. Out of 317 respondents, 93.4% pointed out that they would like to reach college /University level. When probed further if given the opportunity what alternative pathway they will join. Out of 312 respondents, 66.3% pointed out secondary level, 18.3% pointed to apprenticeship/traineeship and 15.4% pointed Technical and Vocational Education Training.

The study concluded that the time spent on home chores affected performance and re-entry policy and intersects with school re-entry policies in Kuria East Sub County and further the performance of learners in Kuria County, Kenya. Learners who drop out of school due to factors such as poverty or early marriage may struggle to reintegrate into the education system, especially if they are still responsible for significant household chores. This can hinder their ability to catch up on missed education and may perpetuate the cycle of poverty in the community. This study concurs with a study by Mwacharo, Nyabuto & Ong'onda, (2019) which established that learners who were burdened with extensive household responsibilities often had limited time for studying and completing school assignments, resulting in lower academic performance.

Additionally, an item in the questionnaire sought to investigate how long learners took to get to school. Out of 317 respondents 45% of the respondents reported that it took them between 10 to 15 minutes, 29% of the respondents reported that it took them between 16 to 30 minutes, 17.7 % respondents reported that it took them between 31 to 59 minutes to get to school while other respondents in minimal percentages reported that it took them between one to two hours and three to five hours to get to school as shown in Table 3. The study concluded that distance to school wasn't an impediment to access to schools for learners in Kuria East Sub County. This contrasts with a study by Kenya Institute for Public Policy

Research and Analysis (2019) which had established that many rural areas in Kenya lack adequate transportation infrastructure, making it difficult for students to access schools. Long distances between homes and schools, coupled with poor road conditions, deterred learners from attending regularly.

Further, an item in the questionnaire sought to establish whether respondents were aware of the school re-entry policy. Out of 318 respondents, 29% of respondents revealed that they were not aware of the school re-entry policy whereas 68.2% of the respondents revealed that they were not aware of the school re-entry policy and 2% didn't know. Moreover, an item in the questionnaire sought to investigate whether girls/boys dropped out of school but later came back to school. Out of 318 respondents, 84.8% of the respondents revealed that they don't come to school and 13.6% of the respondents revealed that they come later to school while other respondents in minimal percentages didn't know. The study further sought to find out whether when learners were back to school what happened. Out of 315 respondents, 81% revealed that they joined the same class, 14.6% revealed that they moved to the next class whereas others in minimal percentage didn't know. An item additionally explored whether upon getting back to school, learners used books and other learning materials they needed. Out of 318 respondents, 93.7% revealed that they used books and other learning materials whereas a minimal percentage revealed they couldn't use books or other learning materials that they needed and others didn't know respectively. In addition, an item in the questionnaire sought to establish whether there were computers in the schools for use. Out of 314 respondents, 56.1% revealed that there were no computers in schools for use whereas 43.3% revealed that there were computers in school for use.

Moreover, the study explored whether there were seats for every student in their classes. Out of 314 respondents, 83.4% of the respondents revealed that there were seats for every learner in class whereas 15% of the respondents revealed that there were no seats for every learner in class.

Further, the study explored whether learners moved around the school easily. Out of 318 respondents 71.4% reported that they moved around the school easily whereas 28.6% reported that they did not move around the school easily as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. General Information about the school environment and the re-entry policy**

Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
How long does it usually take you to get to school?	10-15 minutes	143	45.1
	16-30 minutes	92	29
	31-59minutes	56	17.7
	1-2 hours	19	6.0
	3-5 hours	3	0.9
	More than 5 hours	4	1.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100</b>
Are you aware of the school re-entry policy?	Yes	93	29.2
	No	217	68.2
	Don't know	8	2.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>
Do girls /boys who drop out school but later come back to school?	Yes	43	13.6
	No	268	84.8
	Don't know	8	1.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>
When back in school, what happens?	Join same class	255	81
	Move to next class	46	14.6
	Don't know	14	4.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>100</b>
When at school, can you use books or other learning material that you need?	Yes	298	93.7
	No	19	6.0
	Don't know	1	0.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>
Are there computers at your school for you to use?	Yes	136	43.3
	No	176	56.1
	Don't know	2	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>100</b>
Are there seats for every student in your class?	Yes	262	83.4
	No	50	15.9
	Don't know	2	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>100</b>
Are you able to move around the school easily?	Yes	227	71.4
	No	91	28.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>

From the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that the challenges surrounding the awareness and implementation of school re-entry policies in Kuria East Sub County, Kenya, are multifaceted and deeply rooted in socio-cultural and structural factors. These challenges hinder the effective reintegration of learners, particularly girls, who have dropped out of school due to various reasons such as early pregnancy or marriage. The lack of awareness among

stakeholders regarding existing re-entry policies and their provisions concurs with Wambua's (2018) on Awareness and Implementation of Re-entry Policy in Primary Schools in Kitui County, Kenya. This lack of awareness extends to parents, guardians, educators, and even policymakers, leading to gaps in understanding and implementation at various levels of the education system (Kombo & Kishindo, 2017). Furthermore, societal attitudes towards early pregnancies and

marriages often stigmatize girls who drop out of school, creating barriers to their re-entry (Nyakundi & Nyamwange, 2019). The study concurs with Kimanzi (2020)'s study on challenges faced by re-entry girls in secondary schools in Mbeere South sub-county and Mwita & Ntabo 's study (2016).

Additionally, an item in the questionnaire in a Likert scale sought to find out the intervention measure on school re-entry policy and performance as shown in Table 4.

**Tale 4. Opinion on Intervention Measures in the Classroom**

	Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Intervention Measures (To what extent do you agree with the following statements)	My teachers make me feel welcome in the classroom	Agree a lot	286	89.9
		Agree a little	18	5.7
		Disagree a little	9	2.8
		Disagree a lot	5	1.6
		<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>
	My teachers treat boys and girls differently in the classroom	Agree a lot	82	25.8
		Agree a little	29	9.1
		Disagree a little	41	12.9
		Disagree a lot	164	51.6
		Don't know	2	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>	
	My teachers are often absent for class	Agree a lot	57	17.9
		Agree a little	37	11.6
		Disagree a little	39	12.3
		Disagree a lot	184	57.9
		Don't know	1	0.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>	
	My teachers are friendly to me as a young mother	Agree a lot	178	56
		Agree a little	38	11.9
		Disagree a little	18	5.7
Disagree a lot		71	22.3	
Don't know		13	4.1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>		

An item sought to investigate if learners felt welcome by teachers in the classroom. Out of 318 respondents, 89.9% of the respondents revealed that they felt welcome whereas in minimal percentages agreed a little, disagreed a little and disagreed a lot that teachers welcomed them in the classroom. Further, the study sought to establish whether teachers treated both boys and girls differently in the classroom. Out of 318 respondents, 25.8% of the respondents agreed a lot that teachers treated both boys and girls differently whereas 51.6% of the respondents disagreed a lot. Further, the study established whether teachers were often absent for class. Out of 318 respondents, 17.9% agreed a lot that teachers were often absent in class, 11.6% agreed

a little that teachers were often absent for class, 12.3% disagreed a little that teachers were absent for class whereas 57.9% disagreed a lot that teachers were often absent for class. The study also sought to find out whether teachers were friendly to young mothers. Out of 318 respondents, 58% of the respondents agreed a lot that teachers were friendly to young mothers, 11.9% agreed a little that teachers were friendly to young mothers whereas 22.3% disagreed a lot that teachers were friendly to young mothers. The study concluded that the school environment was conducive for learning, with teachers giving equal attention for both girls and boys. This was a significant factor in promoting school retention (Archambault, Janosz, Olivier and Dupéré; 2022).



Moreover, sought to explore on the school re-entry policy, performance and attendance. An item in the questionnaire sought to establish whether attendance had improved in the past one year. Out of 317 respondents, 82% of the respondents revealed that attendance had improved a lot whereas 14.2% of the respondents revealed that attendance had improved a little. When probed in terms of performance, out of 318 respondents 83.3% revealed performance had improved a lot in the past one year, 86.5% per subject performance whereas 10.7% of the respondents revealed that performance had improved a little per subject in the past one year.

Additionally, an item on the questionnaire sought opinion on what had led to the change in respondents' daily school attendance. 74.8% of the respondents attributed it to family support, 68.9% of the respondents attributed it to financial support, 46.2% of the respondents attributed it to teacher support, 38.3 % of the respondents attributed it to CHVs household visits, 37.2% of the respondents attributed it to school re-entry policy, 33.8% of the respondents attributed it to mentorship programme, 21.2% of the respondents attributed it to back to school kits and 19.6% of the respondents attributed it to club activities.

Further, the study sought to explore on what changes have taken place due to the introduction of the school re-entry policy. Out of 318

respondents, 77.8% of the respondents had observed change in community attitudes towards education, 75.6% of the respondents had observed in family/parents behavior towards girls'/boys education, 74.3% of the respondents observed changes in school safety and support for girls at school, 71.2% of the respondents observed change in teaching and learning in schools and 67.4% of the respondents had observed change girls'/boys motivation to get back to school. In addition, the study explored what important contributions of the stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST), parents and caregivers and community towards the school re-entry policy. In response to this 65.4% of the respondents pointed out change in terms of interventions that are relevant and effective in promoting girls'/boys' education whereas 34.6% of the respondents opined that interventions have been least relevant and effective in promoting girls'/boys' education. Moreover, the study wanted to find out the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on children and their education in the sub-county. 63.7% of the respondents observed that during closure girls/boys dropped out of school, 52.1 % of the respondents observed that many girls got early pregnancies, 17.4% of the respondents observed there were early marriages and 14.3% of the respondents observed that many girls underwent FGM as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. School Re-entry Policy and Performance and Attendance**

	Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
School Re-Entry policy and Performance and Attendance (To what extent do you agree with the following statements)	What changes have you seen about the introduction of the school re-entry policy	Community attitudes to education	247	77.8
		Change of family/parents behavior towards girls/boys education	240	75.6
		Changes in teaching and learning in schools	226	71.2
		Changes in school safety and support for girls at school	236	74.3
		Changes in girls/boys motivation to get back to school	214	67.4
	What have been the most important	Interventions have been most relevant, effective in	208	65.4

	Items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	contributions of the stakeholders [MOEST, parents/Caregivers, Community] towards School Re-entry policy?	promoting girls/boys education		
		Interventions have been least relevant, effective in promoting girls/boys education	110	34.6
	What has been the effect of the COVID19 pandemic on children and their education in this sub county?	During closure girls/boys dropped out of school	203	63.7
		Many girls early pregnancies	166	52.1
		Many girls underwent FGM	45	14.3
		Early marriages	55	17.4

From the findings, the study concluded that the policies must ensure not only school re-entry but retention and transition to higher levels of education so girls can fulfill their full potential. This concurs with Global Partnership for Education. (2021) on school re-entry policies for teenage mothers.

One major challenge is the lack of awareness among stakeholders regarding existing school re-entry policies and their provisions (Wambua, 2018). This lack of awareness extends to parents, guardians, educators, and even policymakers, leading to gaps in understanding and implementation at various levels of the education system (Kombo & Kishindo, 2017). Furthermore, societal attitudes towards early pregnancies and marriages often stigmatize girls who drop out of school, creating barriers to their re-entry (Nyakundi & Nyamwange, 2019). Additionally, coordination challenges among stakeholders, including schools, government agencies, and community organizations, further impede the effective implementation of the school re-entry policy (Okumu; 2020 and Otieno & Oanda; 2021)

Resource constraints also pose significant challenges to the implementation of re-entry policies in Kuria East Sub County (Kimanzi, 2020). Schools in the region often lack adequate infrastructure, teaching materials, and trained personnel to support returning learners (Mwita & Ntabo, 2016). Additionally, coordination challenges among stakeholders, including schools, government agencies, and community organizations, further impede the effective

implementation of re-entry programs (Otieno & Oanda, 2021; Okumu; 2020).

Gender disparities in access to education exacerbate the challenges of school re-entry in Kuria East Sub County (Odhiambo & Opiyo, 2017). Girls, in particular, face greater barriers to education due to socio-cultural norms and practices that prioritize boys' education over girls (Levine, 2019). Limited community support further compounds the challenges of the school re-entry, as returning learners may lack the necessary support systems to facilitate their successful reintegration into schools (Ochieng & Ondieki, 2019). Community engagement and involvement are crucial for addressing the underlying socio-cultural factors that contribute to school dropout and promoting a supportive environment for returning learners (Oketch & Oanda, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

The findings revealed a significant gap between policy awareness and effective implementation. While of learners were aware of the existence of re-entry policies designed to facilitate the return of school dropouts, the actual implementation was hampered by socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers. In conclusion, addressing awareness and implementation of school re-entry policies in Kuria East Sub County requires a holistic approach that involves raising awareness, mobilizing resources, strengthening coordination mechanisms, and promoting gender equality and community engagement in education.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study came up with the following recommendations to improve the awareness and implementation of the school re-entry policy in primary schools in Kuria East Sub-County:

- There is need to enhance and Implement comprehensive training and sensitization programs for teachers, parents, and community leaders to address the cultural stigma associated with teenage pregnancy. These programs should aim to change negative attitudes and promote a supportive environment for re-entry.
- Establish financial support mechanisms for school dropouts to cover school-related expenses. This could include scholarships, provision of school uniforms, and subsidized childcare services for young mothers.
- Schools should develop and implement specific support programs for school dropouts, such as counseling services, peer support groups, and flexible schooling hours to accommodate the young mothers' unique needs.
- Engage community stakeholders in dialogue and advocacy to create a supportive environment for school dropouts. This could involve community leaders, religious organizations, and local NGOs working together to promote the re-entry policy.
- Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure consistent implementation of the re-entry policy across all schools. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms can help identify challenges and areas for improvement.
- Foster collaboration between the government and non-governmental organizations to provide resources and support for schools implementing re-entry policies. Joint efforts can enhance the reach and effectiveness of support programs.

- Advocate for stronger legislative measures to protect the rights especially of young mothers and ensure their access to education. This could include penalties for schools that fail to implement the school re-entry policy effectively.

By addressing these recommendations, the school re-entry policy can be more effectively implemented, thereby enhancing educational opportunities for learners and contributing to broader socio-economic development in Kuria East Sub-County.

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