



**EFFECTS OF SCHOOL DISTANCE ON GIRLS' EDUCATION
AND INFLUENCE ON GENDER INEQUALITY IN SECONDARY
EDUCATION: CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN PANGANI AND HANDENI DISTRICTS, TANZANIA**

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Abstract:

Gender equality in education has been an issue of interest in developing strategies for many countries across the world whereas gender issues have been integrated into the world development agendas. Despite efforts made to achieve gender equality in education, few countries worldwide have attained full gender parity in secondary education. Tanzania like other SSA countries has worked hard to achieve gender equality in education as given by EFA goal number 5, MDG goal number 3 and currently SDG goal number 5. However, the problem of girls dropping out early from school and poor academic performance continues to be prevalent (URT, 2016). Long school distance is pointed out as one of the factors influencing gender inequality in secondary education. This study, therefore, examined the effects of school distance on girls' education and its influence on gender inequality in secondary education. The study was guided by three specific objectives, which were carried out through Cross-Sectional - Convergent Parallel Mixed methods research design to allow simultaneous collection and merging of quantitative and qualitative data. The sample was obtained by using simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques making a total of 101 sample sizes, comprising 79 respondents for quantitative data and 22 for qualitative information. Data

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analysis involved thematic analysis for qualitative data and descriptive statistics for quantitative findings. Study findings revealed that girls are more vulnerable to the problem of long school distances than boys because of biological formation and socially constructed beliefs about gender roles. The study findings noted that school distance encourages the prevalence of sexual harassment, early sexual relations and teenage pregnancy among school girls all of which lead to poor academic performance and or school dropout. Additionally, this study indicated that school distance coupled with the burden of domestic chores negatively affects girls' school attendance, classroom learning and academic performance. This study, therefore, concludes that long school distance is one among main factors that affect girls' education and contribute to the persistence of gender disparities in secondary education. To resolve the problem, this study recommends on the introduction of education PPPs so as to merge efforts among education stakeholders in building school hostels in every community secondary school in the country and fully furnish them with the required facilities.

Keywords: long school distance, girls' education, gender inequality in education

1. Introduction

Gender equality in education becomes an issue of interest in development agendas across many countries in the world whereas gender issues have been integrated into the development programs such as EFA, MDG and currently SDG. Despite efforts that have been made, achievement of full gender parity in education remains elusive as few countries particularly developing countries have attained gender equality in secondary education. Statistics by UNICEF, (2020) show that only 45% of countries worldwide have achieved gender parity in lower secondary and 25% in upper secondary education. The largest gender gaps are observed in the Sub-Saharan Africa region where there is a low increase in the number of countries which achieved full gender parity in secondary education. Statistics by Global Monitoring Education report (2018) indicated that there is a slightly low increase in percentage of countries that achieved full gender parity in secondary education in SSA from 45% in 1995 to only 51% in 2018. Recent statistics show that the secondary education completion rate grew from only 26% in 2010 to 29% in 2019, positioning the region extremely far from the achievement of SDG goal 5 (UN, 2021).

Tanzania like other SSA countries has worked hard to achieve full gender parity in education as indicated in SDG goal number 5. However, the problem of girls dropping out early from school and poor academic performance continues to be prevalent in most secondary schools in the country (URT, 2016). Education statistics in Tanga region for example show that there is poor academic performance among female students compared to male students. According to NECTA (2016), there were 3930 female students who got division zero in form four-nation examinations in the region compared to 2898 male students. Long school distance pointed out as one of the main factors that contribute to gender disparity in school attendance, school dropout, learning and learning

outcomes. Thus, this paper aimed at assessing the effects of long school distances and lack of proper means of school transport to girls' education.

Distance to and from school has been pointed out as one of the main factors affecting education development in most of SSA countries whereas most of the rural schools are located more than 10 kilometers from residential areas due to the sparsely populated nature of rural settlement (Mpyangu, 2014; UNICEF, 2018). Education statistics in Tanzania show that about 2,793 students in the rural area live in a distant area from the school and they normally pass across heavy forests when commuting to and from school (BEST, 2019). Girls are considered more vulnerable to the problem of school distance than boys because biologically girls are at high risk of sexual abuse and traditionally, they are affected by the gender-based allocation of domestic roles (Suleman et al., 2015). Thus, a review of related literature was based on the effects of long school distance on girls' education than boys'.

2. Effects of School Distance on Girls' Education

Several studies indicated that long school distance is more challenging to the education of girls than boys because it threatens girls' security and affects their behavior all of which have an impact on their education (Regasa and Taha, 2015; Suleman et al. 2015; Nyein et al, 2021). Review of the literature revealed that long school distance also creates fear among parents and hence make them consider it as a risk of life of their daughters because it may encourage them to engage in bad peer groups and involved in early sexual relations or sexually harassed (Nyein et al., 2021). Similarly, parents in rural Kenya regard long school distance as a barrier to the education of their daughters because it is normally influencing change in their behavior. Thus most of parents decided to keep their daughters at home until when they become old enough to encounter challenges of of long school distance (Regasa and Taha, 2015). Furthermore, study by SIDA (2016) revealed that parents in rural areas do not want to enroll their daughters to schools because of long school distance and the related challenges. Biologically, boys are more energetic enough to cover long school distance compared to girls who are normally decided to abscond from school due to fatigue as a result of walking long distances. Thus, late school reporting and the related punishment discourage school girls from attending school and hence increase school dropout among them.

One of the prerequisites for improvement of academic performance is to maintain a high rate of school attendance and participation of classroom learning, the vice versa is true for students who have a high rate of school absenteeism and poor classroom learning participation (Agwot, 2015). School distance encourages poor classroom learning among learners who live far away from school because they normally arrive late at school when classroom sessions have been started (Oneye and Onyango, 2021). Additionally, students who used much of their time walking to and from school daily, spend few hours for private studies, are sleepless, walk up late and continuously reported at school late all of

which lead to poor classroom learning and poor academic performance (Peteros et al., 2022).

Furthermore, girl students are more vulnerable to the problem of long school distances because of gender based allocation of domestic roles that require school girls to engage in domestic chores before going to school and after school hours. Female students fail to participate in remedial classes held after school hours or engage in assigned individual/ group work because they are supposed to go back home before darkness to help their mothers to prepare dinner and engage in other related domestic chores (Ebinum et al., 2017; Msoffe, 2016). A study by Dida et al. (2014) made the following summary on the effects of school distance on girls' education: *"The more school girls participate in domestic chores the more they arrive late at school, the more they miss class sessions, the more they fail to complete given assignments and the poor the academic performance"*.

Likewise, education and gender studies noted that school girls who live far away from school are usually experiencing different forms of sexual harassment by adult men/young boys when commuting or use public/private transport to go to school or return back home (TAMWA, 2010; Mpyangu, 2014; Arya et al., 2019). In some cases, school distance forces parents who live in distant areas to find accommodation for their daughters nearby school or allow them to stay with relatives who live nearby school a situation which exposes them to the risk of sexual harassment (Ebinum et al., 2017). Moreover, long school distance, poor means of transport and lack of school lunch encourages school girls to accept some presents and lunch offers all of which leads to early sexual relations, teenage pregnancy and school dropout (Mhiliwa, 2015; Yassin, 2020).

3. Methodology

This section discusses and explains the profile of the study area, research design, study population, sampling techniques and sample size. The section also discusses tools for data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Description of Study Area

The study area covers Pangani and Handeni districts of Tanga region. Pangani district found about 47 kilometers from headquarter of Tanga region. Geographically, Pangani is boarded by Tanga and Muheza districts in the northern part and Bagamoyo district of Coast region in the southern part. The district shares a border with Handeni district to the western and Indian Ocean to the eastern part. The district occupies an area of 1,830.8 square kilometers and is located within the latitude 5° 35' 49" south and longitude 38° 49' 19" east. The main economic activities in Pangani district include tourism, agriculture, livestock and beekeeping.

On the other hand, Handeni district is bordered by Kilindi district to the west and Korogwe district to the north. In the eastern part, the district shares a border with Pangani district and to the south by Chalinze district of Coast region. The district covers an area

of 6,534 square kilometers. It is located within the latitude 40 55' and 60 04'S and between longitudes 370 47' and 380 46 E. The district's main economic activities include agriculture, livestock and mining.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is a type of inquiry in research approaches that provide specific directions and procedures to be used in the investigation of a research problem (Cresswell, 2014). This study adopted a mixed method research approach, cross-sectional - convergent parallel mixed research design so as to allow the concurrent collection and merging of quantitative and qualitative data. According to Zheng (2015), the use of a convergent parallel mixed research design allows the merging of both quantitative and qualitative study findings for a better understanding of the topic under study. This study, therefore, used cross sectional – convergent parallel research design so as to gain an in-depth understanding of the effects of school distance on girls' education and its influence on gender inequality in secondary education. The research design was also used so as to allow the collection of extensive data from different groups of respondents at once in order to minimize the time and the cost involved in carrying out the study.

3.3 Study Population, Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Population in research is defined as the total number of subjects or the total elements of interest to the researcher (Kothari, 2004). It is a target group about whom the researcher wants to develop knowledge (Punch, 2006). Study sample is a subset of the total population that is of interest to the study topic (Omair, 2015). Sampling refers to the selection of a small number of individuals that can provide enough information for the researcher to understand the phenomenon under the study (Mills & Airasian, 2009).

3.4 Study Population

The target population for this study was students from community secondary schools in Pangani and Handeni Districts. The choice of this group was necessitated by the fact that most of the students in community secondary schools live in a distant area from school due to the scattered nature of rural settlement and administrative condition given in the establishment of community secondary schools. Thus, it was expected that most of the students in these schools have experienced challenges related to school distance. Based on job position and experience, the study population also included District Education Officer (DEOs) secondary education from each of the two districts. This group was found to be more knowledgeable about the study topic. Other key informants are female students from selected community secondary schools. This group of key informants provided detailed and valuable information on the challenges of school distance among girl students.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

This study used simple random and purposive sampling techniques to obtain the study sample. Simple random sampling is a sampling technique which permits every single item from the universe to have an equal chance of being included in the sample (Etikan and Bala, 2017). Based on the simple random sampling, respondents from the chosen community secondary schools were randomly selected by using the lottery method whereas several cards bearing a certain letter were put into a bow/jar, mixed thoroughly, and randomly picked out one at a time without replacement until when the required number was obtained. All students who were assigned cards with a letter of the researcher's preference in each class were taken as a sample for the survey questionnaire in each selected school.

Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of particular units from the universe for constituting a sample on the basis that the small mass that is selected out of a huge one will be typical or representative of the whole (Kothari, 2004). Dolores and Tongco (2007) defined the purposive sampling technique as a deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities they possess. This study used a purposive sampling technique to obtain key informants from the study area who provides key information about the challenges of long school distance to girls' education. These key informants included DEOs and female students from selected schools.

3.6 Study Sample and Sample Size

A quantitative sample size of this study was drawn from all students in selected community secondary schools in Pangani and Handeni districts. In determining the required sample size, this study used the simplified formula for proportions by Yamane (1967):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Whereby:

N = total population;

n = sample size;

E = acceptance error (precision level - 5% /10%).

Based on this formula the sample size for the questionnaire survey was calculated as indicated in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1: Sample Size Distribution

Selected School	No. of Students	Sample Size
Bushiri Sec. School	400	17
Kilimangwido Sec. School	211	9
Kwamnyanga'nyo Sec. School	505	22
Misima Sec. School	730	31
Total	1,846	79

Source: Field data, 2022.

The sample size for qualitative data includes 2 DEOs, one from each district council and 20 female students, 5 from each selected community secondary school. Table 3.2 below shows the distribution of sample size for qualitative data:

Table 3.2: Sample Size for Qualitative Data

Key Informants	Sample Size
DEOs	2
Female students	20
Total	22

Source: Field Data, 2022.

Therefore, the total sample size for this study was 101 respondents which comprised 79 respondents for the quantitative method and 22 participants for the qualitative method.

3.7 Data Collection Tools

Data for this study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary data was obtained from a documentary review of education-related documents like the region education statistics profile, national examination results, class attendance registers and school admission books. Primary data was obtained from the field by using a questionnaire survey, interview and focus group discussion. This study employed the following data collection tools:

3.7.1 Questionnaire Survey

A survey questionnaire is a data collection instrument which consists of a series of questions used to gather information from respondents (Abawi, 2013). A questionnaire survey was administered to 79 students including 49 female and 30 male students in selected community secondary schools for the purpose of collecting information related to challenges of school distance focusing on school retention, learning and learning outcomes.

3.7.2 Interview

The interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to get their viewpoints on a particular idea, program, problem or situation (Boyce and Niale, 2006). In this study, the interview was administered to DEOs so as to collect detailed information about the effects of long school distances on school girls. The interview protocol was maintained throughout the interview sessions in which the purpose of the study was elaborated. The researcher orally gets along this introduction several times when talking with participants in order to obtain their consent. Interview questions were asked exactly as they were written and frequently followed up by semi-structured questions with open-ended questions such as "Why?" "Can you give more details?" "Can you provide statistical data to support your argument"?

3.7.3 Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is a method of qualitative data collection through which small groups of participants discuss a given issue in-depth (HIQA, 2010). This study conducted four sessions of focus group discussion one from each selected community secondary school in which female students were involved. This group was involved in the discussion because female students are more vulnerable to the problem of long school distances than males. Van Eeuwijk and Angehrn (2017) argued that a smaller number of participants in focus group discussions provide an opportunity and enough time to share the information on the topic under discussion. Based on this argument this study involved a group of five female students from each selected secondary school so as to enhance control in the discussion and provide an opportunity for each participant to participate in the discussion. The purpose of the study was presented in the introductory part and repeated several times during the discussion so as to get participants' consent and make the discussion more active and successful.

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis whereas quantitative analysis involved numerical data and qualitative analysis concerned with descriptive data. The quantitative findings obtained from questionnaires have been processed using the SPSS version 16 programme while qualitative findings were analyzed by using thematic analysis.

3.8.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis involve: editing, coding and categorization of data into themes so as to reflect information obtained from the interview and focus group discussion. Interview and focus group discussion scripts were merged and arranged into themes and sub-themes so as to avoid repetition and overlapping of findings.

3.8.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were tabulated to find out percentages and figures by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer software to enable analysis and discussion of data. The quantitative analysis involved descriptive and inferential analyses in which a multiple linear regression statistical model was used to determine the extent to which school distance affects the education of girls. Frequency distribution tables, percentages and figures were used in the presentation of quantitative findings.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses findings related to the gender of participants involved in the study, participants' distance from the school and participants' means of transport to and from school. The section also includes a presentation and discussion of findings related to the objectives of this study.

4.1 Participants' Distribution

The study involved 79 respondents for quantitative data of which 62% of respondents were female and 38% were male. Figure 1 below indicates the distribution of the respondents according to their gender.

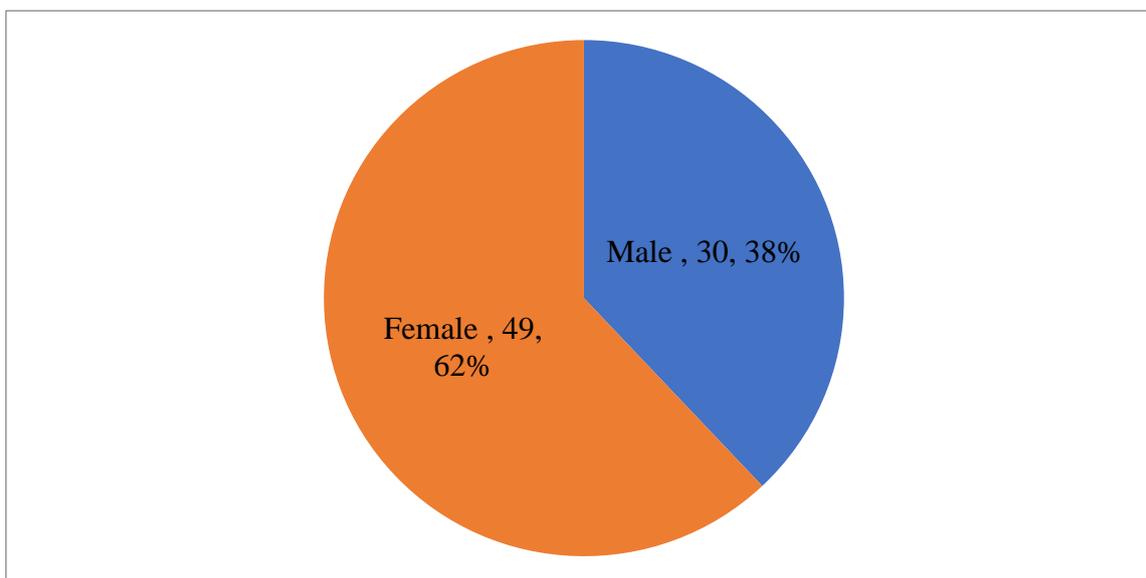


Figure 1: Sex of Participant

Qualitative data involved 2 DEOs from the study area and 20 female students from the selected schools making a total of 22 participants from which qualitative information was obtained.

4.2 School Distance and School Means of Transport Used by Participants

The finding from this study noted that the majority of students in the study area live far away from the school and they normally used to walk to and from school. Table 4.1 below shows the result:

Table 4.1: Respondents' Residential Distance from the School

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Near to school	5	6
Between 5 to 10 kilometers	20	25
Between 10 to 15 kilometers	15	19
Between 15 to 20 kilometers	25	32
20 kilometers and above	14	18
Total	79	100

Source: Field data (2022).

The results from Table 4.1 above show that more than 69% of respondents live between 10 to 20 kilometers and above from the school, unlike 25% who live between 5 to 10 kilometers from the school and 6% of respondents live nearby the school. This finding

entails that majority of students' residential located far away from school thus they are supposed to walk long distances to and from school.

4.3 Means of Transport to and from School

Quantitative finding further indicates that the majority of students in the study area are normally used to walking to and from school with few of them using other means of transport when going to school and return back home. The result from Table 4.2 below justifies:

Table 4.2: Means of Transport to and from School

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
On foot	72	91
Bicycle	6	8
Motor cycle	1	1
Total	79	100

Source: Field data, 2022.

The result from Table 4.2 above shows that the majority of students (91%) used to walk to and from school, (8%) used bicycles and very few of them (1%) used motorcycles when going to school and returning back home. This finding implies that almost all community secondary schools in the study area do not have an organized means of school transport to take students to and from the school. Generally, findings from this study revealed that long school distances and lack of proper means of school transport are among the factors that affect girls' education and widening gender gap in school retention, learning and learning outcomes.

4.4 School Distance and Gender Inequality in Secondary Education

Education studies identified several factors for gender inequalities in basic education including: lack of hygienic and special toilets for girls (Mpyangu et al., 2014; ADB, 2015), negative parents' perception of girl's education (UNICEF, 2014; Regasa and Taha, 2015) and burden of domestic roles among school girls (Yeba, 2015; Msoffe, 2016). Other factors include sexual abuse/ harassment among school girls (CAMFED, 2016; Tantu et al., 2020), Early marriage and teenage pregnancy (Adhikari, 2013; URT, 2017, Word Bank, 2019) and lack of school hostel (Winthrop, 2015; Gabriel, 2015). This study noted the same and indicated that school distance is the main contributing factor to gender inequality in secondary education. Table 4.3 below illustrates:

Table 4.3: Factors for Gender Inequality in Secondary Education

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Lack of school hostel	30	13
lack of special toilets for girls	37	16
School distance and related effects	56	24.2
Sexual harassment among girls in school	21	9.1

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Parents' negative perception about girls' education	26	11.3
The burden of domestic roles to girls	33	14.3
Early marriage and teenage pregnancy	28	12.1
Total	231	100

Source: Field data, 2022.

Table 4.3 above presents findings for factors contributing to gender inequality in secondary education. The result shows that 24.2% of the respondents pointed out long school distance as the leading factor for gender inequality in secondary education, while 16% cited lack of special toilets for girls and 14.3% of respondents mentioned the burden of domestic roles. Furthermore, 13% of respondents indicated a lack of school hostel, 12.1% of respondents pointed out early marriage/teenage pregnancy, and 11.3% cited negative parents' perception about girls' education and 9.1% mentioned sexual harassment among school girls as other factors for gender inequality in secondary education.

School distance is reported to discourage the schooling of girls more than boys due to the fact that boys are more capable enough to walk long distances compared to girls (Mpyangu, 2014). A study by Yassin (2020) for example noted that boys are more energetic to cover the length from home to school and from school back home compared to girls. Findings from this study concur with these studies and indicated that school girls are more vulnerable to the problem of school distance than boys because of cultural and biological related reasons. Table 4.4 below illustrates:

Table 4.4: Gender which is More Vulnerable to School Distance

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Male	30	38
Female	49	62
Total	79	100

Source: Field data, 2022.

The result in Table 4.4 above shows that 62% of respondents said that long school distance is more challenging for girl students than for boys. While, 38% of respondents said boys are more vulnerable to the problem of school distance compared to girls. This finding, therefore, suggests that girls are more vulnerable to the challenge of long school distance than boys.

4.4.1 Effect of School Distance on Girls' School Attendance and Dropout

Education statistics in Tanga region indicate that there is a high rate of school dropout among female students than male students whereas in 2019 there were about 398 girls dropped out from school compared to 333 boys (BEST, 2020). Likewise, findings from this study indicated that there is high number of female students who dropped out from school compared to males. Results From table 4.5 below illustrate:

Table 4.5: Gender with high Rate of School Dropout

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Male	17	22
Female	62	78
Total	79	100

Source: Field data, 2022.

Results from Table 4.5 above show that 78% of respondents reported that the rate of female students' school dropout from school is higher than male students. While, 22% of respondents said that the rate of school dropout among male students is higher than among females. Analysis from the Likert scale further explained the effect of school distance on girls' school attendance as shown in Table 4.6 below:

Table 4.6: Influence of School Distance on Girls' School Attendance and Dropout

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agree	23	29
Strongly agree	42	53
Disagree	12	15
Strongly disagree	2	3
Total	79	100

Source: Field data, 2022.

The result from Table 4.6 above shows that 29% and 53% of respondents respectively agree and strongly agree with the statement that school distance influence school absenteeism and dropout among girl students. While 15% and 3% of respondents respectively disagree and strongly disagree with the statement. This finding suggests that there is a high rate of school dropout among girl students in the study area, long school distances being the main contributing factor.

Furthermore, qualitative findings noted that school distance coupled with the burden of domestic roles encourages poor school attendance and school dropout among girl students. The result from the focus group discussion justifies P.4 in school C elaborate:

"School distance is more challenging to us than boys because we are normally reported to school late because of engaging in domestic chores at our home, so we are normally being punished for coming late. Sometimes we decided not to go to school if we are out of school reporting time. So, we decided to go back home rather than go to school where we know for sure that we shall be punished. But when we think about the burden of domestic chores at our home, we become more confused and hence decided to abscond and or dropout of school."

Additionally, school distance and lack of sanitary pads affect the rate of school attendance among female students. School girls who use local pads and walk a long

distance to and from school are usually encountered with health and psychological related complications as a result decided to abscond from school during their menstruation period. P.1 in school B explained:

“Long school distance coupled with lack of sanitary pads discourages school attendance among us. Walking long distances to and from school while wearing a local pad may result in bacterial infection and bruises which may discourage us to attend school during menstruation periods and as a result we miss several classroom sessions.”

Thus, long school distance coupled with the burden of domestic roles and lack of sanitary towels encourages poor school attendance and school dropout among girl students as a result widening the gender gap in school retention. Similarly, World Bank (2019) report on the assessment of achievement of fee-free basic education in Tanzania indicated that long school distances and the burden of household chores are significantly contributing to poor school attendance and school dropout among girls. This finding implies that lack of proper school means of school transport and long school distance influence gender inequality in school retention whereas the rate of school attendance and school dropout is higher among girls compared to boys.

4.4.2 Effects of Long School Distance on Girls' Classroom Learning and Academic Performance

A study by World Bank (2019) reported that despite the achievement that had so far been attained in the closing gender gap in enrollment to secondary education, the gap is still evident in classroom learning and academic performance. Findings from this study indicated the same that there is a persistence of gender disparity in academic performance. Qualitative findings gave a detailed account on the prevalence of the gender disparity in academic performance. The result from interviews with DEOs' indicated that female students perform poorly in national examinations. P.A said:

“The number of girls repeated class in Form two National Assessments is higher than number of boys”.

P.B provided the following statistics to justify:

“In 2019 there were about 403 students who got division zero in Form Two National Assessments (FTNA) out of whom female students were 264. In form Four National Examinations there were 826 students who got division zero out of whom girls were 465.”

Findings from focus group discussion further noted that school distance coupled with domestic roles influence poor academic performance among female students. P.4 in school B explained:

"We are usually engaged in domestic roles before and after schooling. Thus, school distance coupled with the burden of domestic roles makes us tired and exhausted and hence sleep during classroom hours. Also, school distance deprives us of time for private study as a result we perform poorly in examinations and hence considered academically incapable".

Quantitative findings noted the effects of school distance on girls' education as illustrated in Table 4.7 below:

Table 4.7: Effect of School Distance on Participation in Learning

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Poor classroom participation due to stress	45	22.7
Poor academic performance due to depression	43	21.7
Encourage school absenteeism and dropout	40	20.2
Increase pressure in teenage pregnancy and early marriage	37	18.7
Lose interest of schooling	33	16.7
Total	198	100

Source: Field data.

The findings from Table 4.7 above show the effects of school distance on girls' education whereas 23% of respondents argued that school distance encourages poor classroom learning, 22% said that school distance increases pressure on teenage pregnancy and early marriage. Furthermore, 20.2% of respondents indicated that school distance encourages poor academic performance among female students, 18.7% of respondents said school distance influences poor classroom participation and 16.7% reported that school distance makes female students lose interest of going to school.

Moreover, the result from the Likert scale and multiple regression analysis further revealed the extent to which school distance affect classroom learning and academic performance as shown in Table 4.8 and 4.9 below:

Table 4.8: Influence of School Distance on Girls' Participation
In Classroom Learning and Academic Performance

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agree	31	39
Strongly agree	32	41
Disagree	12	15
Strongly disagree	4	5
Total	79	100

Source: Field data, 2022.

The results from Table 4.8 above show that 39% and 41% of respondents respectively agree and strongly agree with the statement that school distance influence poor classroom learning among girls. While 15% and 5% of respondents respectively disagree and strongly disagree with the statement. This finding suggests that school distance encourages poor classroom learning and academic performance among girl students.

Table 4.9: Regression Analysis Summary on Effect of School Distance on Girls

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.914	.270		7.086	.000
	Late reporting in school and missing some classroom periods	.173	.100	.179	1.724	.088
	Become exhausted upon arrival at school and sleeping during classroom sessions	.093	.175	.054	.529	.598
	Deprive time to engage in individual/group work	-.455	.144	-.320	-3.158	.002
	Limit time for private study among girls.	.053	.110	.048	.483	.630

Source: Field data, 2022.

Additionally, finding from multiple linear regression modal confirm that there is statistical significant between school distance, poor classroom learning participation and poor academic performance among girls.

The results from Table 4.9 above show that late school reporting and missing some classroom periods ($\beta=.179$, $P>0.05$) are not statistically significant, implying that school distance does not influence late school reporting and missing some classroom periods. The result from table 4.9 above further shows that there is a statistical significant between school distance and tiredness, become exhausted and sleeping in classroom learning ($\beta=.054$ $P<0.05$), implying that long school distance makes school girls become tired and exhausted upon arrival at school as a result sleeping during classroom presentation hence poor participation in classroom learning.

The finding from Table 4.9 above also indicated that school distance and limited time for private study are statistical significant ($\beta=.048$ $P<0.05$), suggesting that school distance coupled with the burden of domestic roles deprive female students time to engage in private study as a result perform poorly in examinations. Additionally, the result from linear multiple regression analysis in Table 4.9 above shows that there is a negative relationship between school distance and deprived opportunity to engage in classroom group work ($\beta= -.320$, $P<0.05$), implying that school distance is slightly deprived girls' opportunity to engage in assigned classroom group work.

Moreover, quantitative findings revealed that long school distances coupled with the burden of gender roles and lack of sanitary towels encourage poor classroom participation among girl students all of which lead to poor academic performance. The result from Likert scale in Table 4.10 below shows the responses on the effects of school distance on girls' academic performance.

Table 4.10: Effects of School Distance on Girls' Academic Performance

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agree	32	41
Strongly agree	28	35
Disagree	10	13
Strongly disagree	9	11
Total	79	100

Source: Field data, 2022.

Results from Table 4.10 above show that 41% and 35% of respondents respectively agree and strongly agree with the statement that school distance is influencing poor girls' academic performance. While, 13% and 11% of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the assertion. This finding suggests that long school distances coupled with the burden of domestic roles affect girls' academic performance.

This study concurs with a study by Peteros et al., (2022) who noted that students, who used much of their time walking to and from school daily, spend a few hours for their private studies, sleepless and waking up early to prepare for school, as a result, they deprived time for private study and hence poor academic performance. Similarly study by Ebinum et al. (2017) revealed the same that traditionally girl students who live far away from school do not participate in remedial classes held after school hours or fail to engage in group work discussion because they are supposed to go back home so as to assist their mother in kitchen roles as a result perform poorly in examinations.

This finding, therefore, suggests that school distance coupled with the burden of domestic roles is more challenging to girls' education than boys' because traditionally girls are assigned all domestic chores which in turn deprived them of time to concentrate on their studies.

4.4.3 School Distance and Increased Sexual Harassment and Teenage Pregnancy

School girls who live in a distant area from the school are exposed to greater risks of sexual harassment/assault when going to school and returning back home. This situation forced the majority of parents in rural areas to refuse to enroll their daughters in school until when they become old enough to encounter the challenges of long school distances (SIDA, 2016). Long distances from home to school and the rented rooms nearby the school are pointed out as the main factors that influence early sexual relations and sexual harassment among school girls (Mzeri and Wandela, 2022). Similarly, findings from this study noted that school girls who live far away from school are more exposed to the risk of sexual harassment and engagement in early sexual relations. The result from the Likert scale analysis in Table 4.11 below justify:

Table 4.11: School Distance Influenced Sexual Harassment among School Girls

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agree	30	38
Strongly agree	35	44
Disagree	11	14
Strongly disagree	3	4
Total	79	100

Source: Field data, 2022.

The finding from Table 4.11 above show that 38% and 44% of respondents respectively agree and strongly agree with the statement that school distance increases the chance of sexual harassment among school girls. While 14% and 4% of respondents respectively disagree and strongly disagree with the assertion. This finding implies that female students are sexually harassed/ abused on their way to and from school and in the hired rooms.

Sexual abuse among school girls is also prevalent among girls who use public/private means of school transport (TAMWA, 2010). Likewise, a study by Mpyangu, (2014) and Arya et al., (2019), revealed that school girls who live far away from school usually engage in early sexual relations and experience different forms of sexual harassment by adult men/young boys when commuting to and from school or when using public/private transport. Findings from this study observed the same that sexual relations and sexual harassment among school girls are so common in public or private transport. The results from the focus group discussion revealed many cases of sexual harassment among school girls when going to school and returning back home. P.5 in school C sighted a case of sexual harassment to a certain school girl:

“There was a case in our school whereby a certain man attempted raping our fellow girl student when we return back home. The girl with her fellow girl students was used to randomly collect mangoes in the forest; abruptly certain man kidnapped her and attempted raping. In struggling to escape from the tragedy the girl managed to harm the man by cutting his leg with a razor blade and running away. The guy is still roaming about the forest hunting for school girls. However, he is not being arrested up to this moment because sometimes he uses some witchcraft means (uchawi) to hide himself”.

School distance also influences sexual abuse and mistreatment among school girls. P.3 in school D reported:

“We normally walk a long distance to and from school and we face various forms of sexual harassment on our way to and from school. Sometimes you might be approached by a man who wants to do sex with you when refuse he may ambush and rape you.”

P.2 in the same school added:

“Not only has that but also if you refuse such engagement, he may use abusive language and intimidate you whenever he meets you, something that may psychologically affect you and your study.”

Similarly, a study by Adhikari (2013) in Nepal and Greatland (2014) in Ethiopia observed the same that school distance has exposed school girls to a great risk of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Findings from focus group discussion further revealed the challenges of using public buses among school girls. P.5 in school A reported:

“Some of us use public transport to and from school, however, there are few buses and, in most cases, they either take few students or refuse to take any. The situation is more serious to female students than male students who sometimes use force and manage to get on the bus and go to school or home. So, we normally stay many hours at the bus stop waiting for the buses and hence arrive late in school or at home”.

This finding concurs with a study by Mack (2009) in Dar es Salaam that revealed the same that there was sexual assault among school girls who used daldala as means of transport to and from school. School distance and lack of school transport are also noted to affect parents psychologically. P.2 in school C explained:

“Sometimes we quarrel with our parents for arriving late at home because they think that we are already started engaging in sexual affairs, so they become angry but also worry about us”.

Likewise, a study by Regasa and Taha (2015) indicated that long school distance has created fear among parents in Kenya and as a result parents consider it a challenge to the education of their children, particularly their daughters.

Quantitative findings further revealed that long school distance also encourages school girls to engage in early sexual relations. The result from table 4.12 below illustrates:

Table 4.12: School Distance Encourage School Girls to Engage in Early Sexual Relations

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Agree	25	32
Strongly agree	35	44
Disagree	13	16
Strongly disagree	6	8
Total	79	100

Source: Field data, 2022.

The result from Table 4.12 above shows that 25% and 35% of respondents respectively agree and strongly agree with the statement that school distance increases the chance of engaging in early sexual relations among school girls. While 16% and 8% of respondents

respectively disagree and strongly disagree with the assertion. Qualitative findings further gave elaboration on the effect of school distance and lack of proper means of school transport on girl students. The result from the focus group discussion justifies. P.4 in school B said:

"Sometimes we use Lorries which are used to collect sand and building materials from rural areas to town. However, using a lorry as an alternative to school bus is also a challenge to us particularly during the menstruation period because we face difficulties when boarding and landing from the lorry. More dangerously we are exposed to the risk of engaging in sexual affairs or being sexually harassed by lorry drivers/helpers. Given free lift today will encourage you to wait for the same lorry tomorrow, but mind you that one day you will pay for such assistance."

P.2 in school D added:

"School distance encourages us to engage in sexual affairs, walking long distance can force you to accept some help like a lift from boda boda. The frequent help from boda boda rider can give him chance to tell you that he falls in love with you, at first you may become reluctant and refuse his proposal but as time goes on you may accept it and engage in sexual relations with him, finally, you become pregnant and dropout from the school. That was happening in our school".

This finding, therefore, suggests that school distance and lack of proper means of school transport have influenced sexual harassment and encouraged early sexual relations among female students all of which affect girls' education and hence contribute to gender inequality in secondary education.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concluded that the persistence of gender disparities in education has been linked to the challenge of long school distances and lack of proper means of school transport. Study findings noted that girl students are more vulnerable to the problem of school distance than boys. The study also admits that school distance and lack of school transport encourage poor school attendance, poor classroom learning and poor academic performance among school girls.

Additionally, results from this study confirm that long school distances and lack of school transport are the main factors that influence early sexual relations and sexual harassment among school girls which in turn leads to teenage pregnancy, school dropout, poor participation in classroom learning and poor academic performance. This study, therefore, admits that long school distance and lack of an organized means of school transport in most of community secondary schools are highly affecting girls' education and hence contributes to the persistence of gender disparities in secondary education.

Based on study findings, this study, therefore, provides the following recommendations for policymakers and planners to adopt so as to sort out the challenge of long school distances so as to close the existing gender gaps and promote girls' education and achieve full gender parity in secondary education:

- Policymakers should consider revising sexual abuse regulations focusing on school girls and clearly explain how to deal with those who either sexually harass or engage in sexual affairs with school girls.
- Argued all education stakeholders to increase the number of school hostels in community secondary schools and fully furnish them with the required facilities so as to allow school girls to stay in school hostels.
- Government should consider contracting out construction of school infrastructures including school hostels and the provision of hostel facilities.
- Education PPP should also be applied in the provision of school transport services so as to allow the private sector to be fully engaged in transporting students to and from school, particularly those who live in distant areas.

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GENDER INEQUALITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION: CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PANGANI AND HANDENI DISTRICTS, TANZANIA

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