**Original Research Article**

**ROLE OF GENDER EQUITY POLICY ON GIRLS’ COMPLETION RATES IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RWANDA**

**ABSTRACT**

This study assessed the role of gender equity on girls ‘completion rates in public secondary schools in Kicukiro and Gicumbi districts in Rwanda. Grounded on social justice theory, the research adopted pragmatist paradigm, a quantitative research approach, and a descriptive research design. Data were collected from 260 respondents using questionnaires. The findings revealed a positive correlation between gender equity and girls' completion rates, accounting for 22.2% of the variation in completion (R² = 0.222). The study concludes that there were positive perceptions of gender equity in public secondary schools, highlighting supportive environments for girls' education in Rwanda. The study recommends enforcing robust anti-harassment policies, expanding affordable education for low-income female students, and increasing female teachers' representation to promote gender equity in education.

***Keywords****:* Gender Equity, Girls' Completion Rate, Public Secondary Schools.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Gender equity in education ensures equal treatment for all individuals, regardless of gender, to access, opportunities, and outcomes. It aims to create an environment where girls, boys, women, and men have equal opportunities to participate and benefit from educational resources, programs, and experiences (Zabaniotou, 2020). In India, female education is strongly linked to improved health and nutrition. Kordom (2024) found that higher-education women are less prone to malnutrition-related diseases. Illiterate women have lower height and Body Mass Index, with a higher risk of nutrient deficiencies. Anaemia affects 56% of illiterate women, but only 40% of those who completed at least high school (Haidar, 2010). The importance of gender equity in education cannot be overstated, as it catalyzes social empowerment. When individuals, regardless of their gender, have equal access to education and opportunities to learn and succeed, it not only welfares them personally but also contributes to the overall development and advancement of society (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015).

In the African context, studies have shown that educating girls and women leads to higher economic productivity, improved health outcomes, and lower rates of poverty (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015). When girls are educated, they are more likely to enter the workforce, earn higher incomes, and invest in their families' well-being, breaking the cycle of poverty for future generations. Furthermore, gender equity in education promotes social cohesion and democratic values. By providing equal opportunities for learning and participation, it fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect among individuals of different genders (Lalas *et al.*, 2019). It also challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes, contributing to greater gender equality in all spheres of life. Despite the recognized importance of gender equity in education, numerous challenges hinder its realization. One of the primary challenges is persistent gender-based discrimination and stereotypes. Cultural norms and societal expectations often dictate traditional roles for boys and girls, limiting their educational opportunities (Dost, 2024).

Bizimana's (2018) study in Rwanda analyzed factors affecting girls’ access to education in secondary schools, revealing significant disparities. The study found that girls face lower access to education due to various cultural, community, economic, and school-related factors. Cultural issues like early marriage, pregnancy, caregiving roles, and gender bias in education contributed significantly. Community influence to gender inequality include poor public support, limited female involvement in development, and HIV/AIDS impacts. Economically, parental poverty and lack of necessities hinder girls’ schooling. In schools, gender-insensitive environments, the absence of role models, and harassment further discourage girls. Overall, girls have less access to education than boys, and these barriers are strongly linked to their educational participation. The study recommended policies to enhance financial support, address cultural barriers, and improve gender-sensitive educational environments in public schools.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

***Gender Equity in Education***

Gender equity in education ensures fair access, participation, and outcomes for all, regardless of gender, creating environments where everyone benefits equally from educational opportunities (Zabaniotou, 2020). While, nations like England have reduced gender gaps through targeted policies, significant disparities remain, in low and middle-income countries (Heymann *et al*., 2019). Girls in rural and conflict areas face early marriage, child labor, unsafe travel, and cultural norms that devalue their education (UNESCO, 2020). Poor sanitation also has been contributing to high dropout rates in developing countries (World Bank, 2021).

Gender equitable education boosts economic growth, improves health, and reduces poverty, especially for women (Akinwale, 2023). It also fosters social cohesion, respect, and democratic values. Despite these benefits, access to secondary education remains limited for marginalized groups due to poverty, discrimination, and poor infrastructure in developing countries such as Tanzania (Mulengeki, 2019). Addressing educational barriers ensures equity, supports human rights, and fosters inclusive, sustainable development (Leal *et al*., 2023). Educating girls enhances economic growth, public health, and gender equality. However, gender-based discrimination and stereotypes persist. In Africa, early marriage, domestic duties, and cultural norms lower girls’ school attendance and raise dropout rates as supported by Sikhwari (2024). Urban challenges like high transport costs and inadequate facilities also limit girls access to education (Kanake, 2018).

Gender equity in education remains obstructed by institutional challenges such as biased curricula and limited female representation in leadership. In Tanzania, efforts like teacher training and community involvement have led to some progress, though issues persist (Nkya & Kibona, 2024). Rwanda continues to face inequalities, requiring extensive reforms. Initiatives like “Igire Gimbuka Campaign” aims to address these gaps and promote equality in Rwandan society (Nyiransabimana & Uwimpuhwe, 2024). The issue of achieving inclusive and sustainable educational development demands coordinated and comprehensive strategies (Andiema, 2021).

Otieno (2016) explored the role of school matrons in South Africa, emphasizing their impact on improving girls’ educational experiences. Through qualitative research, the study found that matrons play a vital role in creating nurturing, supportive environments that help girls navigate challenges like bullying, sexual harassment, and limited resources. By offering emotional support and managing essential supplies, matrons would help girls focus on academics and serve as positive role models. Otieno advocated for hiring more female teachers and matrons to foster inclusive and empowering school settings. Likewise, Andiema (2021) examined the cultural barriers to girls' education in Kenya’s Central Pokot Sub County, highlighting the detrimental effects of early marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), and child labor. These practices seemed negatively impacting children academic performance and hinder transitions to higher education. The study called for collective action from communities, governments, and education authorities to eliminate harmful traditions, promote awareness of girls’ educational rights, and increase their chances of completing schools.

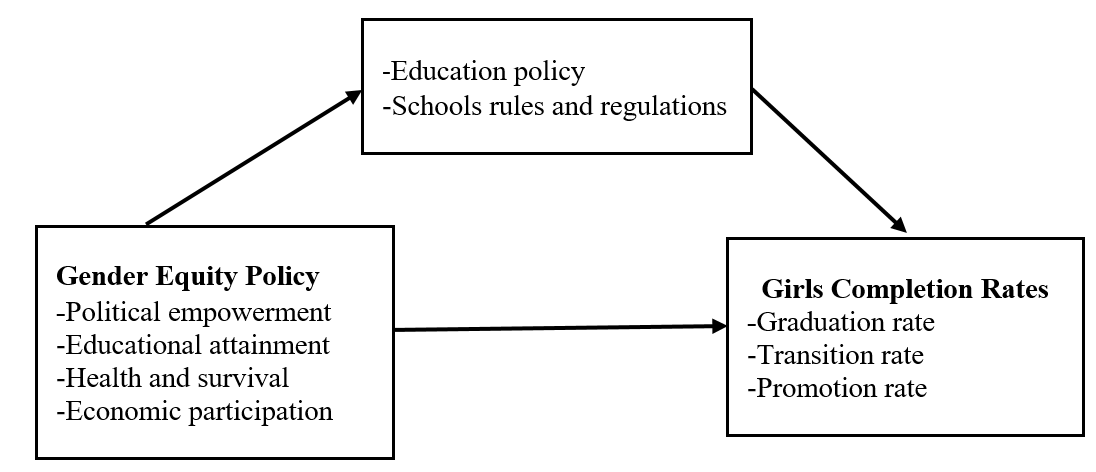
Niyonzima and Buyu (2023) reviewed literature on gender equity policies in Rwanda and their influence on secondary school completion among girls. The findings showed improved completion due to policy reforms, yet persistent challenges such as economic hardship, early marriage, and cultural pressures still obstruct girls’ educational progress, especially in the later stages. The study recommended stronger policy enforcement and expanded support systems, particularly in rural areas. Tusiime (2017) investigated disparities in girls’ access to public versus private schools in Rwanda, finding lower access and higher dropout rates in public schools due to financial and societal challenges. Private schools offered better conditions, underscoring the need for gender-sensitive policies to improve girls’ access to public education. Hence, these studies emphasize the importance of systemic, cultural, and institutional reforms to foster inclusive educational environments that support girls' academic success and long-term empowerment.

***Social Justice Theory***

The theory of social justice was introduced by John Rawls in 1971. It is concerned with the fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities in society. In the context of education, it emphasizes the need for policies that ensure all students, regardless of gender, have equal access to quality education. Additionally, improving gender equity in education can include measures to prevent gender-based violence and harassment within schools, ensuring that girls feel safe and secure in their learning environments. It is important to understand that education extends beyond academics; policies may integrate support services such as counseling, health education, and mentorship programs, which address the comprehensive needs of female students in schools (Bains & Mendelson, 2019). These initiatives help empower girls, offering them not only academic support but also personal and emotional guidance. Social justice theory advocates for active collaboration among educators, policymakers, parents, and communities to create a supportive network that works together to promote the well-being and success of female students. This collective approach is essential for fostering an inclusive and equitable educational environment. This collective approach can enhance advocacy efforts for girls’ education at the local, national, and international levels. Gender equity, rooted in social justice principles, can drive long-term systemic changes that address inequality's root causes, leading to improvements in girls' education and empowerment. It promotes fairness, empowerment, and addressing systemic barriers that affect girls' ability to thrive as boys (Unterhalter, 2015). By improving completion rates, gender equity tackles systemic barriers, helping create an educational environment that empowers girls and supports their academic and personal growth (Fraser, 1997).

***Conceptual Framework***

This study examines the link between gender equity policy and girls’ completion rates in public secondary schools, highlighting the connection between the two variables. Gender equity policy is treated as the independent variable influencing the dependent variable, girls’ completion rates Figure 1.

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*Figure 1* **Gender Equity Policy On Girls ‘completion Rates**

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the independent, dependent, and intervening variable in this study. Gender equity policy is the independent variable, while girls’ completion rates serve as the dependent variable. The intervening variable (i.e. educational policy and school rules and regulations) explains how the effective implementation of the policy enhances girls’ completion rates. Overall, when gender equity measures, such as political empowerment, educational attainment, health, and economic participation, are effectively implemented or enhanced, they would positively influenced by country educational policy environment, schools rules and regulations to impact and increase girls’ completion rates in secondary education.

**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study used a quantitative research approach and a descriptive research design. The quantitative approach was chosen for its ability to gather objective data suitable for statistical analysis, helping identify trends between gender equity policy and girls' school completion rates. The descriptive design allowed for systematic observation of the population without altering variables, focusing on the policy's impact on girls’ completion rates in Rwandan public secondary schools. Solvin’s formula determined a manageable sample size of 260 respondents. Data was primarily gathered using questionnaire, which served as the main research instrument throughout the study.

**4. RESULTS**

This study aimed to assess the role of gender equity policy on girls’ completion rates in public secondary schools. In this section, the researcher presented both descriptive and inferential statistics of this study.

**Descriptive Statistical Analysis**

Findings presented in Table 1 show the role of gender equity policy on girls’ completion rates in public secondary schools.

*Table 1* Gender Equity on Girls’ Completion Rates (N= 260)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Statements** | **STD** | **D** | **N** | **A** | **SA** | **Mean** | **SD** | **Remarks** |
| 1. | Government supports girls’ education. | 8  (3.1%) | 9  (3.5%) | 14  (5.4%) | 60  (23.5%) | 169  (65.0%) | 4.43 | .966 | Very High |
| 2. | Government fulfills its responsibility related to girls’ education. | 9  (3.5%) | 8  (3.1%) | 33  (12.7%) | 92  (35.4%) | 117  (45.0%) | 4.20 | 1.201 | High |
| 3. | The limited participation of women in development activities correlates to girls’ completion rate. | 24  (9.2%) | 21  (8.1%) | 50  (19.2%) | 83  (31.9%) | 82  (31.5%) | 3.68 | 1.252 | High |
| 4. | Political instability can highly affect girls’ completion rate. | 21  (8.1%) | 22  (8.5%) | 26  (10.0%) | 75  (28.8%) | 116  (44.6%) | 3.93 | 1.270 | High |
| 5. | The constitution proclaimed education for all. | 6  (2.3%) | 10  (3.8%) | 39  (15%) | 79  (29.2%) | 129  (49.6%) | 4.20 | .986 | High |
| 6. | The government provides adequate girls’ room. | 20  (7.7%) | 30  (11.6%) | 40  (15.4%) | 78  (30%) | 92  (35.4%) | 3.74 | 1.265 | High |
| 7. | The government provides adequate toilets for girls in my school. | 10  (3.8%) | 10  (3.8%) | 15  (5.8%) | 88  (33.8%) | 137  (52.7%) | 4.28 | 1.006 | Very High |
| 8. | The government provides water and electricity adequately in my school. | 6  (2.3%) | 12  (4.6%) | 33  (12.7%) | 83  (31.9%) | 126  (48.5%) | 4.20 | .984 | High |
| 9. | Educational facilities for greater female participation are adequately provided by the government. | 9  (3.5%) | 33  (12.7%) | 44  (16.9%) | 80  (30.8%) | 94  (36.2%) | 3.83 | 1.152 | High |
| 10. | The government played paramount roles in addressing the menace. | 15  (5.8%) | 27  (10.4%) | 51  (19.6%) | 84  (32.3%) | 83  (31.9%) | 3.74 | 1.179 | High |
| 11. | The government fix the school fees for secondary schools which is affordable for the parents. | 54  (20.8%) | 30  (11.5%) | 22  (8.5%) | 75  (28.8%) | 79  (30.4%) | 3.37 | 1.525 | Avarage |
| 12. | The economic situation discourages parents from sponsoring their female children in school. | 35  (13.5%) | 34  (13.1%) | 41  (15.8%) | 72  (27.7%) | 78  (30.0%) | 3.48 | 1.388 | Avarage |
| 13. | Educating the girl-child is educating a potential mother and educating the mother is educating the Nation. | 7(2.7%) | 7(2.7%) | 26(10.0%) | 61(23.5%) | 159(61.2%) | 4.38 | .961 | Very High |
| 14. | There is an educational commitment of parents to girls’ education. | 10  (3.8%) | 16  (6.2%) | 26  (10.0%) | 97  (37.3%) | 110  (42.3%) | 4.08 | 1.057 | High |
|  | **Grand Mean/SD** |  |  |  |  |  | **3.97** | **1.16** |  |

**Source:** Field Data (2025).

The findings, as shown in Table 1, highlighted the differing views on the effectiveness of gender equity measures and their effect on the completion rates of female students. This analysis focuses on the mean scores of the statements, with high perception indicating a positive view of gender equity efforts and average perception highlighting areas of concern for a policy on gender equity and girls’ completion rates.

Respondents strongly believe that the government supports girls' education, with a high perception score of 4.43, indicating active government involvement through policies, scholarships, and resources. Similarly, the statement: "The government provides adequate toilets for girls in my school" scored a mean 4.28, reflecting the importance of sanitation in reducing absenteeism and dropout rates. These findings suggest that the government's efforts in promoting education and providing necessary facilities are seen as effective in supporting girls' educational success. Moreover, the statement: "Educating the girl-child is educating a potential mother and educating the mother is educating the nation" received a high perception mean score of 4.38, reflecting belief in the long-term societal benefits of girls' education. Additionally, the statement that "Government fulfills its responsibility related to girls' education" scored a mean of 4.20, indicating respondents' confidence in the government's commitment to supporting girls' education. This fosters trust, promoting higher completion rates through various initiatives and policies. The statement linking limited women’s participation in development to lower girls' completion rates, scored a mean of 3.68. This suggest that increased female involvement can inspire role models and improve girls' educational outcomes.

The statement on "Political instability can highly affect girls' completion rate" scored a mean of 3.93, indicating concern that instability disrupts education, impacting girls' schooling. Resources may be diverted, schools closed, and safety prioritized. The statement on "The government provides adequate girls' rooms" scored a mean of 3.74, reflecting a positive yet insufficient perception, suggesting that more dedicated spaces, like study areas or common rooms, are needed to create supportive environments for girls' education. The statement on "Educational facilities for greater female participation are adequately provided by the government" scored a mean of 3.83, suggesting that while respondents recognize government efforts, improvements are needed. These facilities, such as libraries and sports amenities, help maintain girls' educational interest. The statement on "The government played paramount roles in addressing the menace" scored a mean of 3.74, indicating that respondents believe the government needs to do more to tackle obstacles like cultural, economic, and social barriers to girls' education.

Several statements received moderate perception scores, indicating areas needing improvement. The statement that "The government fixes affordable school fees for secondary schools" scored a mean of 3.37, suggesting fees remain as a barrier towards girls' education. Additionally, the statement on whether "The economic situation discourages parents from sponsoring their female children in school", the responses scored a mean of 3.48, reflecting the economic hardships that hinder girls' education, often leading to early marriages or increased household labor for girls.

The grand mean score of 3.97 reflects a generally positive view of government support for girls' education, though improvements are needed in infrastructure, economic barriers, and targeted facilities. While, there’s strong recognition of government efforts, the variability in responses highlights diverse community experiences. Addressing these gaps can enhance government policies, ensuring equal educational opportunities for girls, contributing to national development and gender equality.

In the review of the documents in school heads’ office, the data shows completion rates of students, Table 2.

*Table 2* Students’ Completion Rates in Schools

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Students’ sections** | | **2020/2021** | | **2021/2022** | | **2022/2023** | |
| **Senior 3** | **Observations** | 45 | | 45 | | 45 | |
| **Gender** | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| **Mean** | 98.23 | 97.7000 | 99.42 | 98.975 | 99.67 | 84.66 |
| **Std. Deviation** | 23.9.25 | 24.05241 | 23.321 | 22.36446 | 23.121 | 36.16380 |
| **Minimum** | 46.00 | 45.00 | 51.00 | 47.00 | 56.00 | 43.00 |
| **Maximum** | 147.00 | 146.00 | 152.00 | 149.00 | 162.00 | 134.00 |
| **Senior 6** | **Observations** | 45 | | 45 | | 45 | |
| **Gender** | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| **Mean** | 97.6 | 98.2 | 99.66 | 98.66 | 99.96 | 91.33 |
| **Std. Dev.** | 24.153 | 23.44009 | 23.234 | 23.06487 | 21.013 | 28.99138 |
| **Min** | 45.00 | 46.00 | 56.00 | 47.00 | 56.00 | 45.00 |
| **Max** | 147.00 | 148.00 | 161.00 | 156.00 | 163.00 | 140.00 |

The findings show that female student completion in senior three and senior six public secondary schools in Kicukiro and Gicumbi Districts, Rwanda, decreased over the years. In senior three, completion declined by 7.79% from 2021/2022 to 2022/2023, with a larger drop compared to senior six, which decreased by 3.85%. Senior six students had higher completion rates, attributed to academic maturity and stronger family support. The decline in senior three completions could be attributed to financial challenges, early pregnancies, and a lack of motivation.

***Inferential Statistical Analyses***

Before performing the regression analysis, a pairwise correlation analysis was conducted to ensure greater reliability. This analysis aimed to determine whether the variables were correlated. The results revealed a positive and significant correlation between gender equity and girls’ completion rates, with a coefficient of r = 0.387 and a p-value less than 0.05. According to Hair et al. (2006), item to total correlation should exceed 0.03 and be statistically significant. Thus, the study found a meaningful positive relationship between gender equity and girls’ completion rates in Rwanda public secondary schools.

The same results are obtained with a parametric test, Table 3.

*Table 3* Correlations (Non-parametric)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Correlations (non-parametric)** | | |
| Testing Variables | | **Gender Equity** |
| **Internal efficiency** | Spearman's rho Correlation | **0.387\*\*** |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 |
| Total number of respondents 260 | | |
| \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | |
| \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | |

*Table 4* Correlations (parametric)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Correlations (parametric)** | | |
| Testing Variables | | **Gender Equity** |
| **Girls completion rate** | Pearson Correlation | **0.387\*\*** |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 |
| Total number of respondents 260 | | |
| \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | |

As it is presented in the Table 3 & 4, it was revealed that gender equity has a statistical significance weak positive correlation with the girls’ completion rate in public secondary schools where r = .387 (0.387parametric case)with the P-value = .000 < .05. This shows that promoting gender equity in public secondary schools plays a significant role in the promotion of girls’ completion rates in such schools.

**Regression Analysis**

*Table 5* **Presents Model Summary for Linear Regression Analysis**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model Summaryb** | | | | | | | | | |
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
| R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |
| 1 | .471a | .222 | .213 | .49660 | .222 | 24.323 | 3 | 256 | .000 |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender Equity | | | | | | | | | |
| b. Dependent Variable: Girls completion rate | | | | | | | | | |

Table 5 shows that there is a high positive degree of relationship between gender equity and girls’ completion rates in public secondary schools in Rwanda. This was shown by r = 0.471. Table 6 also indicates an R-squared value of 0.222, meaning that an improvement in gender equity leads to a 22.2 percent increase in girls' completion rates.

*Table 6* **Model Coefficients of Gender Equity on Girls’ Completion Rate**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Coefficientsa** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Model** | | **Unstandardized Coefficients** | | **Standardized Coefficients** | **T** | **Sig.** | **95.0% Confidence Interval for B** | | **Correlations** | | | **Collinearity Statistics** | |
| **B** | **Std. Error** | **Beta** | **Lower Bound** | **Upper Bound** | **Zero-order** | **Partial** | **Part** | **Tolerance** | **VIF** |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.229 | .316 |  | 3.889 | **.000** | .607 | 1.852 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gender Equity | .292 | .070 | .256 | 4.153 | **.000** | .153 | .430 | .387 | .251 | .229 | .800 | 1.250 |
| a. **Dependent Variable**: Girls' Completion Rates | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 6 presents the summary of the regression coefficient of computed variables on gender equity. It was indicated that gender equity policy has significant effects on girls’ completion rate. This was shown by a standard beta of 0.256, significant at. 000. This means that improving gender equity by one will increase 0.256 units of girls’ completion rates in public secondary schools in Kicukiro and Gicumbi District, Rwanda.

**5. DISCUSSION**

The study evaluated the role of gender equity policy on girls’ completion rates in public secondary schools within Gicumbi and Kicukiro Districts. It centered on gender equity as a predictor of girls' education policies, analyzing fourteen items through quantitative data. A significant finding of the study was the high level of approval regarding government support for girls' education. Respondents positively rated initiatives like scholarships and specialized programs, indicating their effectiveness in overcoming educational barriers. This aligns with Sikhwari (2024), who emphasized the importance of government involvement in achieving gender equality in education and increasing confidence among girls and their families. These findings highlight the key role of targeted public policies in promoting girls' access to and success in education.

Moreover, respondents showed a positive view of the government's role in supporting girls’ education, reflecting confidence in its ability to implement, finance, and oversee education policies, as noted by Akinwale (2023). They identified effective policy enforcement and sufficient funding as crucial to improving girls' education and reducing disparities. Regarding the limited involvement of females in development activities, respondents viewed it as a relevant concern, though less significant due to challenges like poor classroom conditions and socio-economic barriers. This supports Mulengeki (2019), showing that participation is important but one of several factors influencing completion rates.

In terms of political instability, respondents rated its impact on girls’ education as not critically severe, indicating awareness that while political disruption poses challenges such as school closures, other factors especially socio-economic conditions and cultural norms are more dominant as stressed by Sikhwari (2024). The study indicated that effective educational policies could mitigate some effects of instability. Respondents positively acknowledged the constitution’s commitment to universal education, highlighting its importance in shaping national education policies and promoting gender equity. Zabaniotou (2020) supports this, emphasizing the need to transform constitutional promises into real progress through continuous implementation and sufficient resources. Views on infrastructure were mixed; concerns arose over the quality and adequacy of girls’ rooms, echoing Qutub and Anjum (2015). However, a high mean score for sanitation facilities reflected their vital role in supporting girls, especially during menstruation, positively affecting attendance, as noted by Sikhwari (2024).

Respondents viewed the sufficiency of water and electricity in schools positively, acknowledging their importance for a productive learning environment. However, when assessing facilities specifically targeted at enhancing female participation, there was a lower level of satisfaction, indicating considerable room for improvement (Nkya & Kibona, 2024). This disparity points to a need for improved infrastructure conducive to female education.

Although government efforts were acknowledged, concerns about school fee affordability emerged as a major barrier to accessing education. The findings revealed persistent challenges that hinder equitable access, highlighting a disconnect between financial support policies and the actual experiences of families, consistent with Leal et al. (2023). Economic constraints were seen as moderately affecting parents' ability to support girls’ education. However, these financial issues are closely linked with cultural preferences for boys, demonstrating that economic barriers are part of a broader range of factors influencing educational outcomes, as emphasized by Chitope (2024).

Despite recognizing government efforts, challenges like poor infrastructure, financial hardship, and weak targeted programs persist. These issues, as noted by Niyonzima and Bayu (2023), significantly impact girls’ retention, especially during the crucial transition before senior three, where financial instability and cultural expectations create the most pressure and contribute to increased dropout rates.

**Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Based on research findings and conclusions of the study, the study recommends several actions. First, Ministry of Education in Rwanda should strengthen anti-harassment policies and ensure their effective enforcement, particularly concerning teacher harassment, including sexual harassment. Schools must establish clear reporting systems, support services, and regular staff training to maintain a safe environment. Secondly, policymakers should expand affordable education for low-income female students through financial support, scholarships, and targeted resources. This will promote gender equality, enhance access to education, and positively impact communities, fostering equity, empowerment, and societal progress.

**6. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on research findings, it can be concluded that gender equity contributes significantly to girls’ completion rates in public secondary schools. Hence, when the government provides necessary facilities and utilities and creates a secure learning environment, there is an increase in girls’ completion rate. Therefore, the findings call for government policies addressing infrastructure, financial aid, and community engagement to enhance gender equity and improve educational outcomes for girls, especially during critical transitional periods in public secondary schools.

Based on research findings, the study underscores the critical role of government support, infrastructure, and societal factors in promoting gender equity and improving girls' completion rates in public secondary schools. While, there is positive recognition of government efforts, challenges such as inadequate facilities, political instability, economic barriers, and limited female involvement in development activities hinder progress. Financial constraints, early pregnancies, and lack of motivation particularly affect ‘Senior Three’ completion rates, whereas ‘Senior Six’ educational outcomes are more stable due to stronger retention strategies and family support. The results emphasize the importance of implementing policies that focus on infrastructure, financial support, and community involvement to improve gender equity and guarantee equal opportunities for girls, particularly during key transition periods in their education.

**DISCLAIMER(ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)**

I confirm that, aside from minor refinements to specific sections, no generative AI tools such as large language models like ChatGPT or software like COPILOT were used in writing or editing this work. All content reflects personal knowledge, skills, and effort. This assurance emphasizes that the ideas and expressions presented are solely human-generated, ensuring the originality and credibility of the publication without reliance on automated assistance.

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