VOL. 07 NO. 2,
FEBRUARY, 2025
E-ISSN 3027-1533
P-ISSN 3026-8648

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of African Innovation & Advanced Studies (JAIAS)

Transforming Female Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Addressing Socio-Cultural, Economic, Institutional and Instructional Barriers to Access and Inclusion

Akem Solange Ojong
Drexel University, School of Education, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
Corresponding Author: akemsolangeojong41@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/ajaias.v7i2.032

Abstract

The phrase *"educate a girl, you educate a nation"* highlights the powerful impact of girls' education on society. This literature review examines the socio-cultural and economic barriers that limit girls' access to and inclusion in education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Drawing on peer-reviewed studies and international reports, the review explores how these barriers interact and affect girls in different ways, especially those from marginalized backgrounds. It uses liberal and intersectional feminist perspectives to explain how unequal social structures and power relations contribute to the exclusion of girls from education. The review identifies key barriers such as harmful gender norms, early marriage, poverty, child labour, and health-related challenges, and explains how these factors limit girls' educational opportunities. It also offers practical recommendations for gender-responsive and inclusive strategies that address both individual and structural barriers to education. The review emphasizes the need for stronger and coordinated action by governments, communities, and global partners, and argues that investing in girls' education is essential for building fairer, healthier, and more prosperous societies.

Keywords: Girls' Education, Sub-Saharan Africa, Gender Inequality, Early Marriage, Poverty, Intersectional Feminism, Educational Access, Inclusive Education, Child Labor, Policy Reform.

Introduction

Contextual and Background Overview of the Review

The term *girl-child* refers to a female from birth to 18 years old (UNICEF, 2005), covering early childhood, primary, and secondary education. Gender goes beyond the basic classification of male and female. It is a social structure that influences people's roles, responsibilities, opportunities, and experiences within society (Heise et al., 2019). In Sub-Saharan Africa, this social structure strongly affects girls' access to education and their ability to succeed in school and later in life. A girl's educational outcomes are shaped not only by her individual abilities but also by conditions within her household and community, including cultural norms, economic resources, and social expectations. Many education policies and development programmes assume that early marriage and adolescent pregnancy are the main barriers to achieving gender equality in education. Although higher levels of education are often associated with delayed marriage and pregnancy, clear evidence showing a direct cause-and-effect relationship remains limited. Recent reviews of policies and programmes addressing child marriage and adolescent pregnancy show mixed results in improving gender equality in education across different contexts. Case studies from Bangladesh, Guatemala, Ethiopia, and Kenya highlight common underlying factors such as poverty, gender norms, and limited institutional support that increase adolescent girls' risk of early marriage, early pregnancy, and early school dropout. These findings demonstrate that decisions related to schooling and transitions into adulthood are closely connected. Therefore, policies and programmes that aim to improve girls' educational access and inclusion must address education, marriage, and adolescent pregnancy together rather than treating them as separate issues (Psaki, 2016).

Within this broader effort to promote gender equity in education, national laws and policies have played an important role, but serious challenges remain in practice. In some African countries, several pieces of legislation have been passed, especially in South Africa, to promote equity in education and ensure equal opportunities for all learners. Despite these legal frameworks, disturbing reports show that sexual harassment of girls remains a serious problem in many schools. Female learners are often denied equal opportunities and effective education because they are subjected to harassment by educators and male students. In addition, girls face emotional pressure, fear of unwanted pregnancy, and loss of self-respect, all of which negatively affect their learning.

The purpose of this article was to examine the nature and extent of sexual harassment and violence in South African schools and to explore ways in which the rights of female learners to equal treatment and equal educational opportunities can be protected and promoted (Prinsloo, 2006). Beyond issues of safety and protection within schools, access to quality education itself remains a major concern, particularly for girls in poor countries. Children are entitled to free and quality basic education, and this right was recognized globally when world leaders adopted universal primary education as one of the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015. However, by 2004, it was already evident that this goal was unlikely to be achieved in many low-income countries. School attendance, especially for girls, remains far from universal, and many children leave school before completing primary education. Even for those who attend school, the quality of education is often poor due to underpaid and poorly trained teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and shortages of basic learning materials such as textbooks, blackboards, pens, and paper (Hillman & Jenkner, 2004). As a result of these structural and institutional challenges, many girls in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to experience poor educational outcomes and early school exit**.** Although girls' enrollment in primary education has increased, completion rates remain low, and girls drop out more frequently than boys, leading to high levels of female illiteracy and persistent gender inequality in education (Johannes, 2010). According to Human Rights Watch (2018), all girls have the right to education regardless of pregnancy, marriage, or motherhood. In reality, however, pregnant girls often face discrimination and punishment, while boys responsible for pregnancies are rarely held accountable. In many cases, girls are expelled from school, whereas boys are allowed to continue their education. Although countries such as Gabon, Kenya, and Malawi have policies that permit pregnant girls to return to school after childbirth, implementation remains weak and support for adolescent mothers is limited. In contrast, countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania expel pregnant girls and deny them access to public education, often resulting in permanent school dropout, early marriage, poverty, and abuse.

Building on the institutional and policy challenges discussed above, social and economic pressures further deepen girls' educational exclusion across Sub-Saharan Africa. Reports show that pregnancy, together with early marriage, poverty, and the preferential treatment of boys, is a major cause of the higher school dropout rates among girls. Evidence from Kenya illustrates the scale of this problem. A report by the Centre for the Study of Adolescence, titled *The Situation of Young People in Kenya* and released with Save the Children Sweden, found that by the age of 19, 48 percent of young women in Kenya had already had their first child. These patterns highlight the difficult realities facing adolescent girls and show how early motherhood

often interrupts or permanently ends their education. At the same time, Africa stands at a critical point in its development, where future economic growth and social progress depend on current policy choices and investment priorities. With more than 145 million adolescent girls living on the continent, investing in their education presents a powerful opportunity to influence long-term development outcomes. However, despite this potential, serious challenges remain, including high rates of child marriage and limited access to schooling. More than half of African girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are currently out of school, reflecting deep and persistent barriers to educational access and inclusion (Ajayi & Koussoubé, 2025). In addition to economic hardship and early motherhood, the school environment itself often discourages girls, especially teenage mothers, from continuing their education. Stigma and discrimination from teachers are frequently reported as key reasons why adolescent mothers leave school. The experience of nineteen-year-old Rhoda Moraa, who dropped out during her first year of secondary school after becoming pregnant, reflects the challenges faced by many girls in similar situations (Oyaro, 2008). More broadly, education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa often provide unequal opportunities for boys and girls, shaped by gender, location, social class, and regional differences. These inequalities contribute to high illiteracy rates among girls and women and reinforce long-standing gender gaps in education (Ombati & Mokua, 2012).

These educational inequalities are further reinforced by wider social, cultural, and structural factors that limit girls' participation and success in schooling. Key contributors to gender inequality in education include political instability and violence, poverty and economic challenges, harmful cultural values, female genital mutilation, early marriage, and sexual harassment. Additional barriers include the lack of gender-responsive teaching practices, ineffective instruction, inadequate learning materials, poor school environments, and the impact of HIV/AIDS. When left unaddressed, these factors slow individual development, weaken national progress, and hinder social transformation, affecting both women and men. For this reason, the elimination of gender inequality in education must be treated as a priority. Various strategies and interventions aimed at reducing gender disparities in education across developing countries have been proposed and discussed (Ombati & Mokua, 2012). Focusing specifically on Kenya highlights how deeply rooted cultural beliefs continue to undermine girls' educational opportunities. Despite global and national efforts to promote gender equality, Kenya still experiences significant gender gaps in education. Cultural practices and beliefs often restrict girls' rights and expose them to early marriage, female genital mutilation, and sexual exploitation. These practices directly interfere with girls' ability to remain in school and complete their education, reinforcing cycles of disadvantage and exclusion (Mwakio, 2017).

In Ghana, despite many efforts to promote gender equality, inequality in education continues to exist. This inequality is mainly expressed through socio-cultural practices that limit girls' educational opportunities. A study examining these issues explored the views of university faculty members using semi-structured interviews. The findings show that the gendered division of labour is the main socio-cultural factor that promotes gender inequality in education. Girls are often expected to take on domestic responsibilities, which reduces their time and chances for schooling. The study argues that unless such deeply rooted socio-cultural practices are addressed through advocacy and community engagement, gender inequality in education will persist. Therefore, there is a strong need for awareness and sensitization on the negative effects of these practices, using African indigenous knowledge and education to promote female empowerment and support national education and development goals (Ussher et al., 2022).

Similarly, in Cameroon, gender equality is a stated national priority, yet significant challenges remain. Promoting better living conditions for women through gender equality has been emphasized in national policies and public addresses by the Head of State, His Excellency Paul Biya. However, past development efforts under the Millennium Development Goals were largely unsuccessful in addressing gender inequality at the grassroots level, particularly in relation to women's development (Djapou Fouthe, 2017). Although the Sustainable Development Goals encourage women and their advocates to take ownership of empowerment strategies, progress remains limited. The Social Institutions and Gender Index 2014 shows high levels of discrimination against women in Cameroon's social institutions. In response, this work highlights the need to closely track progress and ensure sustained attention to gender parity. The study also discusses ongoing discrimination against women and girls and provides a clear roadmap for gender empowerment in Cameroon (Djapou Fouthe, 2017).

Further evidence from Tanzania shows how socio-cultural practices continue to limit girls' access to primary education. A study conducted in Makonde societies in the Newala District examined how cultural practices affect girls' schooling. The study focused on the views of education stakeholders on rites of passage, the effects of early marriage on girls' academic development, community attitudes toward girls' education, and possible strategies to address these challenges (Declan, 2015). Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 204 participants through questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The findings show that the majority of respondents, including female pupils, teachers, school committee members, and head teachers, agreed that socio-cultural practices significantly limit girls' primary education. Only a small number of respondents

disagreed. Based on these findings, the study recommends that central and local governments, schools, and the media should conduct public awareness campaigns to increase community understanding of the importance of investing in girls' education (Declan, 2015). Similarly, in Nigeria, gender inequality in education remains a serious concern despite government efforts. Key challenges include weak capacity to monitor and integrate gender issues into education programmes and limited funding. Socio-cultural practices also reduce girls' participation in schooling. In many families, when resources are scarce, priority is given to boys' education, while girls are expected to perform household chores and caregiving roles. Other harmful practices, such as early marriage, religious restrictions, and unwanted pregnancies, further increase girls' risk of dropping out of school. Pre-marital sexuality also affects girls more negatively than boys and often disrupts their education (Adelabu & Adepoju, 2007).

Beyond access to schooling, evidence shows that educating girls brings wide social and economic benefits, yet parental attitudes can still limit participation. Female education is especially important in developing countries because it directly affects social, economic, and political development. A study conducted in Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria, examined how parents' socio-cultural backgrounds influence girl-child education. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 240 parents through a structured questionnaire. The findings show that some parents view girls' education as unimportant, unprofitable, or a waste of resources. These attitudes negatively affect girls' schooling. However, the study found no major differences in these views based on parents' gender, religion, age, or education level. The study recommends that government agencies and youth-related institutions should design programmes to educate parents about the value of girl-child education. It also suggests employing trained counsellors at all levels and discouraging cultural beliefs that restrict girls' educational opportunities (Okafor, 2020).

Similar patterns of inequality are evident in Ghana, where girls continue to face barriers across all levels of education. Female education improves the quality of life for individuals, families, communities, and nations, yet gender gaps remain (Aziato, 2016). A review of studies on female education identified several factors that negatively affect girls' schooling, including poverty, adolescent pregnancy, sexual and emotional harassment, menstruation-related challenges, and heavy family responsibilities. The study concludes that families, communities, and governments should adopt context-specific strategies to support girls' education. These include flexible school schedules and supportive learning environments. Despite increased enrollment, many girls in Sub-Saharan Africa still fail to complete primary school, leading to higher dropout rates and continued gender inequality (Aziato, 2016; Johannes, 2010). Although less directly linked to access, research from Nigeria also

highlights gaps in support systems affecting young women's development. A study on university athletes assessed mental toughness among male and female students using a descriptive research design. Data collected from 80 athletes showed that most participants demonstrated low to moderate mental toughness levels. The study highlights the lack of structured support and intervention programmes for young people in Nigerian institutions, pointing to broader institutional gaps that can also affect female development and success in educational settings (Bunyi, 2008).

Recent evidence from Kenya further shows how multiple barriers continue to affect girls' education. A study in Kenya found that girls' schooling is limited by early marriage, sexual harassment, early pregnancy, child labour, lack of teachers, shortage of learning materials, and harmful cultural practices (Mwanahamisi, 2014). The study also shows that support measures such as mentoring, adequate learning materials, and school feeding programmes help keep girls in school. It recommends stopping practices that encourage early pregnancy, reducing poverty through community economic empowerment, and removing harmful cultural practices. The study further stresses the importance of community cooperation in reducing school dropout and improving girls' academic performance (Mwanahamisi, 2014). Beyond country-specific challenges, gender equity in education is widely recognized as essential for social empowerment and inclusion. Gender equity in education supports social empowerment and helps build a more inclusive society (Kuteesa, Akpuokwe, & Udeh, 2024). Although progress has been made, gender gaps in access to education remain, especially in marginalized communities. Girls continue to face barriers such as restrictive cultural norms, economic hardship, and poor school infrastructure. Gender stereotypes also limit girls' subject choices and reduce their participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (Kuteesa, Akpuokwe, & Udeh, 2024). Addressing these challenges requires coordinated actions. Policies must focus on removing financial, cultural, and institutional barriers through investments in infrastructure, scholarships, and targeted support. In addition, education systems should challenge gender stereotypes through inclusive curricula and community engagement. Providing quality education that builds confidence and critical thinking skills is key to expanding girls' opportunities and promoting long-term empowerment (Kuteesa, Akpuokwe, & Udeh, 2024).

At the secondary education level, gender inequality remains a serious concern across Sub-Saharan Africa. A thematic study on junior and senior secondary education examined gender equity in Ghana, Malawi, and Uganda, alongside a review of studies conducted over the past decade (Sutherland-Addy, 2008). While gender equity at the primary level has received significant attention, secondary education has been less prioritized. Evidence shows continued gender gaps in access, retention, and academic

performance at the secondary level. Although girls often transition from primary to secondary school at higher rates than boys and repeat grades less frequently, they remain underrepresented in secondary school enrollment. This study aims to document the nature and extent of gender disadvantage in secondary education, examine its causes, and identify strategies that can reduce or eliminate these inequalities. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions on improving secondary education and training in Africa (Sutherland-Addy, 2008).

Economic and Social Benefits of Girls' Education

Education is a powerful tool for driving economic growth and social development. Even basic education equips individuals with essential life skills and opens access to resources that help reduce poverty (Bangura & Mambo, 2023). Yet in sub-Saharan Africa, the benefits of educating girls are still underappreciated, especially in regions where traditional gender norms limit women's roles. Recent research, however, makes clear that girls' education generates both individual and national gains. Reports by the World Bank and World Economic Forum show that when women are educated, they are more likely to enter the workforce, earn higher incomes, and contribute more to economic growth (Bangura & Mambo, 2023). Educated women are also better positioned to support their families, providing access to healthcare, food, and education for the next generation. At the national level, closing gender gaps in education and employment could significantly raise per capita income and GDP (World Bank Group, 2016). Bangura and Mambo (2023) emphasize that removing barriers to girls' education is vital for both household stability and long-term national development. When girls are left out of education, communities lose out on the wide-ranging benefits of having educated women, such as healthier children, reduced poverty, and increased civic participation.

Education plays a central role in human-centred development. When education is lacking or of poor quality, it weakens all other development efforts (Browne & Barrett, 1991). Education is closely linked to better health and nutrition, improved hygiene practices, higher child survival rates, and lower fertility levels (Browne & Barrett, 1991). Studies in Africa also show that education brings strong economic benefits. Research by the World Bank indicates that investment in education produces higher economic returns than many other forms of investment (UNICEF, 1990, p. 45 as cited in Browne & Barrett, 1991). For this reason, education is a key foundation for development in its broadest sense. Differences in education levels have been identified as a major reason why countries with similar natural resources and investment levels experience different rates of economic growth (UNICEF, 1990, citing Ul Haq, 1988

as cited in Browne & Barrett, 1991). Therefore, education should be treated as a top priority for all members of society in the development process.

The education of girls brings many important benefits to individuals and society as a strong commitment to educating girls up to the secondary level encourages communities and governments to build more secondary schools for girls. When schools are available, affordable, and located within a reasonable distance, parents are more willing to enrol their children and keep them in school. Increased parental involvement also improves the quality of education and strengthens learning outcomes at both primary and secondary levels. Girls' education produces wide social benefits for society. Education helps girls develop critical thinking skills, which support civic participation and promote democratic change. Girls who remain in school are less likely to be involved in crime or youth violence and are less likely to become victims of such activities. In addition, secondary education reduces the risk of human trafficking by improving economic opportunities and decreasing vulnerability among young people (Rihani, 2006)

Girls' education plays a vital role in improving health outcomes. Educated girls and women are better able to address major health challenges in developing countries. Girls' education is linked to lower infant mortality rates, improved child nutrition and immunization, reduced child stunting, and lower fertility rates. It also helps reduce unwanted pregnancies, leading to healthier families and communities. Finally, girls' education contributes to the prevention of HIV and AIDS. Women and girls make up about half of the global population living with HIV and AIDS, and secondary education provides a critical opportunity to reach girls at a vulnerable stage of life. Through education, girls learn healthy behaviors and gain knowledge that reduces their risk of infection. Evidence shows that uneducated girls are more likely to be affected by HIV, highlighting the protective role of secondary education (Rihani, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

This review uses two key feminist theories such as, Liberal Feminist Theory and Intersectionality Theory to analyze the socio-cultural and economic barriers that limit girls' access to education in sub-Saharan Africa. These frameworks help explain how structural inequalities affect girls differently and inform the review's focus on gender-responsive solutions.

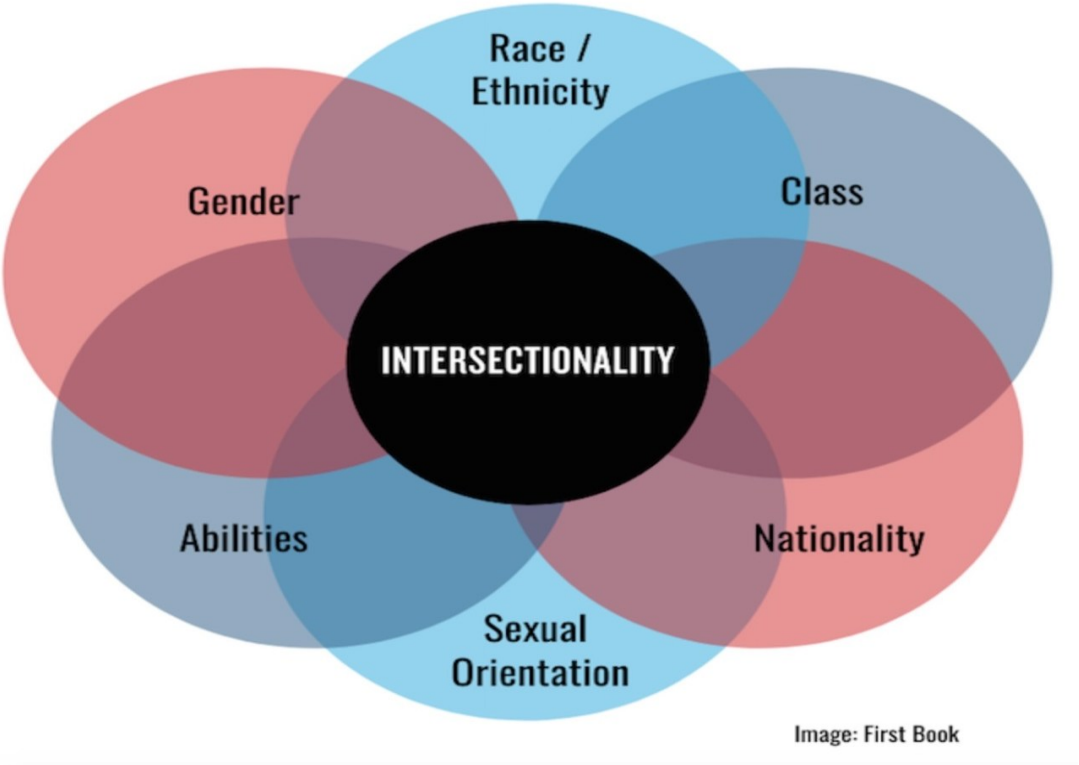
Liberal Feminist Theory



Liberal feminism focuses on achieving gender equality by promoting women's and girls' rights through legal reforms, policy changes, and equal access to education, work, and public life (Saulnier, 1996; Tong, 2009). This theory challenges traditional power structures, such as patriarchy, which often limit girls' opportunities in education. It emphasizes that girls and boys should have equal rights, including the right to attend school, receive quality education, and benefit from supportive learning environments. Liberal feminism has long advocated for education as a basic right. Early thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill emphasized women's right to education, and later scholars such as Betty Friedan focused on the institutional barriers that prevent women from fully participating in society. Today, liberal feminist theory continues to guide research and policy by calling for actions such as removing school fees, offering scholarships, and promoting laws that protect girls' right to stay in school. This theory is relevant to the review because it helps explain how legal and policy gaps, along with harmful socio-cultural practices like early marriage or gendered household roles, continue to exclude girls from education. It also supports the review's focus on promoting gender-responsive policies such as re-entry programs for young mothers, school-based protections from gender-based violence, and campaigns that challenge gender norms, to create more equal opportunities for girls. By applying liberal feminist theory, this study argues for practical changes within existing systems to ensure that girls are not left behind in education. It aligns with research that highlights how reforms such as eliminating school costs or changing

attitudes toward girls' roles can remove key barriers and improve educational outcomes (Cahill, 2011; Zulu, 2015).

Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989)



Intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), expands the analysis by showing how different forms of inequality such as gender, class, race and ethnicity, ability, nationality, sexual orientation and disability interact and shape girls' experiences in complex ways. In the context of sub-Saharan Africa, this framework helps explain why some girls face more severe educational challenges than others, depending on their background. For example, a girl from a rural, low-income family may face poverty, cultural expectations to marry early, lack of transport to school, and limited access to health care. These overlapping challenges cannot be understood in isolation. Intersectionality helps uncover how these factors combine to deepen exclusion and marginalization.

It also draws attention to groups of girls who are often overlooked such as those with disabilities or those from ethnic minorities, and who require targeted interventions. Using this framework allows the review to move beyond general comparisons between

boys and girls. Instead, it highlights how gender inequalities are layered with other forms of disadvantage. This is critical for designing education policies and programs that truly address the needs of the most marginalized girls, not just increasing access overall, but making education systems more inclusive and responsive. Together, liberal feminist theory and intersectionality offer a strong foundation for this review. Liberal feminism focuses on legal equality and policy reforms, while intersectionality explains how multiple inequalities overlap and reinforce one another. These theories help frame the analysis of barriers to girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa and support the review's call for systemic, inclusive, and gender-sensitive solutions.

Methodology

This literature review used a qualitative and integrative approach to examine existing research on the barriers affecting girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The aim was to bring together evidence from different types of sources in order to develop a clear understanding of the social, cultural, economic, institutional, and instructional challenges that limit girls' access to and success in education across the region.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria: The review included peer-reviewed journal articles, regional and international policy reports, and relevant grey literature published between 2000 and 2025. Key sources were drawn from organizations such as Human Rights Watch, as well as academic databases including JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar. All selected sources were carefully screened and chosen based on their direct relevance to girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa, the quality and rigor of their research methods, and their contribution to understanding gender inequality and barriers to educational access and inclusion.

Search Terms: The literature search used a wide range of keywords to capture relevant studies on girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Core search terms included *girls' education*, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, *gender inequality in education*, *early marriage*, *child labour*, and *intersectional feminism*. These were expanded to include related terms such as *gender equity in education*, *female education*, *school access and retention*, *school dropout*, *adolescent pregnancy*, *socio-cultural barriers*, *economic barriers to education*, *poverty and education*, *educational inclusion*, *education policy*, *sexual harassment in schools*, and *girls' empowerment through education*. Boolean operators and combinations of these keywords were used to broaden and refine the search, ensuring comprehensive coverage of both theoretical and empirical studies relevant to the review.

Data Organization and Literature Analysis: To organize and manage the literature, reference management software, specifically Mendeley and Zotero, was used to systematically store, organize, and track all selected articles, reports, and policy documents. These tools made it possible to categorize sources by themes, publication year, region, and type of study, which improved accuracy and reduced duplication during the review process. All selected papers were uploaded into the software, where notes, highlights, and keywords were added to support detailed analysis and easy retrieval. Each study was read several times to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of its purpose, research design, key findings, and conclusions. During the first reading, attention was given to the general focus and relevance of the study. Subsequent readings were used to identify specific themes, patterns, and arguments related to socio-cultural, economic, institutional, and instructional barriers to girls' education. Key concepts and recurring ideas were noted and compared across studies. This iterative reading process supported a deeper synthesis of the literature and helped identify shared findings, contrasting perspectives, and gaps in existing research, which informed the overall analysis and discussion.

Inclusion Criteria: Studies were included in this review if they focused on girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa and examined barriers that limit access, participation, and inclusion in education. These barriers included socio-cultural, economic, institutional, and instructional factors, in line with the focus of the introduction. Only studies that addressed primary or secondary education were considered. The review included peer-reviewed journal articles, international and regional policy reports, and credible grey literature published between 2000 and 2025. All selected studies applied a gender perspective or feminist approach and provided clear evidence, analysis, or recommendations related to gender inequality in education.

Exclusion Criteria: Studies were excluded if they did not focus on Sub-Saharan Africa or were not directly related to girls' education. Research that focused only on higher education, adult education, or male education was not included. Studies were also excluded if they lacked a gender-focused analysis, did not clearly describe their methods, or did not present clear findings or conclusions. Opinion-based sources and materials without strong empirical or theoretical support were not considered in this review.

Findings from the Review

This section presents the key findings from the reviewed literature on factors affecting girls' enrolment and participation in education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The evidence

shows that girls' education is mainly limited by social, cultural, and economic barriers. These barriers are connected and often make each other worse. Understanding these challenges is important for developing effective solutions that address the main causes of girls' exclusion from education.

Social and Cultural Constraints

Parental Discrimination

Parental attitudes and decisions play a major role in shaping children's access to education. While lack of schooling affects both boys and girls, girls, especially those living in rural areas, are more disadvantaged. This is largely due to social beliefs that place higher value on educating boys than girls. In many African communities, parents believe that boys are future leaders, heads of households, and main providers for their families. As a result, investing in boys' education is seen as more important and more beneficial than investing in girls' education (Njau and Wamahiu 1994 as cited in Bangura & Mambo, 2023). In contrast, girls are often viewed as future wives whose main role is to care for children and manage the home. There is a common belief that a girl does not need much education because she will depend on her husband for financial support. These beliefs remain strong in many rural communities, even as countries like Kenya experience modernization and globalization. Although social and economic changes have taken place, traditional beliefs, customs, and myths have continued over many generations. One such belief is that boys are naturally more intelligent and more likely to succeed than girls. Because of this belief, parents feel more confident that money spent on boys' education will not be wasted. When school fees are difficult to pay, parents often choose to educate boys and withdraw girls from school, believing that boys have better future opportunities (Bangura & Mambo, 2023).

Another reason parents limit girls' education is the belief that there are few or no employment opportunities for women. Many parents question the value of educating their daughters and see it as a waste of time and money, especially in poor and rural households. When families face financial pressure, girls are more likely than boys to be kept at home or removed from school to save costs (Bangura & Mambo, 2023). Cultural expectations around female behavior also affect girls' education. In several ethnic communities in Kenya, including the Luo, Kikuyu, and Luyia, great importance is placed on girls remaining virgins until marriage. Parents fear that attending school may expose girls to new ideas and behaviors that go against traditional values. They worry that education may lead girls to engage in premarital relationships, which are strongly discouraged in their cultures. This fear is often linked to the belief that schooling introduces foreign values that may weaken cultural traditions. Cultural

norms, negative attitudes toward girls, and early marriage continue to limit girls' ability to access education on an equal basis with boys (Bangura & Mambo, 2023). In many communities, girls are still viewed as less important than boys, and their education is often seen as a lower priority. These attitudes reduce school enrollment and completion rates for girls and reinforce long-standing gender inequality.

Cultural norms, negative attitudes toward girls, and early marriage continue to limit girls' ability to access education on an equal basis with boys (Bangura & Mambo, 2023). In many communities, girls are still viewed as less important than boys, and their education is often seen as a lower priority. These attitudes reduce school enrollment and completion rates for girls and reinforce long-standing gender inequality. Human Capital Theory shows that education improves skills and productivity, leading to better economic outcomes (Bangura & Mambo, 2023). When girls are denied education, the impact extends beyond the individual to families and communities, resulting in lost income and continued poverty. Limited access to education for girls lowers household earnings and weakens national development, making the removal of barriers to female education urgent (Bangura & Mambo, 2023). A descriptive survey by Bangura and Mambo (2023) involving female lecturers and students at Africa International University supports this view. The study found that most educated women contribute financially to their families, but many respondents identified parental discrimination and poverty as major barriers to female education. The study recommends greater parental and community awareness to address these challenges.

Child Marriage

Child marriage, also referred to as early or forced marriage, is a serious violation of girls' human rights and has harmful effects on their education, health, and social well-being (UNFPA, 2012; UNICEF, 2014, as cited in Paul, 2019). In many developing countries, girls are married at a young age, often without having a choice about when or whom they marry (Jensen & Thornton, 2003). Once married, girls are usually expected to leave school and take on adult responsibilities, which ends their education. Child marriage remains a major challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa, where some of the highest rates in the world are recorded. Although efforts to reduce child marriage have increased, progress has been uneven. A study examining trends across 31 Sub-Saharan African countries found that marriage before age 18 has declined over time, but this decline is mainly among older adolescents. Marriage before age 15 has remained unchanged for over twenty years in many countries and has even increased in some cases. This shows strong resistance to change, especially among the youngest and most vulnerable girls (Koski, Clark, & Nandi, 2017). Recent research also confirms that

early marriage continues to undermine girls' education in the region. Despite global progress in female education over the past decades, gender gaps remain wide in Sub-Saharan Africa. Early marriage, along with cultural and financial barriers, continues to prevent girls from accessing and completing education. Early marriage leads to school dropout, limits future opportunities, and reinforces cycles of poverty. These findings highlight the need for stronger legal reforms, improved enforcement of existing laws, and increased public awareness to protect girls' rights and support their education (Zhou, 2024).

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) refers to all procedures that involve the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for non-medical reasons (WHO, 2025). The practice has no health benefits and causes serious physical and psychological harm, including severe bleeding, infections, childbirth complications, and increased risk of newborn deaths. FGM remains a serious form of violence against girls and women and continues to affect their education and well-being, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite global and national efforts to end FGM, the practice remains common in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania. A study in Nigeria found that sociocultural beliefs strongly influence mothers' support for the continuation of FGM. Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the study shows that attitudes, social pressure, and cultural expectations shape decisions to continue the practice (Ali, 2022). Other studies show that higher education levels, better economic status, urban residence, and access to information reduce the risk of FGM, while poverty, rural living, and certain religious practices increase it (Kisendi et al., 2025). Overall, FGM remains a major health and social problem affecting millions of girls and women and continues to limit girls' educational opportunities (Cordova-Pozo, Abdalla, & Moller, 2024).

Early Pregnancy

Early pregnancy is another major barrier to girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa. A study in Cameroon shows that pregnancy-related school dropout plays a significant role in widening the gender gap in education. Reducing pregnancy-related dropouts would greatly improve girls' educational attainment, especially when combined with efforts to address gender inequality from an early age (Eloundou-Enyegue, 2004). This finding shows that early pregnancy both reflects and reinforces broader gender discrimination in education. Although international human rights standards state that all girls have the right to education regardless of pregnancy or motherhood, this right is often not respected in practice (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Pregnant girls are

frequently punished, stigmatized, or expelled from school, while boys responsible for the pregnancy usually face no consequences. Although some countries allow girls to return to school after childbirth, support systems are weak. In other countries, pregnant girls are completely excluded from public education, leading to permanent school dropout, early marriage, poverty, and abuse (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

High Illiteracy

High levels of female illiteracy remain a serious challenge in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in northern Nigeria. Despite government programmes such as the Northern Education Initiative, Girl Education Project, and Universal Basic Education Commission, Sokoto State continues to record high illiteracy rates among women and girls. This situation is mainly linked to cultural beliefs and poor socio-economic conditions that limit girls' access to education (Ibrahim, Khan, & Ramli, 2020). A study conducted in Sokoto State examined parents' attitudes toward female education and the factors responsible for low school enrolment and frequent school withdrawal. Using a survey design, data were collected from students at the Women Centre for Continuing Education. The findings show that many parents hold negative views about educating girls, and poverty is the main reason for low enrolment and dropout. Other contributing factors include early marriage, gender inequality, religious beliefs, child labour, and low parental education levels. The study recommends free education for girls, increased job opportunities to reduce poverty, and public awareness campaigns on the value of female education. It also emphasizes the need for female counsellors to support girls and engage parents on the importance of educating girls (Ibrahim, Khan, & Ramli, 2020).

Violence and Harassment in Schools

Violence and harassment in schools are serious barriers to girls' education. In South Africa, violence against adolescent girls occurs in a context of widespread gender-based violence, unequal power relations, and strong patriarchal values. This violence harms girls' physical and mental health and negatively affects their school attendance and academic performance (Haffejee, 2006). A study conducted with girls aged 13–17 in schools in Gauteng found that efforts to address violence against girls are limited and often not treated as a priority. Focus group discussions showed that there are few or no support services in schools or communities, which causes frustration among girls. The study also reported high levels of sexual harassment and physical and sexual violence, showing that schools are often unsafe spaces where violence is accepted as normal (Haffejee, 2006). Research also shows that young women are especially vulnerable to gender-based harassment in school and social settings. There is

increasing recognition that challenges related to school relationships, mental health, and gender-based violence are social in nature and affect girls more than boys (Molina, Cahill, & Dadvand, 2022). Similar findings are reported in Sudan, where gender-based violence includes many harmful practices such as sexual abuse, forced pregnancy, female genital mutilation, early marriage, and other forms of physical and emotional harm. Girls experience violence from a very young age, and these experiences have serious physical and psychological effects. Such violence reduces girls' educational achievement and limits their ability to live healthy and productive lives (Badri, 2014).

Economic Constraints

High Cost of Education

The high cost of education is a major economic barrier to girls' schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa. Studies show that educating girls often costs more than educating boys. In countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, and Tanzania, families spend more on girls' school needs, especially uniforms, while boys are often allowed to attend school in old or torn clothing. Because of these higher costs, families with limited income are more likely to invest in boys' education than in girls' education (Bangura & Mambo, 2023). Family income and the number of children in a household strongly influence decisions about girls' education. In many poor families, girls are expected to work to support the household, often on farms, plantations, or as domestic workers. The income earned by girls is sometimes used to support the education of boys. In rural areas of Kenya, girls spend more time on household chores, farming, and caring for younger siblings than girls in urban areas. As a result, fewer rural girls attend school or remain in school for long periods (Bangura & Mambo, 2023). Another factor that limits girls' education is the belief that educating girls has little economic value. Some parents believe that there are few job opportunities for women and therefore see girls' education as a waste of time and money. This belief is more common in rural families. When financial decisions must be made, girls are more likely than boys to be kept at home or withdrawn from school due to these economic and social attitudes (Bangura & Mambo, 2023).

High education costs greatly reduce demand for schooling among poor families. Many households must first meet basic needs such as food and shelter before paying for education-related expenses, including school fees, books, uniforms, transport, and learning materials. Although some parents might afford education if costs could be spread over time, many families in low-income countries do not have access to credit, making schooling difficult to sustain (Hillman & Jenkner, 2004). Parents may also choose not to send children to school because of opportunity costs, preferring them to work, perform household chores, or care for sick family members to support the

household. Girls are more affected by this because they are often expected to take on domestic responsibilities. In addition, parents' perceptions of the value of education influence school attendance. Some parents believe that the returns on education are too low, especially when education quality is poor, or that local jobs do not require academic skills. Others think employment depends more on personal connections than education or feel that better job opportunities are too distant to pursue. In communities that do not value education or discourage educating girls, parents may avoid sending girls to school to comply with social norms (Hillman & Jenkner, 2004).

Cost of School Resources

The cost of school resources is another major economic barrier to girls' education, especially for low-income and rural families. Even when school fees are low or removed, families are still required to pay for learning materials such as textbooks, exercise books, pens, school bags, uniforms, and sometimes examination fees. For poor households, these costs are often unaffordable and place a heavy financial burden on families. When resources are limited, parents are more likely to prioritize boys' schooling and delay or stop girls' education. In rural areas, schools often lack basic learning materials, which forces parents to cover additional costs or discourages them from sending girls to school at all. As a result, girls from poor and rural households are more likely to experience irregular attendance, poor academic performance, and early dropout due to the high cost of essential school resources (Hillman & Jenkner, 2004).

Recommendations for Addressing Barriers to Girls' Education

Addressing Parental Discrimination

To reduce parental discrimination, governments and education stakeholders should invest in strong community awareness programmes that highlight the social and economic value of educating girls. Parents need clear information showing that educated women contribute to household income, family well-being, and national development. Community dialogues should involve traditional leaders, religious leaders, women role models, and educators to challenge harmful beliefs that favour boys over girls. Parent education programmes should also address myths about girls' intelligence, employment opportunities for women, and fears related to cultural values. Schools and local authorities should create safe spaces where parents can openly discuss concerns about girls' education and receive guidance. These actions can help change attitudes and promote equal educational investment for both boys and girls.

Addressing Child Marriage

Ending child marriage requires strong legal enforcement and community-level action. Governments should strengthen and enforce laws that set the minimum age of marriage at 18 and ensure that violations are punished. At the same time, community education programmes should explain the harmful effects of child marriage on girls' education, health, and future opportunities. Schools should work with local leaders to identify girls at risk of early marriage and provide support such as scholarships, mentoring, and safe boarding options. Keeping girls in school is one of the most effective ways to delay marriage. Public awareness campaigns should also promote positive alternatives to early marriage, such as education and skills development, to protect girls' rights and futures.

Addressing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Efforts to end female genital mutilation must focus on changing social norms and beliefs that support the practice. Community-based education programmes should target parents, especially mothers, and explain the serious health, psychological, and educational consequences of FGM. Girls' education itself should be promoted as a protective factor, as higher education levels are linked to lower support for FGM. Governments should strengthen laws banning FGM and ensure that they are enforced, especially in rural areas. Health workers, teachers, and religious leaders should be trained to act as advocates against FGM. Providing accurate information through schools, radio, and community meetings can help reduce acceptance of the practice and protect girls' education and well-being.

Addressing Early Pregnancy

To reduce early pregnancy and school dropout, schools should provide age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education that empowers girls to make informed decisions. Governments should enforce policies that protect pregnant girls' right to remain in or return to school after childbirth. Schools should offer counselling services, flexible learning schedules, and academic support for adolescent mothers. At the community level, programmes should address stigma and discrimination against pregnant girls and young mothers. Boys and men should also be included in education programmes to promote shared responsibility. These actions can reduce pregnancy-related dropout and help close gender gaps in education.

Addressing High Illiteracy

Reducing female illiteracy requires both access and support. Governments should expand free and compulsory education for girls, especially in regions with high

illiteracy rates. Adult and continuing education programmes should be provided for women who missed formal schooling, allowing them to gain literacy and life skills. Public awareness campaigns should target parents and communities to change negative views about girls' education. Female counsellors and mentors should be employed to support girls academically and emotionally and to engage parents in positive dialogue. Improving household economic conditions through job creation and poverty reduction programmes will also help families keep girls in school.

Addressing Violence and Harassment in Schools

Creating safe school environments is essential for girls' education. Schools should adopt and enforce clear policies against sexual harassment and violence. Reporting systems must be confidential, child-friendly, and trusted by students. Teachers and school staff should receive training on gender sensitivity, child protection, and positive discipline. Schools should provide counselling and support services for survivors of violence. At the community level, programmes should address harmful gender norms that normalize violence against girls. Ensuring safe transport to and from school can also reduce girls' exposure to harassment. Safe schools encourage attendance, participation, and academic success for girls.

Addressing High Cost of Education

To reduce financial barriers, governments should expand free education policies that remove school fees and related costs. Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes should be used to support poor families, especially when linked to girls' school enrolment and attendance. These programmes help reduce poverty while encouraging long-term investment in education and health. Giving women control over cash transfers strengthens their decision-making power and supports girls' education. Scholarships, school feeding programmes, and transport support should also be provided for girls from poor households. These measures help families keep girls in school and reduce gender gaps in enrolment and completion (Skoufias, 2009; Fiszbein et al., 2009; Millán et al., 2019).

Addressing Cost of School Resources

To reduce the burden of school resources, governments and partners should provide free or subsidized textbooks, uniforms, and learning materials, especially in rural areas. Schools should be adequately funded to ensure that basic resources are available without additional costs to parents. Community-based support systems, such as shared resources and school supply banks, can also help poor families. When schools are

well-resourced, parents are less likely to withdraw girls due to cost, and girls are more likely to attend regularly and perform better academically.

Leveraging Digital Learning for Equity

Digital learning offers an important opportunity to expand girls' access to education, especially in fragile and remote contexts. Governments should invest in affordable internet access, digital devices, and community learning centres. Digital literacy programmes for girls and teachers are essential to ensure meaningful use of technology. Partnerships with technology companies, NGOs, and international organizations can support infrastructure development and training. Mobile learning platforms can provide flexible learning options for girls affected by school closures or insecurity. Successful models, such as Rwanda's One Laptop per Child initiative, show that technology can improve learning access when equity is prioritized (OLPC, 2005–2014).

Recommendations for Future Research

Expansion of Empirical Research on Girls' Education

Future research should prioritize empirical studies that use primary data to examine how social, cultural, and economic barriers affect girls' education in different contexts. There is a need for field-based studies that collect data directly from girls, families, schools, and communities, especially in rural and low-income areas. Such empirical evidence would strengthen understanding of how barriers operate in real-life settings and provide more accurate information to guide policy and practice.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Existing Education Policies

Future studies should systematically evaluate the effectiveness of current education policies and programmes aimed at improving girls' access to education. Research should assess whether policies such as free education, conditional cash transfers, re-entry policies for pregnant girls, and community awareness programmes are achieving their intended outcomes. Evaluating policy implementation, coverage, and impact will help identify gaps between policy design and practice and support the development of more effective and equitable education strategies.

Conclusion

This literature review examined the social, cultural, and economic barriers that limit girls' access to and participation in education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The review shows that factors such as parental discrimination, harmful cultural norms, child marriage, female genital mutilation, early pregnancy, violence and harassment in

schools, poverty, and the high cost of education continue to prevent many girls from enrolling in school, staying in school, and completing their education. These barriers are closely connected and often reinforce one another, making gender inequality in education persistent across the region. The findings also highlight that denying girls education has serious consequences beyond the individual level. Limited access to education reduces girls' future opportunities, weakens household income, and slows social and economic development at the community and national levels. Evidence from the reviewed studies shows that when girls are educated, they contribute economically to their families and society, supporting the principles of Human Capital Theory. The review further demonstrates that policies such as free education, conditional cash transfer programmes, community awareness initiatives, and digital learning opportunities can improve girls' access to education when they are well designed and properly implemented. However, weak enforcement, limited resources, and deep-rooted social norms continue to reduce their effectiveness in many contexts. Overall, achieving gender equity in education in Sub-Saharan Africa requires coordinated and sustained efforts that address social attitudes, cultural practices, and economic constraints together. Governments, communities, and development partners must strengthen policy implementation, invest in inclusive education strategies, and support families and girls directly. Without urgent and collective action, the barriers identified in this review will continue to limit girls' educational opportunities and undermine long-term development goals.

References

Adelabu, M. A., & Adepoju, T. L. (2007, August). Women and higher education: Implication for sustainable development. In Second HERPNET Regional Conference on Reform and Revitalization in Higher Education, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Ajayi, K., & Koussoubé, E. (2025). Pathways to Prosperity for Adolescent Girls in Africa: Empowering Adolescent Girls in Africa. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Pathways_to_Prosperity_for_Adolescent_Gi/V_FiEQAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

Aziato, L. (2016). The dynamics of female education from the basic to the tertiary levels in Ghana: Challenges and reflections. The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher, 28(3), 1–15.

Badri, A. Y. (2014). School-gender-based violence in Africa: prevalence and consequences. Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences, 2(2), 1-20.

Bangura, P. S., & Mambo, A. W. (2023). Barriers to Female Education and its Impact on Slow SocioEconomic Development of the Family: A Case of Africa International University. Research Journal of Education, Teaching and Curriculum Studies, 1(1), 23–36. Retrieved from https://www.ajol.info/index.php/rjetcs/article/view/261026

Browne, A. W., & Barrett, H. R. (1991). Female Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: the key to development?. Comparative education, 27(3), 275-285. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0305006910270303

Bunyi, G. (2008). Gender, education and EFA in Sub-Saharan Africa: Progress, challenges and the way forward. The African Symposium: An On Line Journal Of African Educational Research Network, 8(1), 1–15.

Casely-Hayford, L., Gruijters, R. J., Adjei, L. O., & Yeboah, V. A. (2025). The intended and unintended effects of secondary school fee abolition: evidence from Ghana's free senior high school policy. Comparative Education, 61(4), 566–585. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2025.2463820

Cordova-Pozo, K., Abdalla, H. H. I., & Moller, A. B. (2024). Female genital mutilation: trends, economic burden of delay and basis for public health interventions. International Journal for Equity in Health, 23(1), 73.
Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989(1), 139–167.
Declan, R. M. (2015). The Influence of Socio-Cultural Issues in Limiting Girls Primary Education in Makonde Societies-Newala District, Tanzania (Doctoral dissertation, The Open University Of Tanzania).
Djapou Fouthe, C. (2017). Dealing with challenges on gender inequality in Cameroon. Humanistic Management Association, Research Paper Series, (17-33).
Eloundou-Enyegue, P. M. (2004). Pregnancy-related dropouts and gender inequality in education: A life-table approach and application to Cameroon. Demography, 41(3), 509-528. DOI: 10.1353/dem.2004.0021
file:///Users/user/Downloads/alvaro_arribas,+R1_JOSPOE_VOL3.pdf
Fiszbein, A., Schady, N. R., Ferreira, F. H. (2009). Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty. United Kingdom: World Bank Publications.
Haffejee, S. (2006). Waiting Opportunities: Adolescent girls experiences of gender-based violence at schools. Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. https://help.csvr.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2006/09/waitingopportunities.pdf
Hillman, A. L., & Jenkner, E. (2004). Educating children in poor countries. International Monetary Fund. https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/issues/issues33/
Human Rights Watch (2018). Leave No Girl Behind in Africa: Discrimination in Education against Pregnant Girls and Adolescents. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/au0618_web.pdf
Ibrahim, Z. L., Khan, A., & Ramli, J. (2020). Cultural and socio-economic status factors affecting female education in Sokoto State, Northern Nigeria: Implication for counselling. Universal Journal of Educational Research, 8(11C), 124–128. https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.082314
Jensen, R., & Thornton, R. (2003). Early female marriage in developing countries. Gender & Development, 11(2), 9–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/741954311
Johannes, E. (2010). Women's education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Obstacles facing women and girls access to education: The case of Kenya. Kenya Studies Review, 1(2), 57-71.
Kisendi, D. D., Lyakurwa, D., Paulo, H. A., Malingumu, E., Vong, V., Matthews, E., ... & Li, B. (2025). Trends and determinants of female genital mutilation prevalence among women of reproductive age in Tanzania and Kenya: a demographic and health survey analysis (2008–2022). BMC Public Health, 25(1), 2380.
Koski, A., Clark, S., & Nandi, A. (2017). Has Child Marriage Declined in sub-Saharan Africa? An Analysis of Trends in 31 Countries on JSTOR. Population and Development Review, 7. https://doi.org/44202627
Kuteesa, K., Akpuokwe, C., & Udeh, C. (2024). Gender equity in education: Addressing challenges and promoting opportunities for social empowerment. International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences, 6(4), 631–641. https://doi.org/10.51594/ijarss.v6i4.1034
Millán, T. M., Barham, T., Macours, K., Maluccio, J. A., & Stampini, M. (2019). Long-term impacts of conditional cash transfers: Review of the evidence. The World Bank Research Observer, 34(1), 119-159. https://academic.oup.com/wbro/article/34/1/119/5492445
Molina, A., Cahill, H., & Dadvand, B. (2022). The role of gender, setting and experience in teacher beliefs and intentions in social and emotional learning and respectful relationships education. The Australian Educational Researcher, 49(1), 63-79. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-020-00420-w
Mwakio, N. (2017). Overcoming obstacles to educational access for Kenyan girls: A qualitative study. Journal of International Women's Studies, 18(2), 260-274.
Mwanahamisi, G. K. (2014). Challenges facing the education of the girl child in Kenya: A case study on experiences and views of girls in Galole Constituency of Tana River County, Kenya (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).
Okafor, Ifeoma P. (2020). "Influence of Socio-Cultural Background of Parents on Girl-Child Education in Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria" in EDUCARE: International Journal for Educational Studies, Volume 13(1), August, pp.49-60.
OLPC. (2005- 2014). One Laptop per Child Initiative. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Laptop_per_Child?utm_source=chatgpt.com
Ombati, V., & Mokua, O. (2012). Gender inequality in education in sub-Saharan Africa. Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship and Education, (3–4), 114–136. https://www.library.ien.bg.ac.rs/index.php/jwee/article/view/100
Oyaro, K. (2008, May 23). Kenya: Teenage mothers denied education. IPS News. https://www.ipsnews.net/2008/05/kenya-teenage-mothers-denied-educati

Paul, P. (2019). Effects of education and poverty on the prevalence of girl child marriage in India: A district–level analysis. Children and Youth Services Review, 100, 16-21. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740919300581?via=ihub

Prinsloo, S. (2006). Sexual harassment and violence in South African schools. South African journal of education, 26(2), 305-318.

Psaki, S. (2016). Addressing child marriage and adolescent pregnancy as barriers to gender parity and equality in education. Prospects, 46(1), 109-129. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-016-9379-0

Rihani, M. A. (2006). Keeping the Promise: Five Benefits of Girls' Secondary Education. Academy for Educational Development. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED500794.pdf

Skoufias, E. (2009, July). Conditional Cash Transfers Reducing Present and Future Poverty. In Ed), Wening Handayani ve Clifford Burkley, Social Assistance and Conditional Cash Transfers-The Proceedings of the Regional Workshop, Asian Development Bank.

Sutherland-Addy, E. (2008). Gender equity in junior and senior secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa. World Bank. A World Bank Policy Research Report.
https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/582591468202446377/pdf/448090PUB0Box310only109780821375051.pdf

UNICEF. (2005). Early marriage a harmful traditional practice a statistical exploration 2005. Unicef.

Ussher, Y. A., Tsevi, L., & Boafo-Arthur, A. (2022). Promoting Gender Equality in Ghana: Sociocultural Factors in Perspective. In Reimagining development education in Africa (pp. 129-153). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

WHO. (2025). Female genital mutilation. World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation

Zhou, Z. (2024). Addressing Gender Inequality in Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Barriers, Policy Reforms, and Cultural Shifts. In 2024 9th International Conference on Modern Management, Education and Social Sciences (MMET 2024) (pp. 858-864). Atlantis Press.