

An Analysis of the Roles Played by the Kenyan Government and the Faith-Based Organizations in Curbing Gender Disparity in Public Primary Schools in Central Pokot Sub-County, Kenya

By

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role played by the government of Kenya and Faith-Based Organizations in curbing gender disparity in public primary schools in the central Pokot sub-county, West Pokot, Kenya. This article was guided by the Cultural Adaptation Theory to analyze the roles played by the Kenyan Government and Faith-Based Organizations in curbing gender disparity in public Primary Schools in Central Pokot Sub-County, Kenya. The study examined the Kenyan government's response to gender disparity in Kenya, the role of Faith-Based Organizations in providing education in modern Kenya, and the participation of Faith-Based Organizations in managing gender disparity in education in Central Pokot Sub-County. The study adopted the exploratory research design and was cross-sectional. Purposeful sampling was utilized to identify knowledgeable respondents from the subcounty. Secondary sources were derived from books, journals, and online sources. A qualitative data analysis method was employed to analyze data and a report was compiled thematically. It was revealed that the Faith-Based Organizations and the Kenyan Government have done a lot in promoting gender equality in primary schools. Despite the many efforts by Faith-Based Organizations and the Kenyan Government to promote gender equity, statistics revealed that they are far from meeting their targets. This raises the question of the challenges facing the FBOs and the GoK in promoting gender equality. The study recommends that the FBOs in Central Pokot Sub County can help eradicate poverty by providing alternative projects to boost the community's income. Therefore, advocacy and social mobilization should be stirred and built on the ground by the natives of Central Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County to eliminate the gender disparity of girl-child in the retention and completion of primary education. Concerning cultural practices like Female Genital Mutilation, Faith-Based Organizations could actively participate in alternative rites of passage training and provide venues, training materials, and co-sponsor graduation ceremonies with the community. Faith-based organizations should target men as advocates of Alternative Rites of Passage and girl child education because Pokot is a patriarchal society.

Keywords: Kenya, West Pokot, Faith-Based Organizations, Cultural Adaptation, Gender Disparity, Government of Kenya, Girl-Child.

An Analysis of the Roles Played by the Kenyan Government and the Faith-Based Organizations in Curbing Gender Disparity in Public Primary Schools: A Case of Central Pokot Sub County, Kenya.

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this article was to establish the role of FBOs and GoK in addressing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot sub-county, Kenya. The 2020 UN report on education policy maintains that education is a fundamental human right that is key to individual, social, and national development. Chapter four of the 2010 Kenyan constitution stipulates that all children have a right to equal opportunities in access to basic education regardless of their gender. The literacy levels in marginalized communities such as Turkana, Pokot, Maasai, Rendille, Pokomo, and others stand at a rate of (23%) against the national indicator of 43%. Further, gender representation in schooling in these areas stands at 18% against a national indicator of 34% (KNBS, 2010) hence disadvantaging the girl child. As a control measure of gender disparity, the GoK has enacted several legislative measures and policies to forbid gender discrimination such as the National Gender and Development Policy (2007), the Free Primary Education Policy (FPEP 2003), the $\frac{2}{3}$ Gender Rule, and the Education Sector Gender Policy. Consequently, the Ministry of Education has undertaken the review of the Gender in Education Policy (2007), to incorporate emerging issues that have implications on gender equity and equality in the education sector. One wonders, if we have these wonderful initiatives, why is it that the rate of gender disparity is higher in marginalized areas compared to non-marginalized areas? This study sets out to answer the following questions: How have FBOs and the GoK contributed to minimizing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County? This article, therefore, was guided by the Cultural Adaptation Theory to highlight the role of the GoK and FBOs in gender disparity in the girl child among pupils in the Central Pokot sub-county. It begins by explaining the Kenya government's response to gender disparity in Kenya, the role of Faith-Based Organizations in providing education in modern Kenya, and the participation of FBOs in managing gender disparity in education in Central Pokot sub-County.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Ministry of Education, undertook a review of the Gender in Education Policy in 2007, to incorporate emerging issues that have implications on gender equity and equality in the education sector. However, the rate of gender disparity is higher in marginalized areas compared to non-marginalized areas and why? This study sets out to answer the foregoing question by finding out how the Government of Kenya, and the Faith-Based Organizations have encountered gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County. Specifically, it sought to answer questions; How have FBOs and the GoK contributed to minimizing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County?

1.2 Objective

The study's specific objective was to analyze the roles played by the Kenyan Government and the Faith-Based Organizations in curbing gender disparity in public primary schools in

Central Pokot Sub-County, and thus answer the question: How have FBOs and the Government of Kenya contributed to minimizing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County?

1.3 The Kenyan Government's Response to Gender Disparity

To elevate women's status in society, the GoK has taken several steps and continues to work toward this goal. Different plans, programs, and policies have been established to place an emphasis on women's empowerment and increase women's participation in politics, the economy, education, and other spheres to parity with men's (Ombati, 2012). The GoK has put in place a legal and policy framework to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination against women. This includes the Constitution of Kenya 2010, which provides for gender equality and prohibits discrimination based on gender, as well as the National Gender Policy, which sets out a comprehensive framework for promoting gender equality in all spheres of life. In addition, the government has implemented a range of affirmative action measures to address gender disparities in education, employment, and political representation. These include policies such as the two-thirds gender rule, which requires that no more than two-thirds of any elected or appointed body be composed of one gender.

The GoK has mainstreamed gender into its policies, programs, and budgeting processes, to ensure that gender considerations are taken into account in all areas of governance. In addition, the government has taken steps to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV), including through the enactment of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act 2015 and the Sexual Offenses Act 2006, as well as the establishment of specialized GBV units within the police force and the courts. The GoK has prioritized women's economic empowerment, recognizing that economic empowerment is a key factor in promoting gender equality. This has included initiatives such as the Women Enterprise Fund and the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, which provide loans and business training to women and young people.

Kenya's Ministry of Education has worked hard to ensure that gender inequality is eliminated from the primary to the university levels. In light of Vision 2030, which aims to ensure equal opportunities and development in Kenya, progressive change is evident but relatively slow (Vision 2030). According to Mwangi (2013), there have been significant reforms made to the educational system. Programs and initiatives have been launched to support women's education such as the Elimu Scholarship Program, Girls' Education Challenge, Zawadi Africa Education Fund, Kenya Girls' Schools Foundation, and Women's Education Project Kenya. The Elimu Scholarship Program provides financial support to economically disadvantaged girls in Kenya, enabling them to attend secondary school. The program mainly focuses on areas with low enrolment rates for girls intending to increase their access to education. The Girls' Education Challenge is a global initiative that operates in Kenya and other countries. It aims at addressing barriers to girls' education, such as poverty, early marriage, and gender-based violence. The initiative supports innovative approaches to improve girls' enrolment, retention, and learning outcomes.

Zawadi Africa is a nonprofit organization that provides scholarships and leadership development programs to academically gifted girls from disadvantaged backgrounds in Kenya and other African countries. The program supports girls throughout their education journey, from secondary school to university. The Kenya Girls' Schools Foundation works to improve

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access to quality education for girls in Kenya. The foundation supports the establishment and development of girls' schools, provides scholarships, and implements programs to enhance girls' educational opportunities. The Women's Education Project Kenya focuses on empowering women through education and skills training. The project provides scholarships and mentoring to young women from low-income backgrounds, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge for personal and professional development.

According to Ombuya, Yambo, and Omolo (2017), GoK has made an effort to achieve equality in the quota system through the free primary education policy, which includes giving out textbooks and exercise books to all primary school students across the nation. The policy was implemented in 2003 and it applies to both boys and girls. It was introduced to address the barriers to accessing education, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. By removing the financial burden of primary education, the government aimed to increase enrolment rates and promote equal educational opportunities for all children, including girls. The free primary education policy has had a positive impact on girls' education in Kenya. It has contributed to increased enrolment rates for girls and helped reduce the gender gap in primary education. By removing the financial barriers, more girls have been able to attend school and benefit from quality education. However, despite the policy's implementation, there are still challenges to achieving gender equality in education.

In addition, the government implemented the Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy in 2003. The UPE policy aims to provide free and compulsory primary education to all children in Kenya, regardless of their gender or socio-economic background. Its objective is to eliminate the financial barriers that hinder access to education for many children, thus promoting equal opportunities and increasing enrolment rates. The UPE policy in Kenya has significantly expanded access to primary education for both boys and girls. It has led to a substantial increase in enrolment rates and helped reduce the gender gap in primary education. By making education free, more children, including girls, have been able to attend school and benefit from basic education. However, despite the UPE policy's positive impact, challenges remain in achieving universal and equitable education in Kenya. Some of these challenges include limited infrastructure, inadequate resources, teacher shortages, quality of education, and persistent socio-cultural barriers that affect girls' enrolment and retention in schools. Efforts are being made by the government, NGOs, and other stakeholders to address these challenges and ensure that all children, including girls, have access to quality primary education.

In Kenya, as part of its commitment to the SDGs, the government and various organizations have implemented programs and initiatives to address gender disparities in education, promote girls' enrolment and retention, and provide equal educational opportunities for all. The SDGs are a set of global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to address various social, economic, and environmental challenges by 2030.

The SDGs Goal 4 specifically addresses the importance of high-quality education and seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." This is specifically addressed in Target 4.5, which states: "By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure that all disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations, have equal access to all levels of education and vocational training." The assumption is that educating girls and achieving the SDGs for gender equality will have a variety of positive effects on

developing countries (Shultz, 2014).

Despite the GoK efforts to limit gender inequality in the classroom, Central Pokot Sub County and West Pokot County still experience gender inequality. The aforementioned is attributed to cultural factors that affect the social events in the community (Wasamba, 2005). Given that education is the cornerstone of development, it is advised that no country can afford to play around with the education of its people, especially the young people who will become the parents of tomorrow. The aforementioned is supported by the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan, who cautions that without achieving gender equality in education, the world has no chance of achieving many ambitious health, social, and development goals it has set for itself (Chibiko, 2009).

The introduction of free primary education has increased enrolment across the board in the entire nation. However, this does not translate into primary education retention and completion. The GoK has established scholarships for the gifted and deserving to encourage primary school retention (World Education Forum, 2015). The government must take several steps to reduce gender inequality, including increasing funding for free primary education, hiring more female teachers who will serve as role models, and building more classrooms. Additionally, the board of governors and school management committees have been given more power to make decisions that will support the delivery of high-quality education.

According to Simatwa and Ahawo (2017), the Kenya National Development Plan 2003–2008 (KNDP) highlights the establishment of a capacity-building program by the government to ensure that managers and staff members handling the new responsibilities have the necessary managerial skills and facilitation tools to support the implementation of the reforms. To support the implementation of the curriculum, the author also notes that the government has made sure that learning and teaching materials are distributed fairly in primary schools (World Bank, 2008). It is required to build the capacity of primary schools through leadership, school management committees, and field officers to guarantee the effective delivery of high-quality education. Additionally, the government has promoted a gender-inclusive learning environment with a focus on the availability of water and sanitation. The government has lowered the entry point to increase the participation of girls in higher education. Additionally, the government promotes integrating gender into plans and policies for the education sector.

Regardless of a child's gender, all children are guaranteed access to education thanks to the government's implementation of a policy framework and pertinent legislation, according to Ombuya, (2017). To ensure that all citizens have access to education, the government has signed international declarations and protocols (Ombati, 2012). The aforementioned offers a framework for fostering social inclusion, such as education for all goals and the millennium development goals for universalizing education.

A study conducted by Wafula and Juma (2018) examined the effectiveness of government policies in promoting girls' education in Central Pokot Sub County. They found that although policies had been put in place, cultural beliefs and practices remained significant barriers to girls' education. The government has not yet developed primary school education while also addressing socio-cultural and socioeconomic factors in the Central Pokot sub-county.

This study heeds to the UN SDG 5 which advocates for major efforts to eliminate discrimination, exploitation, and violence against women. However, it seems the efforts listed in the SDG represent a West-centric approach to providing global solutions to world problems;

yet, discrimination against women continues unabated globally, West Pokot County included. In the spirit of decolonizing development, we hold that Ubuntu can be a solution. Ubuntu is an indigenous African value-based worldview that may be applied to promote women's equality and empowerment globally. Ubuntu can provide insights and creative ways in which it may be applied to meet global aspirations for justice while evaluating its limitations. For instance, Ubuntu holds that `I am because we are, since we are therefore I am` (Mbiti, 1969). This means that, if the world adopts a worldview that women have their place in development fully, they will be appreciated as humans who deserve what others have.

1.3 The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Providing Education in Central Pokot Kenya

The role of FBOs in providing education in Central Pokot has been significant, especially in the early years after independence. Churches played a crucial role in establishing schools and providing education to Kenyan children, particularly in rural areas where government schools were few or non-existent.

In the early years after independence, the GoK faced significant challenges in providing education to all citizens, and Churches stepped in to fill the gap. Missionary organizations such as the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and the Presbyterian Church played a critical role in establishing schools and training teachers. These schools provided education to Kenyan children, regardless of their social or economic background.

The FBOs also played a significant role in promoting education for girls, who had traditionally been excluded from formal education. Missionary organizations established girls' schools and provided scholarships to girls, helping to increase access to education for girls in Kenya.

Today, FBOs continue to play a significant role in education in Kenya, although the government has taken over the responsibility of providing education to its citizens. The Catholic Church, for example, is one of the largest providers of education in Kenya, with over 1,300 schools and 800,000 students enrolled. Other denominations such as the Anglican and Presbyterian churches also operate a significant number of schools in Kenya. In addition to providing formal education, the Faith-Based Organizations has also been involved in providing vocational training and adult education programs, helping to improve the skills and employability of Kenyans. FBOs have also been involved in promoting education on issues such as health and HIV/AIDS, helping to improve the health and well-being of Kenyan communities.

The Ministry of Education refers to FBOs as a stakeholder and a partner alongside other civil society organizations due to their history of founding, leading, and operating educational institutions. In West Pokot County, FBOs are treated with the deference they merit, and people frequently take the investor's position as gospel. Respect between the Church and the state exists in Kenya thanks to a solid partnership that aims to fund education (WFP. 2015). As part of their God-given mission to educate students, shape their character, and spread their faith as a way to transmit morals and beliefs and reinforce the moral fabric of Kenyan society, the FBOs established schools in West Pokot.

To support the aforementioned, Mwangi (2012) points out that Canon 795 of the Catholic Church categorically states that education must take into account the formation of the

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whole person to assist everyone in achieving their eternal destiny and advance society as a whole. A harmonious development of a child's physical, moral, and intellectual faculties must be encouraged while raising children and young people (Wasamba, 2005). They can acquire a greater sense of responsibility, learn how to exercise their freedom responsibly and prepare for active participation in society in this way. This claim amply supports the Church's correct view of education.

Similar to other counties, the Faith-Based Organizations in Pokot offer education at every level, including primary, secondary, tertiary, and university. The aforementioned was changed in light of Matthew chapter 28:18–20, in which Jesus gives the disciples the commission to make disciples in the whole world. Somasekhar (2017) concluded that since religion is a crucial component of our nation's public life, it must be heavily emphasized in the curriculum.

A study done by Van Peter (1996) also holds similar views, arguing that religious education is sufficient because people have moral and spiritual tendencies. Christian education, therefore, involves the development of constructive attitudes that transform a person's life into one that emulates Christian living as demonstrated by Christian character and conduct. Since many of the respondents who provided information for this work held this opinion, Magee (1967) found that religious studies are essential for a comprehensive education. According to Bishop Mckeown (2010), the Catholic Church established its schools because it sees them as a unique way to promote the development of the whole person because the school serves as a centre for the development and dissemination of specific concepts about the world, the human being, and history. Faith-based education involves more than just teaching people about Christianity (Wafula, 2018). It specifically deals with whole-person formation to help everyone reach their eternal destiny and advance societal harmony.

Many of the schools in Pokot County were founded by Faith-Based Organizations. The task force was informed in a memo dated May 25, 2016, by Rev. National Council of Churches of Kenya's Canon Peter Karanja observed that as the post-independence government of Kenya came into power, some Faith-Based Organizations and schools were given to it, taken over by it, or accepted by the relevant Churches and other FBOs (USAID, 2016). The Faith-Based Organizations that established the schools in Pokot County have been identified by the Ministry of Education as the "sponsors" of those establishments, which the government has either fully or partially taken control of.

FBOs in the Central Pokot sub-county have taken the initiative to establish schools in areas where access to education is limited. They identify the need for education and work towards setting up schools to provide learning opportunities for children, including those in Pokot County. Thereafter, some Faith-Based Organizations contribute to the development of school infrastructure by providing land, buildings, and facilities necessary for education. They also mobilize resources and support from their congregation or external donors to construct classrooms, libraries, and other essential educational facilities.

FBOs in the Central Pokot sub-county also play a role in recruiting and training teachers for their schools. Some provide training programs or collaborate with education authorities to ensure that teachers are qualified and equipped with the necessary skills to deliver quality education to students. Faith-based schools often integrate religious values and teachings into their curriculum to promote a holistic approach to education that combines academic learning

with moral and spiritual development. This can contribute to character-building and in still ethical values among students.

FBOs in the Central Pokot sub-county establish scholarship programs or provide financial assistance to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They prioritize students who are unable to afford school fees or lack access to resources, ensuring that education is accessible to all, irrespective of their socioeconomic status. In addition, most of the FBOs in the Central Pokot sub-county have strong community ties and are deeply involved in community engagement. They foster partnerships with parents, community leaders, and local organizations to promote education and address specific needs within the community. They create a supportive network that encourages parental involvement and community participation in educational activities.

During their services, Churches provide moral and spiritual guidance to students, fostering a positive and values-based learning environment. This contributes to the holistic development of students and their well-being. The study revealed that FBOs in the central Pokot sub-county are always active in school programs to ensure a smooth transition, and the success of the schools and that it permeates into people's way of life (UNESCO, 2015). However, one respondent retorted “Over time, regional authorities and the Churches are being ejected from sponsoring schools”, a matter which he could not substantiate with evidence.

Notably, the study revealed that the participation of the FBOs in minimizing gender disparity in education in Central Pokot Sub County is significant. The Faith-Based Organizations has been actively involved in advocating for gender equality and empowering girls to access education. Notably, in Central Pokot Sub County, gender disparities in education have been prevalent, with girls being less likely to attend school and complete their education compared to boys. The FBOs have played a vital role in addressing this issue by establishing girls' schools and providing scholarships to girls who come from marginalized backgrounds.

The Catholic Church, for instance, has been actively involved in promoting education for girls in Central Pokot Sub County. The Church has established schools that specifically cater to girls, providing a safe and conducive environment for learning. The Church has also provided scholarships to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, enabling them to access education that they would otherwise not have been able to afford. This means that Churches establish schools and educational institutions, including primary and secondary schools that specifically focus on providing education for girls. These schools aim to address the gender disparities in education and ensure that girls have equal access to quality education.

Moreover, FBOs have been involved in advocacy programs that promote gender equality and empower girls to take control of their education. The Faith-Based Organizations work with local leaders and community members to raise awareness about the importance of educating girls and to challenge harmful cultural practices that perpetuate gender disparities in education.

Additionally, FBOs are involved in capacity-building programs that equip girls with life skills and knowledge that will help them succeed in school and beyond. They provide training on leadership, entrepreneurship, and financial management, helping girls to become self-sufficient and contributing members of society. The FBOs provide scholarships and financial assistance to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, enabling them to access education. These scholarships can cover school fees, uniforms, textbooks, and other educational expenses,

making education more affordable and accessible for girls.

FBOs in Pokot County often implement empowerment programs specifically targeted at girls. These programs focus on developing their skills, self-esteem, leadership abilities, and overall empowerment. They may include mentoring, life skills training, and workshops on various topics, helping girls overcome societal barriers and excel in their education. They emphasize the creation of safe and supportive learning environments for girls. They strive to ensure that girls feel secure and protected within the school premises, free from any forms of harassment or discrimination. By providing a safe environment, the FBOs encourage girls to actively participate in their education and promote their overall well-being.

It was noted that FBOs advocate for gender equality in education within the local community and beyond. They raise awareness about the importance of educating girls and challenge harmful cultural norms and practices that hinder girls' education. Through advocacy efforts, FBOs contribute to changing attitudes and promoting a supportive environment for girls' education. Consequently, FBOs collaborate with government authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders to enhance girls' education in Pokot County. They work together to address systemic challenges, advocate for policy changes, and improve the overall quality of education for girls.

In the process of evangelization, FBOs actively engage parents and the local community in supporting girls' education. They conduct sensitization programs, meetings, and workshops to encourage parents to prioritize their daughters' education. By involving the community, the FBOs foster a supportive network that values and supports girls' education.

Seemingly, the goal of Catholic education in West Pokot has always been to help students achieve the fullness of life (John 10:10). As frequently stated in FBOs documents on education, this is equivalent to enabling these people's integral or holistic development. According to a crucial informant in Marich Pas, the FBOs play a significant role in promoting the abandonment of harmful cultural practices in Central Pokot Sub County. In other words, religious institution discourages cultural practices like FGM and favouring boys as children (Somasekhar, 2017). Girls' education in Kenya has always been hampered by their parents' restrictions. The Pokot parents' traditional view of a girl's place in the home suggests that they either saw their daughters' Western education as necessary or beneficial.

Church missionaries had a big influence on Kenya's education policies during the colonial era. For example, according to Donald (2010), missionaries served on the 1910 education board. Later, the Central Advisory Council of African Educational Policy is thought to have had a significant influence on the Catholic and Protestant missionaries (Mwangi, 2012). Churches that established the schools in Pokot Sub County were made sponsors, and the government gave them certain duties. The sponsors, who are members of the BOG, have a moral obligation to uphold the Christian tradition of the school, such as providing counselling and guidance (Mwangi, 2012). He adds that the sponsor had the authority to arrange for the free use of the school's facilities outside of school hours in consultation with the administration and that they were frequently involved in staffing decisions.

Additionally, the Churches in Pokot have made use of education as a tool to carry out their program of evangelism, bringing the good news into every situation in which humanity is found to renew humanity (Barasa, 2014). Early missionaries in Pokot saw education as a way to advance social, technological, and economic development in addition to preaching (Nganga,

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2008). As a national education agent with a moral obligation to create a different kind of future for Kenyan youth through education and community development in Central Pokot Sub County. Isika (2012) emphasizes that Churches take an all-encompassing, spiritual, intellectual, economic, and physical approach to solving problems. To properly address a person, their entire being—soul, body, and spirit—must be taken into consideration. Religious organizations, among other elements of ethnic society, were crucial in connecting African society to the revolutions that were brought about by education (USAID, 2016). It is assumed that gender inequality will be reduced to some extent if the Faith Based Organizations support and collaborate with the government on educational issues.

According to Barasa (2014), FBOs in Kenya, including the central Pokot sub-county play a significant role in the development of schools. Churches diligently carry out this function over time. By actively taking part in events like school education days, fostering students' faith in addition to making sure that schools meet high academic standards, and engaging in evangelism, various Churches have continued to contribute to the advancement of education.

According to Mwangi (2012), Christianity has systematically spread, allowing the majority of young people to embrace it. This value has aided in the development of a fully integrated society with a solid Christian foundation. The Church has been successful in reducing egoistic tendencies in young people and cultivating a strong altruistic base thanks to its central role in tele-evangelism. Based on her history and contributions to the field of education, the Church, which serves as the moral foundation of society, has the authority to help address issues related to gender disparity in primary education (Summers, 1992).

Anderlini (2010) observes that education has found fertile ground in Churches but serious challenges remain in how to nourish, be rooted, and grow since Africans see education and the Church as a Western model (Shultz, 2014). The researcher opines that the Church should incarnate socio-cultural reality to the degree that through their lives and being they actualize Jesus Christ so that Christianity could become a way of life rather than a simple way of believing.

Nganga (2008) observes that Church missionaries to Africa should enhance dialogue with African tradition and they should seek an authentic balance between religious and cultural backgrounds. It should put into discussion the content of the Christian message as well as challenge African culture. This aims at unveiling the unconscious values, outlooks, patterns of thoughts, and yearnings that lie hidden behind the evident tensions helping to purify and create an integrated view that blends culture and the Christian message. Therefore, there is a need for an in-depth discussion that is integral, paying attention to both the Pokot's culture and the Church seeking to transform, consolidate, and adopt some values of the Pokot into the Church Simatwa (2017). Despite all the endeavors of enculturation much still needs to be done it is not enough to sing, dance, or worship in the Pokot style but serious attention be paid to socio-cultural institutions of the Pokot these are: entertainment dances (*kidonga*), gender roles, nomadic pastoralism, circumcision of Pokot girls (FGM), *sapana*, cattle rustling, early marriage to address them one by one (Mwangi, 2012). FGM featuring as the main cause of gender disparity in primary education can be addressed through enculturation by the FBOs through alternative rites of passage.

According to Ruether (2006), the missionary's goal was to spread Christian understanding among the people living in a tribal setting. For evangelism to be successful, the

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young converts would need to be educated so they could read the Bible in their native tongue. Due to the majority of Pokot residents' unwillingness to give up their cultural practices due to illiteracy, it was necessary to use other tactics to ensure that children were drawn to education. In addition, providing a stepping stone for the emancipation of women was the mission schools' greatest accomplishment, outside of offering general education. The school helped the girls develop a new consciousness and prepared them for fresh challenges in life (Olesen, 1994). Due to the powerful traditional forces that prevented parents from releasing their daughters for formal education in West Pokot County, this educational strategy proved to be slow (Otiato, 2016). However, the arrival of the Sister Congregations in Kenya gave the development of the education of the girls a new impetus that strengthened it even more. For instance, the expansion of girls' education in the larger Kitale diocese was facilitated by the arrival of the Congregations of Sisters by the end of 1970 (Nganga, 2008). These Congregations started several girls' schools.

Saint Mary was founded by the Mary Rehabilitation School, which is currently a shelter for young girls. The establishment of Father Leo Girl's Secondary School in Central Pokot Sub County, later on, has greatly aided the education of girls throughout West Pokot County. After teaching children how to read and write, they would be given food that was special compared to what they typically ate at home. Likewise, the clothing was different from what was considered appropriate for school (Odaga, 2015). Religious instruction, reading, writing, maths, hygiene, gardening, and drills were all taught in the early schools. Through the promotion of games, sports, and music, schools served as social hubs for a new social life.

The first Pokot students to attend school were completely cut off from their families. Children who attended school were cut off from and alienated from the neighbourhood (Ombuya, 2017). The conventional female counterparts help their mothers with housework. According to one chief in the area of study in November 2018, girls would abandon school entirely and remain illiterate once they underwent circumcision between the ages of 8 and 12 and were thus ready for marriage. In general, the Pokot community did not place a high value on formal education, so they would use any means necessary to find an excuse to skip class. A Central Pokot Sub County chief attributed illiteracy to ignorance of the value of education (Ng'ang'a, 2008). To prevent their children from being forced to go to school, the wealthy, for instance, preferred to take cattle to the chief. To put it another way, *wealthy Pokot people would pay off chiefs to allow their children to stay home and not attend school. The girl would eventually get married to any man, regardless of age, as long as he can raise the necessary number of cattle* (Interview Chief Central Pokot, 2012). Eventually, the children would stop attending school and instead herd cattle as a formality for the boy child.

The researcher established that several Faith-Based Organizations are working in Central Pokot Sub County that work to minimize gender disparity in schools. The majority of those interviewed saw the Faith Based Organizations as an agent of change in their community. They claimed that the Faith Based Organizations have helped many needy children, especially girls to access and go through the entire education program in Kenya (Jaetzold, 2010). Most of the learned people in Central Pokot Sub County attribute their education to sponsorship and support from Faith-Based Organizations.

A Catholic priest pointed out that the Central Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County Education was first introduced by Christian missionaries who visited the most remote places

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that the government has not even reached today (Isika, 2012). The earliest schools were started by Father Leo in 1935 as disclosed by a key informer, a chief in Masol of Central Pokot Sub County. The first school was the current Father Leo Girls School which initially was open for all the pupils as a primary school. Saint Mary's Boarding Primary School was started in 1992 by Father Leo too as a city of refuge for the girl-child. Ever since this school was started many girls have been able to pursue education without being interfered with by circumcision and early marriage (GoK 2014). A Seventh-Day Adventist church elder stated that;

The Church has provided full scholarships to the girls by paying fees, providing all the basic needs, and providing boarding facilities. In other cases, it has taken a major lead in ensuring that the community is taught the importance of education and the negatives of bad traditional practices. Through capacity building and Faith-Based Organizations sponsorship, the Church has been able to increase the number of parents embracing education (M. Sambai 18th Nov. 2018)

This was advocated by an Anglican priest who stated that; `their Church has been in the forefront in advocating for culture change that is from regressive practices like cattle rustling, early marriages and FGM towards development approach that include adopting education (Flick, 2015). `Both of these findings have shown the importance of the Church in advocating against the practices that lead to gender disparity in schools.

Through the support of the Catholic Church, many girls from the Pokot community were not only able to access education but also capable of studying and completing their education. The success of schools in this region is attributed to FBOs and Churches in the region (Fletcher, 2017). The Anglican Church of Kenya has also done commendable work in Central Pokot Sub County as far as the education of the girl child is concerned. An ACK evangelist noted that;

'The Church's doctrine does not support cultural practices but preaches against FGM, they teach on empowerment of girls and women thus helping to increase awareness and support of education. Those who embrace the Christian faith are given a full scholarship to pursue education in Central Pokot. Moreover, the community is empowered economically through projects like bee-keeping for those who are past school age` (J. Bwombok 18th Nov. 2018).

The few elites in the community are a living testimony of the results of those who embrace the Christian faith; this is seen through their better standard of living; they earn a living through employment and they are being depended on by their families and communities generally.

Isika (2012) points out that the Church's approach to issues is holistic: spiritual, intellectual, economic, and physical. Churches propagate a comprehensive approach that covers matters of the soul, body, and spirit in which the whole person's needs are addressed specifically.

World Vision Kenya, an FBO, is actively involved in promoting gender equality and empowering girls to access education. Vision Kenya has been working in Central Pokot Sub

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County to address gender disparities in education by providing support to schools and communities. The organization has been working with local leaders and community members to raise awareness about the importance of educating girls and to challenge harmful cultural practices that perpetuate gender disparities in education.

The organization has been involved in capacity-building programs that equip girls with life skills and knowledge that will help them succeed in school and beyond. These programs have included training on leadership, entrepreneurship, and financial management, helping girls to become self-sufficient and contributing members of society. In addition, World Vision Kenya has also been providing scholarships to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, enabling them to access education that they would otherwise not have been able to afford. The organization has been working with schools to improve the quality of education and to create a safe and conducive learning environment for girls.

Moreover, WVK has been involved in advocacy programs that promote gender equality and empower girls to take control of their education. The organization has been working with local leaders and community members to challenge harmful cultural practices that perpetuate gender disparities in education and to promote girls' education. The main objective of WVK is to utilize the mainstream Church to spread the spiritual gospel hand in hand with changing harmful traditional practices in society (Mwaura, 2013). It hangs on the Vision 2030 blueprint campaign on basic human rights like ensuring all people access to education, elimination of poverty, and affordable health care to all the people within remote places in Kenya. They work in collaboration with other Faith-Based Organizations, schools, and CBOs to get rid of harmful practices and to improve the general welfare of the community (Narayam, 2014).

An official in the WVK stated that they have done a commendable job as far as education is concerned in Central Pokot Sub County.

Lack of education encourages harmful traditional practices including FGM and early marriage. Teaching the benefits of Education to girl children is important in FGM eradication and should be done to improve the level of literacy among women in Central Pokot Sub County. WVK as an FBO has the potential and responsibility to change the community attitude from FGM to Alternative Rite of Passage using Christian-based teaching and examples (C. Chongwony 17th Nov. 2018).

World Vision is giving voice to the voiceless by empowering children to become advocates on issues affecting their development. This finding shows that World Vision with other partnering schools is on the fast front advocating against bad cultures that have directly hindered academic progress in schools (Murgor, 2016). This proves to be significant in addressing gender disparities in primary schools.

Further, to support the work conducted by World Vision, a report from a key informer revealed that the circumcisers do the practice for material gain as a business and rewards like a goat and local brew are given to them as a token and a source of livelihood to them (Mackey, 2015). Therefore, to overcome this challenge, WVK empowers women circumcisers by teaching the effects of FGM on health and starting a business or another work for them. One WVK worker stated further that;

‘WVK and the Faith Based Organizations are the main sources of information on FGM. They organize advocacy seminars and the Faith Based Organizations use its youth and women forums to discuss FGM issues. WVK carry out sensitization through seminars and workshops on the importance of girl child education, their strategy includes exposure visits and alternative rites of passage (ARP) graduations. To counter the training made to women and girls WVK has seminars for men encouraging them to marry girls who have undergone alternative rites of passage (E. Laktabai 16th Nov.2018).

WVK girl child sponsorship in Central Pokot Sub County is recommended; it has contributed to the improvement of girls’ education; they have put a lot of effort into securing girls’ futures by reinstating the drop to the rescue centre schools (Luca, 2012). This enables them to make better decisions in the short and long run. A key informant reported that the retention rate of the sponsor is high since there are no setbacks like influence from parents to remain at home or lack of school fees. The Christian approach used by WVK has contributed to the success of Central Pokot Sub County (Linda, 2014). This is further elaborated by the project assistance in building boarding facilities, donation of cows to schools, construction of classrooms, the introduction of anti-FGM clubs, payment of school fees, provision of school uniforms, and construction of rescue centres to cater to girls threatened by FGM and early marriages. In collaboration with other CBOs like Mercy Vocational Training, *Anyiny Sapon*, *Ywaleteke*, and *Cheptiangwa*, WVK partners to promote girl-child education by training girls to be self-reliant; encourage girls not to undergo FGM; promote anti-FGM advocacy and support vulnerable girls with income generating activities like catering, garment making, hairdressing, and artisan (Kumar, 2019).

One of the chiefs stated that;

‘The improvement of girl child retention in schools to the immense support from WVK; he said further that; ‘the community has benefited from WVK projects in the following ways: donation of cows to schools, construction of classrooms and rescue centres, the introduction of anti-FGM clubs’ payment of school fees and provision of school uniforms` (K. Rotino 18th Nov. 2018).

The finding shows that WVK plays a major role in ensuring girls are capacitated to enrol and be retained in schools. It is one of the FBOs that have contributed significantly to addressing issues related to gender disparity in Central Pokot (Kimosop, 2019). Furthermore, World Vision supports vulnerable families by providing clean water, and food and protecting girls against FGM and early marriage.

FBOs like World Vision Kenya play a significant role in managing gender disparity in Central Pokot Sub County. They actively promote gender equality in education by advocating for girls' rights to education and challenging discriminatory practices. They work to change cultural and social norms that hinder girls' access to education and encourage equal opportunities for both boys and girls. They implement educational programs that specifically

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target girls and provide them with opportunities for quality education. They offer scholarships, school supplies, and support services to ensure that girls can access and complete their education. These programs help reduce the financial barriers that may prevent girls from attending school.

Further, FBOs organize life skills and empowerment training programs for girls in Central Pokot Sub County. These programs aim to enhance girls' self-esteem, leadership skills, and decision-making abilities. By empowering girls, FBOs equip them with the tools necessary to overcome challenges and succeed in their education. During their training, they work towards creating safe and supportive learning environments for girls. They collaborate with schools and communities to address issues of gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and discrimination. In the process, the FBOs promote policies and practices that ensure girls feel safe and protected in their educational journey.

Faith-Based Organizations actively engage parents and the community in efforts to address gender disparities in education. They conduct sensitization campaigns, community dialogues, and workshops to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education. By involving parents and the community, FBOs foster a supportive network that values and supports girls' education. This means that FBOs in the Central Pokot sub-county collaborate with various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and other community-based organizations, to address gender disparities in education comprehensively. They share resources, expertise, and best practices to develop and implement effective strategies for promoting gender equality in education.

FBOs engage in advocacy and policy influencing to address systemic barriers to girls' education. They work with local and national government entities to advocate for policies that promote gender equality in education and allocate resources for girls' education programs. FBOs amplify the voices of marginalized communities and advocate for inclusive and equitable educational policies. Their holistic approach, encompassing advocacy, programs, empowerment, and community engagement, helps create an enabling environment for girls to thrive academically and overcome gender disparities in education. The FBO and government should help create an inclusive and more supportive learning environment for all students.

1.4 Contribution of Community-Based Organizations in Managing Gender Disparity in Primary Schools in Central Pokot Sub County

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have played a crucial role in managing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County. One such example is the Ywaleteke CBO, which has been working with schools and communities to promote gender equality and empower girls to access education. *Ywaleteke* Group community-based organization is 23 years old in Central Pokot Sub County; it was started in the year 2,000 and consists of teachers, women, and men. The main objective of the group is to focus on girl-child education welfare by providing strong support for education issues and providing scholarships to bright children (KNBSs, 2013). The Ywaleteke CBO provides scholarships to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, enabling them to access education that they would otherwise not have been able to afford. The scholarships cover school fees, uniforms, and other essential learning materials. The organization has also been involved in capacity-building programs that aim to empower girls with life skills and knowledge that will help them succeed in school and beyond. The

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capacity-building programs include training on leadership, entrepreneurship, and financial management, helping girls to become self-sufficient and contributing members of society.

Moreover, the Ywaleteke CBO has been involved in advocacy programs that promote gender equality and empower girls to take control of their education. The organization has been working with local leaders and community members to challenge harmful cultural practices that perpetuate gender disparities in education and to promote girls' education. At the same time, Ywaleteke CBO has also been working with schools to improve the quality of education and to create a safe and conducive learning environment for girls. The organization has been providing support to schools to ensure that they have the necessary infrastructure, materials, and resources to promote girls' education. Other objectives include: starting nursery schools, helping the disabled, women empowerment, health-related issues, environment and agriculture whereby they have started tree nurseries, planting crops, integrating livestock breeding, community development, and anti-FGM advocacy through songs. The CBO helps the local community by providing the required finances to start and run the programmes and the projects. One key informant from *the Ywaleteke CBO* group stated that;

‘Since its inception, they have managed to sponsor more than 1000 girls from Central Pokot Sub County. This has transformed the lives of the girls who are currently working in major parts of the Kapenguria and Lodwar towns. In addition, the organization has been able to provide start-up capital for girls who have completed school to start their businesses or projects. Through capacity building more women have been empowered economically thus sustaining the lives of their families.’ (Chongwony 17th Nov. 2018).

The finding shows that the CBO is taking a bigger role in managing issues of gender disparity in Central Pokot Sub County. The findings were further supported by the chief of Lokarkar who stated;

Girls who have been sponsored by the Ywaleteke organization are now breadwinners in some of the families in the locality, and more families are now seeking funding sponsorship from the organization to educate their girls. In addition, more projects have been developed by the women in the communities.’ (M. Lorupe 15th Nov. 2018).

The findings show that the Ywaleteke organization is a key partner in solving gender disparity in Central Pokot Sub County. Adelemu's (2018) study on the right to inclusive development of the girl child in Africa, concurs with the finding by mentioning the need to build capacity and ensure that bad practices are rooted in the community.

1.5 Points of Interaction between the Kenyan Government Faith-Based Organizations in Addressing Gender Disparity

In Kenya, the government and faith-based organizations can collaborate on various points of interaction to address gender disparity. The government involves FBOs in the development and implementation of policies aimed at addressing gender disparity. By including their perspectives and expertise, policies are more comprehensive and responsive to the needs

of diverse religious communities. FBOs partner with the government to raise awareness about gender inequality and advocate for policy changes. They organize joint campaigns, workshops, and public forums to promote gender equality, challenge harmful cultural practices, and educate communities about women's rights.

The government collaborates with faith-based organizations in providing social services that address the specific needs of women and girls. This includes healthcare services, educational programs, vocational training, and economic empowerment initiatives. FBOs often have networks and resources at the grassroots level, making them valuable partners in reaching marginalized communities. The GoK and FBOs work together to advocate for legal reforms that protect women's rights and promote gender equality. This involves lobbying for changes in laws related to gender-based violence, inheritance rights, child marriage, and other discriminatory practices. The government supports capacity-building efforts within faith-based organizations to enhance their understanding of gender issues and equip them with the tools to address gender disparities effectively. This includes providing training on gender-responsive programming, human rights, and leadership development.

The GoK and FBOs collaborate on research projects and data collection initiatives related to gender disparities. By pooling their resources and expertise, they generate evidence-based insights that inform policies and interventions aimed at addressing gender inequality. The government facilitates interfaith dialogue platforms where representatives from different religious communities, including faith-based organizations, come together to discuss gender-related issues. This dialogue fosters mutual understanding, challenges stereotypes, and promotes collaborative efforts in addressing gender disparities. The government engages FBOs in monitoring and evaluating the impact of gender-related programs and policies. Faith-based organizations contribute their on-the-ground perspectives and experiences, helping to assess the effectiveness of interventions and identify areas for improvement. By emphasizing the collaboration on these points of interaction, the Kenyan government and faith-based organizations can leverage their respective strengths and resources to address gender disparities more comprehensively and effectively. Such partnerships can lead to positive social change and the promotion of gender equality in Kenyan society.

1.6 Conclusion

This article was guided by the cultural adaptation theory to discuss GoK's response to Gender Disparity. Later it explains the Role of FBOs in providing education in modern Kenya. Thereafter, it discusses the Participation of FBOs in Managing Gender Disparity in Education in Central Pokot Sub County and the role of FBOs in managing gender disparity in Central Pokot Sub County. Thereafter, it discussed the activities of WVK in Central Pokot Sub County and the contribution of CBOs to managing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County based on an example of Ywaleteke. It was revealed that the FBOs and the Kenyan government have done a lot in promoting gender equality in primary schools. Despite the many efforts by FBOs and the Kenyan government to promote gender equity, statistics reveal that they are far from meeting their target. This raises the question of the challenges facing the FBOs and the GoK in promoting gender equality.

1.7 Recommendations

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The study recommends a strong partnership which is essential for systematic intervention from the Government, FBOs, and the local community of Central Pokot Sub County, West Pokot County. If the FBOs and community partner and unite to reinforce laid policies of the government, gender disparity will decline. Concerning cultural practices, the FBOs should actively participate in alternative rites of passage training and provide support where necessary. Men should be targeted as advocates of alternative rites of passage and girl child education because Pokot is a patriarchal society.

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