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## **FACTORS AFFECTING GIRLS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: A CASE OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BUKOMBE DISTRICT, GEITA REGION - TANZANIA**

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### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi prestasi akademik siswa pada Ujian Nasional kelas IV di Sekolah Menengah Negeri Daerah Bukombe. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan campuran dengan rancangan paralel konvergen dan didasarkan pada teori human capital dan teori Kebutuhan Manusia. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan panduan wawancara semi terstruktur bagi anggota dewan sekolah untuk memperoleh wawasan kualitatif, serta kuisioner berisi pertanyaan tertutup dan terbuka yang dibagikan kepada guru dan siswa untuk memperoleh data kuantitatif. Analisis data kuantitatif dilakukan dengan bantuan SPSS, sedangkan data kualitatif dianalisis secara tematis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa prestasi akademik siswa dipengaruhi oleh aktivitas rumah tangga yang berlebihan, tingkat pendidikan orang tua, ukuran keluarga, hubungan seks pranikah, jarak dari rumah ke sekolah, fasilitas sanitasi yang tidak memadai, serta sikap dan motivasi guru. Hasil penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa peningkatan prestasi akademik mahasiswa dapat dicapai melalui kesadaran sosial dan dukungan lintas sektor terhadap pentingnya pendidikan anak perempuan.

**Kata kunci:** Prestasi Akademik Anak Perempuan, Budaya Sosial Ekonomi, Kegiatan Rumah Tangga Yang Berlebihan, Jarak Dari Rumah Ke Sekolah, Sekolah Menengah, Bukombe.

### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to identify the factors that affect the academic performance of students in the fourth grade National Examination in the Bukombe Regional State Secondary School. This study uses a mixed approach with convergent parallel design and is based on human capital theory and Human Needs theory. Data collection was conducted using semi-structured interview guides for school board members to obtain qualitative insights, as well as questionnaires containing closed and open questions that were distributed to teachers and students to obtain quantitative data. Analysis of quantitative data was carried out with the help of SPSS, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The results showed that students' academic achievement was influenced by excessive domestic activity, the level of education of parents, family size, premarital sexual relations, distance from home to school, inadequate sanitation facilities, and teacher attitudes and motivations. The study concluded that the improvement of students' academic achievement can be achieved through social awareness and cross-sector support to the importance of girls' education.*

**Keywords:** *Girls' Academic Performance, Socio-Economic Culture, Excessive Household Activities, Distance From Home To School, Secondary School, Bukombe.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Developed countries have invested heavily in the education of their citizens regardless of the gender of their students (Schultz, 2002). In fact, women have been reported to be the majority among secondary school graduates, students enrolled in tertiary education, and tertiary graduates. Women are educated in larger numbers than males in developed countries such as Canada, Norway, Finland, Iceland, the UK, the USA and Thailand. Studies (Chakupewa, 2018); HakiElimu., 2015) have observed that in most nations, education is a primary means of solving social problems. Studies in developed countries have indicated that gender differences in examination performance are diminishing, for instance, in the United Kingdom, where most secondary schools are mixed and girls perform even better than boys. Similarly, in the United States of America, academic data show that girls achieve higher grades in class, similar to boys. Girl child education reduces poverty and improves health World Bank, 2002 as cited by (Anyango, 2012). As such, the education of girl students is very important to any society since it leads to an improved standard of life for a large part of the population. Educated girls become women and mothers who are conscious of health issues such as hygiene and diet. In the developing countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania included, there is greater attention to investments in education. The prompting question to ask is whether these countries point their focus to issues regarding equality in both education inputs and outputs. (Tanzania, 1995), as cited by (Rwegasira, 2017).

Examination is the most important factor that expresses the direction of improvement or decline in education quality (King Sigalla, 2013). However, girls' academic performance in the Tanzania Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (CSEE) has been steadily declining, prompting concerns in civil society and the government about what should be done to address the failure (HakiElimu., 2013). In addition, the trend of performance in four national examination results in different years in Tanzania shows that girls' academic performance is not persuasive compared to that of boys since it does not truly show prospects in social, economic and political development (HakiElimu., 2012). Table 1 presents a comparison of performance between boys and girls in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination from 2015 to 2019.

**Table 1 National Examination Performance of Girls in relation to Boys in 2015-2019 in Bukobe District**

Year	Sex	Percentage (%)
2015	Girls	64.88
	Boys	71.09
2016	Girls	67.06
	Boys	73.91
2017	Girls	75.21
	Boys	79.06
2018	Girls	78.51
	Boys	80.05
2019	Girls	79.46
	Boys	81.94

**Source:** National Examination Council of Tanzania 2015-2019

The situation in Bukombe District is not different from that reflected in table 1 statistics. As indicated in the table, girls scored lower than boys in public secondary schools. Therefore, girls' academic performance is one of the major challenges in Tanzania, as in other developing countries (MoEST, 2011). Unsatisfactory academic performance has become one of the greatest obstacles to girls' opportunity to access higher education as well as to secure employment. This follows the fact that academic performance is a determinant and a principle qualification for

higher education and employment.

However, different initiatives, such as the Secondary Education Development Programme (SEDP) of 2004 – 2009 and Big Result Now launched in 2013, have been put in place with the aim of improving students' academic performance. However, girls' performance has remained relatively poor in comparison to that of boys. Therefore, this study assessed the factors that have contributed to continuous poor academic performance among girls in Form Four National Examinations in Public Secondary schools in Bukombe District, Geita Tanzania.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory provides a critical lens for understanding the factors affecting girls' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Bukombe District, Geita Region, Tanzania. Girls in this region face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to excel in school, many of which align with Maslow's five levels of human needs. These challenges include inadequate access to basic needs, unsafe learning environments, lack of social support, low self-esteem, and limited opportunities for personal growth. Addressing these barriers is essential for improving girls' academic performance and ensuring equal educational opportunities (UNESCO, 2021).

At the most fundamental level, physiological needs such as food, clean water, and healthcare significantly impact girls' academic success. Many students in Bukombe District come from low-income households that struggle to provide adequate nutrition, which directly affects cognitive function and energy levels (Mosha & John, 2022). Malnourished students often experience difficulties concentrating in class, leading to poor academic performance. Moreover, inadequate menstrual health management due to a lack of sanitary pads and private washrooms contributes to high absenteeism rates among girls (Chacha, 2020). Research has shown that providing school feeding programs and menstrual hygiene products can improve attendance and participation in education (Nkata, 2023). Ensuring that schools meet these physiological needs is crucial for fostering a conducive learning environment for girls.

Safety is another crucial factor influencing girls' academic achievement. Many girls in Bukombe District experience unsafe school environments due to risks such as sexual harassment, bullying, and long, insecure commutes to school (Mgaiwa, 2021). Girls who travel long distances on foot are often exposed to risks of assault, fatigue, and even abduction, which negatively impact their attendance and academic concentration (Mtebe & Raphael, 2020). In addition, excessive domestic responsibilities, such as household chores and childcare, further limit girls' study time, reducing their ability to perform well academically (Mendry, 2022). Studies indicate that creating secure school environments, enforcing strict policies against harassment, and providing safe transportation can significantly enhance girls' educational outcomes (Gabrieli, 2023).

The need for love and belonging also plays a critical role in shaping girls' academic experiences. In many communities, cultural norms and gender biases discourage girls from pursuing education, leading to a lack of emotional and social support from family and society (Msuya, 2021). Girls who do not receive encouragement from their parents, teachers, or peers are more likely to drop out of school or perform poorly (Mgonja, 2024). Moreover, early marriages and teenage pregnancies continue to be major obstacles to girls' education in Tanzania, forcing many to leave school before completing secondary education (Komba & Nkumbi, 2022). Research has shown that mentorship programs, community awareness campaigns, and strong support systems in schools can significantly improve girls' academic engagement and success (Wasson, 2023).

Esteem needs are also an essential determinant of girls' academic achievement. Many girls in Bukombe District struggle with self-doubt and lack of confidence due to deeply ingrained gender stereotypes that prioritize boys' education (Shayo, 2023). The absence of female role models in education and leadership further discourages girls from striving for excellence (Quezada & Quezada-Parker, 2022). Studies indicate that when girls receive recognition for their academic efforts, their motivation and performance improve significantly (Jumani, 2021). Creating scholarship opportunities, celebrating female academic achievements, and promoting female representation in leadership positions within schools can help boost self-esteem and encourage girls to pursue higher education (Mbunda, 2022).

Finally, self-actualization is the ultimate goal in Maslow's hierarchy but remains a challenge for many girls in Bukombe District. Financial constraints, limited career guidance, and gender discrimination prevent girls from realizing their full potential (Gabrieli, 2023). Without access to higher education and skills development programs, many girls are unable to achieve their academic and professional aspirations (Shemwelekwa & Kahangwa, 2022). Studies suggest that providing career counseling, leadership training, and vocational education can empower girls to set ambitious goals and work towards achieving them (Mtebe & Raphael, 2020).

In conclusion, Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the factors affecting girls' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Bukombe District, Geita Region. Addressing these challenges—ensuring access to basic needs, providing a safe and supportive learning environment, boosting self-esteem, and promoting self-actualization—can significantly improve girls' educational outcomes. Policymakers, educators, and community leaders must work together to eliminate these barriers and create an inclusive learning environment that supports the success of all students, particularly girls (UNESCO, 2021).

Girls have been scoring relatively lower than boys in Form Four National Examinations (NECTA, 2017-2019), a scenario that has brought about low enrolment of girls in institutes of higher learning. It has also increased gender imbalance in the labor market. The prompting question is, Why are girls performing poorly in comparison to boys, yet they students are in the same school structures and use similar facilities? It was therefore necessary to conduct a study assessing the factors affecting girls' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bukombe District. The study was guided by the following research objectives: a). To determine the home-based factors affecting girls' academic performance in Form Four National Examinations in public secondary schools in Bukombe District, b). To determine the school-based factors affecting girls' academic performance in Form Four National Examinations in public secondary schools in Bukombe District.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Bukombe District, one of the five districts in the Geita Region of Tanzania. Bukombe is geographically positioned with Mbogwe District to its north and east, while Biharamulo and Chato Districts border it to the west. The southern part of the district is adjacent to the Kigosi/Moyowasi forest. The study focused on the fifteen public secondary schools in Bukombe District due to the consistently lower academic performance of girls in national examinations compared to boys. Additionally, Bukombe District was selected for its accessibility, making it a practical choice for data collection. To investigate the factors affecting girls' academic achievement, a convergent parallel design was employed, as suggested (Creswell, 2012). This mixed-method approach allowed for the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. By integrating both research methods, the study mitigated the limitations of each approach and improved the accuracy and reliability of findings.

The study targeted key stakeholders in public secondary schools, including female students, teachers, and school board members. A total of 209 respondents participated, selected through various sampling techniques: simple random sampling for 120 female students, a combination of stratified random and simple random sampling for 72 teachers, and purposive sampling for 17 school board members. Data collection was conducted using a semi-structured interview guide and questionnaires. Interviews were used to gather detailed qualitative insights from school board members, while questionnaires with both closed- and open-ended questions were distributed to teachers and students for quantitative data collection. The validity of the instruments was ensured through expert review by university supervisors, lecturers, and peers, while the reliability was assessed using a test-retest method, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.8. Data recording included the use of notebooks, sound recorders, and direct questionnaire responses. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed, while quantitative data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20, with results presented in tables and charts.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### RESULT

The study results are presented according to the objectives of the study. The first specific objective was to determine home-based factors and how they affect girls' academic performance in public secondary schools in Bukombe District. The following factors were obtained from the field:

#### *Excessive Domestic Activities*

The study aimed to identify the kind of activities that girl students carried out at home before and after school hours and how those activities affected their academic performance. The respondents mentioned activities such as finding firewood, fetching water, washing clothes, cooking, and taking care of children, among others. Therefore, due to those activities, the majority of girls did not have sufficient time to engage with academic work such as assignments, take-away, personal reading and revision after school hours because they were occupied.

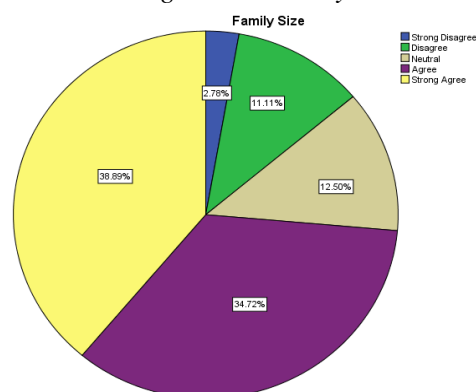
Girl students mentioned that they were engaged in many domestic activities, such as collecting fire wood, burning charcoal, fetching water, washing clothes, cooking and taking care of the children while at home. This indicates that much time is consumed in domestic activities instead of revising and doing homework. Moreover, during interview meetings with board members of schools, one respondent provided information that matched with that obtained from students.

Furthermore, the heads of schools were interviewed as members of schools' boards. They affirmed that girls were subjected to excessive domestic activities soon after arriving home from school as a result of becoming tired and failing to engage in academic work.

#### *Family size*

The study intended to determine details on the family size of respondents during data collection and its effects on academic studies. The findings showed that most girls' child education is affected by the size of their family because large families tend to prefer to support boys' child education at the expense of girls' child education due to economic constraints. Different students mentioned the number of children found in their family, with most of them indicating many children; for instance, many families had 10, 12, 14, 16 and 22 children. Girl students who came from larger families tended to have lower levels of attainment and lower levels of secondary completion, on average, than children who came from smaller families. The argument was that parents with many children could not afford to provide school basic needs and quality time to their children. Figure 4.3 shows the degree of agreement on how family size affected girls' academic performance as a percentage.

Figure 4.3 Family size



Source: Field Data, 2020

As indicated in Figure 4.3, 38.89% of girls strongly agreed and 34.72% agreed that their performance was affected by large families due to lack of school basic needs such as uniforms, exercises and shoes, tiredness, laziness, sickness, financial problems and parental care with

attention, respectively, compared to 12.50% of girls who had nothing to worry about, while 2.78% and 11.11% were not affected by the size of the families. According to the findings, financial problems and lack of parental care and attention to girl students were common in the larger family size compared to the smaller one in the Sukuma society. During the interview session with board members, parents who were members of the school boards provided information that corresponded to the explanation given by the students. Second Objective: To determine the school-based factors affecting girls' academic performance in Form Four National Examinations in public secondary schools in Bukombe District. The study intended to determine the school-based factors that affect girls' academic performance in secondary schools in Bukombe District.

### **Teenage Sexual Relationship**

Part of the second study objective was to determine whether girl students engaged in sexual relationships and how those relationships impacted their academic performance. The questionnaires required girl students to indicate whether they engaged themselves in sexual relationships as well as indicate the degree to which they agreed that such relationships impacted their academic relationships. The findings are summarized and presented in table 4.8 below.

**Table 4.8 Teenage sexual relationship**

<b>Sexual Harassment to Girl students</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>CF</b>
Strong Disagree	3	4.2	4.2
Disagree	2	2.8	6.9
Agree	21	29.17	36.1
Strong Disagree	46	63.89	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Source:** Field Data, 2020

The findings in Table 4.8 indicate that 63.89% of girls in public secondary schools strongly agreed, and 29.17% of girl respondents agreed that they were involved in teenage sexual relationships in school and while at home. Teenage sexual relationships included all sexual disturbances girl students encountered in their day-to-day life. The above affirmation was supported during the interviews with the members of school boards. One of the heads of the schools who was interviewed asserted that:

We have had cases whereby our girl students are lured into unhealthy sexual relationships by males teachers, boda boda riders, male students and street vendors with promises such as money, free boda boda rides and being deceived that they would be supported financially in their studies and at home. (Head of School A)

### **Sexual Harassments**

The findings summarized in table 4.9 indicate the extent to which the respondents were sexually harassed while in school and on their way to school.

**Table 4.9 Extents of sexual Harassment**

<b>Extent of sexual harassment</b>	<b>Girl students</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>CF</b>
Very little		4	3.3	3.3
Little		9	7.4	10.8
Much		13	10.7	21.7

Very much	37	30.6	52.5
Don't know	57	47.1	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>99.2</b>	

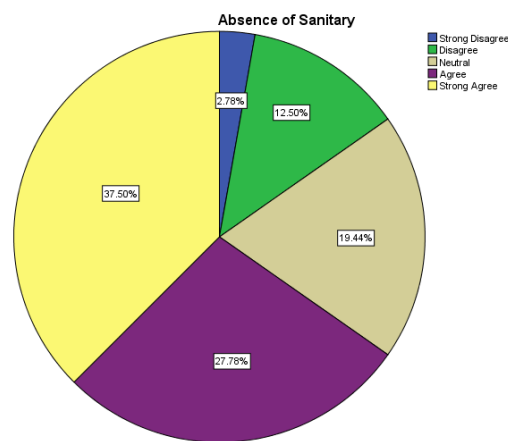
Source: Field Data, 2020

The findings indicated that 30.58% of the girls were very harassed, 10.74% said they were very harassed, 7.44% were harassed a little, 0.83% were very little harassed, and 47.11% said they did not know whether they were harassed. Therefore, the study established that sexual harassment among girl students in public secondary schools in Bukombe district was a factor that affected girls' academic performance in Form Four National Examinations.

### Availability of Sanitary Services

The researcher intended to understand the availability of sanitary facilities, including clean water, toilets and hostels for girl students, as well as sanitary pads in public secondary schools in Bukombe District. The findings are summarized in Figure 4.4, which depicts the level of agreement on sufficient available sanitary services.

Figure 4.4 Absence of Sanitary Facilities



Source: Field Data, 2020

The findings summarized in figure 4.5 show that the majority of the respondents agreed that most public secondary schools in Bukombe lack sufficient sanitary facilities, including clean water sources, toilets, hostels and sanitary pads. For instance, during an interview session with board members, one respondent responded:

The school lacks piped water, and there is no drilled borehole; as such, the school depends solely on rainy water that becomes unsafe when stored for a long time. Additionally, during short rains and long dry seasons, the school runs with no drop of water for students. The students are therefore required to bring with them water from home although they walk for a long distance. Thus, during dry seasons, most girls skip classes when they are experiencing the menstruation period, and as a result, poor performance among girls becomes inevitable (Board Member of School A).

In addition, the researcher wanted to understand the provision of girls' sanitary pads as an important need for girls. Data collected from the students' questionnaires showed that they were given only one piece of pad, which was not sufficient; hence, they opted to stay at home for two to four days after the menstrual period. Additionally, in the interview session, one of the heads of school responded,

The issue of pad sanitation is a sensitive and important need. The government provides a budget to public schools, but the challenge is that the money that is directed to buying sanitary pads is not enough compared to the large number of girls. We give girls one piece of the sanitary pad as an emergence and parents are

expected to provide rest as per the need (Head of School C)

Furthermore, during the data collection, the researcher wished to know the availability of toilets in the secondary schools in Bukombe District. The researcher interviewed school board members, and one of them asserted that

There are five toilets for 957 girl students in our school. Although we have a source of water, insufficient toilets are a challenge since the ratio of girls to girls is too large. There is an insufficient number of toilets in many public secondary schools in Bukombe District; hence, girls are not comfortable when exercising their biological needs (Board Member of School B).

### ***Hostels and Boarding Facilities***

The second study objective was to determine how the presence or lack of hostels and boarding facilities in public secondary schools in Bukombe District affected girl students' academic performance. The findings indicated that all public secondary schools in Bukombe District had neither hostels nor boarding facilities. The findings indicated that 92.56% of students did not get meals at school, while only 6.61% ate their meals at school. During the interview, a parent who happened to be a board member explained difficulties that the school underwent in convincing parents to contribute either money or foodstuffs for meals program at school;

A large number of parents claim that the government provides free compulsory basic education, and as such, no other contribution should the school administration demand from parents. On the other hand, moderate parents were of the opinion that they contribute foodstuffs only for the candidate classes that included only form II and form IV. As such, 90% of the students do not have anything to eat and keep them in school for the entire day. Teachers are therefore forced to end the classes by midday so that students are able to walk back home (Parent, Board Member of School D)

### ***Distance from Home to School***

The researcher intended to know how walking distance to public secondary schools was from girl students' residences. Respondents were required to select the answer that matched reality, as indicated in Table 4.11.

**Table 4.11 Distance from home to school**

	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>CF</b>
Strong Disagree	3	4.2	4.2
Neutral	1	26.4	5.6
Agree	19	68.1	31.9
Strong Agree	49	100.0	100.0
Total	72		

As indicated in table 4.10, the collected data revealed that the majority of girl students in public secondary schools in Bukombe District travelled/walked a very long distance from their homes to reach schools.

## **DISCUSSION**

Bukombe district is inhabited by the Sukuma tribe, whereby girls are accountable for home activities, and due to their culture when mothers are away from home, girls take charge of all responsibilities. The greater they are subjected to domestic activities, the greater they lose time to engage in effective studies. According to the above findings, there is a problem of girl students being involved in excessive domestic activities in Bukombe District, as identified by different respondents, which has resulted in the poor academic performance of one school, as reported by nearly all the respondents.

The above statements, as given by the head of school, concur with other studies conducted by (Nyalusi, 2013) and (Kihombo, 2017) whereby (Nyalusi, 2013) found that girls spend more time in

domestic activities than academic activities. All the matter results from the fact that social arrangements and practices assign girls to more domestic activities than boys. The present study found that most of the day girls' scholars do not have time to concentrate on academic studies due to overloaded domestic activities, which consequently affect their academic performance. The study of (Kihombo, 2017) on the assessment of factors contributing to girls' school attendance and academic performance on four national examinations in Mbeya observed that in rural areas, there are greater expectations for girls to perform domestic chores at home, such as cooking, taking care of their siblings, helping parents on the farm and fetching water, than boys. Most girls are required to carry out work in households and agriculture, while their parents often work far from home to sustain the family. Therefore, due to different explanations from respondents, the researcher recognized that there is a problem of excessive involvement of girl students in domestic activities that has resulted in tiredness, loss of concentration on subjects, wasting time for revising and reading, poor school attendance and dropping out, hence poor academic performance.

Additionally, the study findings established that many families in Bukombe District were polygamous and, as such, had very many kids. In this regard, many families opted to educate boy children at the expense of girls due to financial constraints. This was supported by the findings of Conley and Glauber (2006) as cited by Azumah, F. D., Adjei, E. K., & Nachinaab, (2017) that children in large families obtained lower educational investments and showed poor education performance. Additionally, the research findings by Alabi, T., & Alabi, (2014), as cited by (Kapur, 2018), clarify that problems associated with family size and family planning are prevalent in relation to possible participation in education and imply the need for health education at the school level. Girls usually experience problems in focusing on learning due to deprived health conditions. In general, the effect of poverty and malnutrition on the health of school-age children is harder for girls than boys. Boys may receive favoured feeding, while girls, who are required to carry out domestic responsibilities, are more likely to be undernourished. Even if they go to school, this unfavourably affects their performance and retention rate. Furthermore, Alemayehu (2003), as cited by Hirago, (2014), specified that the major problems that affect girls' development in their education are economic limitations and large family size. Even though school fees are free, the cost of education resources such as stationary, school uniform, meals and other extra items are too expensive for small income families. In such circumstances, in regard to choice in poor and large families as to who go to school among their children, they give priority to boy children instead of girls because boys are expected to be the future of cash winners and boys can create cash to cover their school costs. Apart from that, most of the findings concentrated generally on the performance of children (boys and girls), while family size affects girls' academic performance at large. Poor parents with large families are very selective in education matters; they only support the education of boys and not girls. Therefore, the above finding is concluded by researcher views that the size of families greatly affects girls' academic performance. Even if education is free for parents with large families and low incomes, they are not able to provide all necessary school basic needs to their children; hence, they select to support boy students through the provision of their needs, while girls find themselves in a hard situation as a result of poor focus and concentration on their academic matters, which causes them to score unsatisfactory performance in their examinations. Girls from smaller families have the opportunity to attain academic excellence because of the greatness of their contact with their parents compared to those from large families who lack parental consideration, time and close follow-up of their academic development as a result of poor performance.

On the other hand, the study found that many girls were involved in sexual relationships with their age mates, boy students or male adults. Additionally, they were in these risky relationships either out of malice or they were lured into them. Such relationships were found to distract girls from studies, thus affecting their academic performance. These findings were in line with studies conducted by (Auma, 2014), (Kihombo, 2017) and Akinyi, O. D., & Musani, (2015), whereby (Auma, 2014) observed that most girls came from poor families and attended coeducational schools at an adolescent age, which is quite tempting. Since they attended coeducational schools, boys and girls interact quite often and share their views on teenage sexuality. According to the study, most girls engage in teenage sexual behaviour to meet some of their needs they lack at home. It was obvious that girls in the most

vulnerable situations could not perform academically. Similarly, the study of (Kihombo, 2017) observed that girls face peer pressure from other girls who drop out or skip school. Therefore, if they engage in unsafe sex and have unintended pregnancies, they are more likely to miss school or have poor academic performance. Additionally, the study of Akinyi, O. D., & Musani, (2015) shows that boys harass girls by touching them and writing to them bad letters that are disrespectful, they make bad comments regarding girls and therefore hurt their feelings, they at times answer girls rudely when they ask questions or inquire about anything, they display an arrogant attitude towards girls and sometimes they are given a book to share, and instead of taking good care, they cut pictures and write on them.

Furthermore, the study found that a long walking/travelling distance from home to school was a major factor that affected girl students' academic performance. The above findings were supported by Chakupewa (2018) in Nzega on persistent students' poor performance in selected community secondary schools, who found that schools located at ward centers easily misbehave without being noticed as being responsible for students' academic performance. Obviously, if girls walk for a long distance to and from school and are assigned domestic activities once they reach their homes, this will result in their poor academic performance because they will not have the chance to appraise what they have learned. In most rural areas, each ward has approximately 10 villages, but only one secondary school serves members from all these villages, and the majority of these schools are day schools, where students are required to walk long distances each day to and from school. In such an environment, girls fall into temptations by nonschool males and school boys as they make their way to and from school. Exposure to sexual violence is a greater risk for girls commuting longer distances (Mbelwa & Isangula, 2012). Similarly, the study conducted in Mbeya by (Kihombo, 2017) observed that the schools are built far away from their houses, and the schools do not have living quarters, so as a result the girls have to walk long distances to and from schools. Girls in particular face many dangers when walking to school, such as sexual assaults and peer pressure, thus affecting their school attendance and academic performance.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that for girls in public secondary schools to perform well in Form Four national examinations, there must be a supportive teaching and learning environment that enables them to learn comfortably and effectively so that the majority of them can join the next level of education and, consequently, the labor market. During the data collection, the study found that girl students in public secondary schools in Bukombe District were day scholars due to a lack of hostels and boarding facilities, whereby they walked very long distances to and from school.

Additionally, before going to school early in the morning and after school hours, girls were occupied with excessive domestic activities, as much as the majority of their parents were not educated; hence, they do not know the importance of education, especially for girls. Moreover, most schools lacked sufficient toilets for students, especially for girls, sanitary pads, a lack of safe water and sewage systems for waste materials, and students did not get meals (breakfast or lunch) in the schools from morning to evening.

This study also found that some parents were not educated and were not able to support their daughters in academic matters. As such, many parents could not perform close follow-up or grant them ample time to engage in academic work. Many parents valued not the education of the girls, while others had too large a family to provide basic school needs and special needs to girls, such as sanitary pads, small bicycles to facilitate their distance to and from school and some money to buy bites while they were in the school compound. Therefore, it is vital to conclude that society and the government should put more effort into improving girls' learning environment in public secondary schools.

The study thus concluded that sustainable development goals and millennium goals that stem from human rights, equity, equality, globalization, science, and technology advancements cannot be attained when girls are not taken as an important part and puzzle of society through the provision of quality education

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