

## **Socio-Cultural Effects on Orphan hood And Its Influence On The Girl-Child's Access And Retention In Secondary School Education In Ron go District, Kenya**

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**ABSTRACT :** *This article dealt with orphan hood which is a critical issue in almost every household not only in Kenya but also the world over. Orphans are at risk of losing their learning time as well as being involved in child labor among others. Orphan hood can be associated with an increased demand of the child's time in home production which results in less schooling. The objective of this article was; to establish the socio-cultural effects of orphan hood on the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education in Rongo District, Kenya. Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no statistically significant socio-cultural effects of orphan hood on the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education in Rongo District, Kenya. This study was guided by the classical - liberal theory of equal opportunity (Rousseau, 1712) who asserted that each person is born with a given amount of capacity, which to a large extent is inherited and cannot be substantially changed. The study adopted the descriptive survey design and targeted a population of orphaned girl-child in secondary schools in Rongo District, Kenya. 36 Head teachers and 36 teacher counselors from the 36 sampled secondary schools in Rongo District were included in the study to provide the required information about the orphaned girl-child. The 36 sampled secondary schools included 23 mixed day, 5 girls boarding, 6 mixed day/boarding and 2 mixed boarding secondary schools. Simple random sampling was used to select 468 orphaned girls, and purposive random sampling was used to include the 36 head teachers and 36 teacher counselors totaling to 540 respondents. Data was collected using closed and open ended questionnaires. The questionnaires were pre-tested by being administered to 30 respondents from two schools which were not included in the study. The scores obtained from the first and second tests were 0.76 and 0.77 respectively. The descriptive statistics including percentages mean and frequency tables were used to analyze the data. Inferential statistics such as chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) was also used to analyze quantitative data. All hypotheses testing procedures were based on  $\alpha = 0.05$  level of significance. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.0 computer programme. The results of the study indicated that several socio-cultural factors negatively affect an orphaned girl-child's access and retention in education. Some of these factors include: Early pregnancies, forced marriages, effects of sugar daddies and death of parents among others. The study recommends that guidance and counseling interventions be put in place to address socio-cultural and needs of orphaned girl-child. The results of the study would help the government in formulation of policy and programme interventions aimed at helping the orphaned girl-child and to specifically address the needs of the families with such children by making the said policies and programmes as proactive as possible to the needs of the orphans.*

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**KEYWORDS:** *Orphanhood, Girl-child, Access, Retention, Socio-Cultural, Secondary school, Education*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Orphanhood being a condition whereby a child loses one or both parents through death is a critical issue in every household in the world over and raises concern to every individual in the society. It is estimated that twenty four of twenty- five countries with the world's highest levels of HIV/AIDS prevalence rates are in Sub-Saharan Africa as reflected in the current number of orphaned children (USAID, 2003). According to a joint report by UNAIDS, UNICEF and USAID (2004), at least 12.3% of all children in Sub-Saharan Africa or 43 million children are orphans (who have lost one or both parents). Moreover, although the numbers of orphans in other regions of the world are decreasing, the numbers in Sub-Saharan Africa are increasing, mainly because sub-Saharan Africa, as a region, has been hit hardest by HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS et al., 2004). Unfortunately, the steady increase in the number of orphans, especially in the last two decades, coupled with the increase in poverty in the region, has overwhelmed the traditional extended family system (Ssewamala, 2005).

As a result, a considerable number of orphaned girl-children who would otherwise have been cared for within the extended family system have dropped out of school in order to either farm the family land to take care of themselves and their siblings, or in desperation, migrated to large urban areas in search of employment opportunities (child labor), or forced into marriage (Orodho, 2004). In Kenya, orphan hood has consistently affected education of very many children and the girl-child in particular. UNICEF (2004) estimated that Kenya had about 1,659,000 orphans (or 12% of the children) out of who about 54% were orphaned through HIV/AIDS. Other causes may include armed conflicts, accidents and deaths from other diseases /sicknesses. Rongo District, Kenya, is dominantly inhabited by the Luo community and it is bordered by the Abagusii community. Considering recent past political events the area might be prone to armed fighting occurring between the two named communities and this also may be the cause of orphan hood to many children in the district.

## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The family being the cradle of a child's development provides the child with emotional and educational support. However, increase in the rate of orphan hood is steadily overwhelming the extended family systems which have been known to take up the burdens of orphans. This has created an upsurge of a number of child headed families, and in specific terms the girl-child headed families which are experiencing starvation, poor health and lack of education. Without adequate support the orphaned girl-child stands a risk of prostitution, child labor, child abuse, HIV/AIDS among others. Furthermore, this poses a risk to the orphaned girl-child not accessing and continuing with secondary school education. The study therefore was to establish the socio-cultural effects of orphan hood on the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education in Rongo District, Kenya.

### **Socio-Cultural Effects of Orphanhood**

The prevalence of orphanhood among the children in sub-Saharan Africa has been greatly exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Beegle, 2003). This shows that HIV/AIDS pandemic has major effects on the mortality of men and women in their prime child bearing and earning years. Consequently, orphanhood rates are increasing and putting a larger share of children at risk. According to Orodho (2004), many of such orphans have subsequently dropped out of school in order to either farm the family land to take care of themselves and their siblings, or in desperation migrated to large urban centers in search of employment opportunities, or forced into marriage. Attitudes do play a major role in provision of educational opportunities. However, a major deterrent to female take up and follow through educational opportunities is near universal fundamental cultural bias in favor of males. The research carried out in sub-Saharan Africa found out that the widespread operation of patriarchal systems of social organizations on early pregnancy, on heavier domestic and subsistence duties of females (especially in rural areas) and a generally lower regard for the value of female life, adversely affect the participation of girls and women in formal education (USAID, 2004). Poverty and malnutrition are other factors deterrent to secondary school education attainment of orphaned girl-child. Lindblade, Odhiambo, Rosen, and Decocks (2003) emphasize that the effect of poverty and malnutrition on the health of school age orphan falls harder on girls than boys. Boys may get preferential feeding, while girls (who have heavier workload) are more likely to be undernourished. This adversely affects their enrolment, academic achievement and retention rate in schools.

Cultural factors also play a major role in deterring orphaned girl child's access and academic achievement in secondary school education. Silver (1973) postulates that culture over- burdens girls with more responsibilities than boys. He noted that in a case whereby a mother dies, a girl may be brought home to take care of the family and other siblings at the expense of schooling whilst the boys are allowed to continue with schooling. In addition, girls suffer from traditions such as early/post marriages in exchange for bride price transforming the school girls into a commodity for exchange auctioned to the highest bidder so that their brothers can continue with education (Rono, 1990). It has been noted that the situation is made worse when the parents have died and girls remain under a care-giver. In rural areas, it is not uncommon for poor families to endorse early marriage for girls to lighten the family's economic burdens, and becomes a reason for such girls to leave school prematurely. The high cost of schooling and the inability of poor orphaned girls to buy uniforms and acquire other basic necessities may encourage the girls to seek sexual relationship with older men who can provide them with money to use. The effect of this relationship results into pregnancy of such girls who are then expelled from schools, thus cutting short their schools careers (FAWE, 1994). Even though such girls are encouraged to return to school after delivery of the baby, it becomes a difficult task for an orphaned girl because there would be nobody to remain at home with the child born, or their care-givers fear that they would become pregnant again, or the girls themselves fear of being ridiculed or feel stigmatized (Corcoran, 1995)

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey design to collect data through questionnaires from the study sample. The descriptive survey design attempted to collect data from the sample of the study in order to determine the effect of orphan hood on the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education in Rongo District, Kenya. The choice of the design was made because the nature of data needed for the study did not involve or required time series over several monitoring rounds of data. It involved collection of information from a sample that had been drawn from a predetermined population at one point in time (Fraenkel&Wallen, 2000). Furthermore, Borg and Gall (1989) note that descriptive survey research is intended to produce statistical information about aspects of education that interests policy makers and educators. Therefore, the descriptive survey that was employed explored opinions, attitudes and knowledge about the effect of orphan hood on the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education in the area of study. These schools included mixed day, girls' boarding, mixed day/boarding and mixed boarding secondary schools. The study excluded boys day/and, or boarding secondary schools. Rongo district, in Nyanza Province, borders Homa-Bay district to the North, Migori district to the South, Ndhiwa district to the West and South Gucha district to the East. The district has three educational divisions namely Rongo division, Uriki division and Awendo division, with a total of 56 secondary schools and approximate student population of 15,354. Most of the schools are mixed secondary schools, and there are only five girls' boarding secondary schools in the district. The target population of the study consisted of the orphaned girl-child in secondary schools in Rongo District, Kenya. However, the head teachers and teacher counselors in the area of study were also targeted to provide the required information about the effect of orphan hood on the girl child's access and retention in secondary school education in Rongo district, Kenya. There were 56 (fifty six) secondary schools in the district with approximate population of about 15,354 students categorized as 36 mixed day secondary schools, 5 girls boarding secondary schools, 4 mixed day/ boarding, 9 boys boarding secondary schools, and 2 mixed boarding secondary schools (Cited from DEO Rongo, 2008). The study excluded the 9 boys boarding secondary schools and used 47 secondary schools with girl- child population. The table below indicated the population of girl-child in secondary schools in the district where the sample size was drawn.

Table 1: Enrolment of girl-child in secondary schools in Rongo District, 2009.

Enrolment	Double Orphans	Single Orphans	Total
5735	459	1032	1491

**Source: DEO's office Rongo, 2009: Enrolment statistics.**

In this study, three groups of respondents namely; head teacher teacher-counsellors and orphaned girl-child were used to provide the required information about the effect of orphan hood on the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education in Rongo district, Kenya. The sample frame was 47 secondary schools with the girl-child population, out of which 36 sampled secondary schools were randomly selected. From each of the selected 36 secondary schools, one head teacher and one teacher counsellor (yielding to 36 head teachers and 36 teacher counselors) were included in the study to provide the required information. Simple random sampling was used to target 13 orphaned girl-children from each school yielding to a total of 468 orphaned girl-children from the 36 secondary schools. The sample size of schools from each division was proportionally selected as indicated in table 2 below. The entire sampling matrix yielded a total sample size of 540 respondents for the study. Since there were only five girls' boarding secondary schools in Rongo District, Kenya, they were automatically selected. This sample of orphaned girl-child from the target population was chosen because according to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) the population of study was found to be homogeneous in characteristics (orphaned girl-child in secondary schools). For descriptive survey, the minimum recommended sample size is 20-50 in each minor sub- group (Borg & Gall, 2003). In this study, the minor sub-group comprised a total of 36 subjects in each sub- group, which was within the minimum to cater for attrition. The proposed sample size in the study was 540 respondents. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), the following formula might be used to determine the sample size:

$$n = \frac{d^2}{z^2 pq}$$

Whereby:

n = desired sample size (if targeted population is greater than 10,000).

Z = standard normal deviate at required confidence level.

P = proportion in the target population estimated to have characteristics being

measured.

q = 1-p

d = level of statistical significance set.

Table 2: Sample size by the schools per division

Divisions	Schools	Schools sampled		Sample Size		
		H/teacher	T/counselors	Students	Total	
Rongo	18	14	14	14	182	207
Awendo	17	13	13	13	169	195
Urii	12	9	9	9	117	138
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>540</b>

According to Ballian (1998) in case there is a need to adjust upward or downward the sample size then it can be calculated at 10-15% in order to cater for attrition. Therefore the sample size for this study was calculated at 13 orphaned girl-children per school totaling to a sample size of 468 orphaned girl-children from the 36 sampled secondary schools in the district. Simple random sampling was used to select the orphaned girl-children for the study. Data collection instruments included structured questionnaires for head-teachers, teacher counselors and orphaned girl-child. The questionnaires were considered ideal for collecting data from the head teachers, teacher counselors and orphaned girl-child in secondary schools because these respondents could interpret and record the questionnaires on their own. In the structured questionnaires, the question items helped the researcher to get information from the respondents. Each questionnaire type had three sections (A, B, C). Section background information of the respondents, Sections B and C- home and school related effects of orphan hood on the girl-child access and retention in secondary school education respectively. After data collection, the responses to the questionnaire were coded, and then data was entered into the computer for analysis. Data was entered according to respondents' identification number based on the schools. The data which largely came from individual respondents was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and percentages were used for descriptive statistics, while chi-square ( ) was used to analyze quantitative data. All the hypothesis testing procedures were based on  $\alpha = 0.05$  level of significance test of independence used to test the effects of orphan hood on the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5 was the computer programme used for the analysis of the data.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

##### **Socio- Cultural Effects of Orphanhood and its Influence on the Orphaned Girl-Child's Access and Retention in Secondary School Education in Rongo District.**

This objective aimed at identifying the socio-cultural effects of orphanhood and their influence on the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education in Rongo District. These effects included the sexual abuse and early pregnancy on orphaned girl –child, effects of premarital relationships and early marriage, the students parents' status, other socio-cultural factors affecting the orphaned girl-child's access to schooling, hypothesis testing on socio-cultural effects of orphanhood and its influence on girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education capturing early pregnancies.

##### **Sexual Abuse and Early Pregnancy on Orphaned Girl –Child**

The effects of sexual abuse to an orphaned girl - child by mature adults ('sugar daddies') was considered in this study because the high cost of education and inability of the poor orphaned girls to buy uniforms and acquire other basic necessities encourage such girls to seek sexual relationship with older men who provide them with money to use.

Table 3: The Effects of Sexual Abuse and Early Pregnancy on Orphaned Girl-Child' Access and Retention in Secondary School Education

Rating	Sexual Abuse%	Early Pregnancy%
Lowest	5.6	2.8
Low	13.8	5.6
High	2.8	16.7
Higher	75.0	58.2
Highest	2.8	16.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

N = 36

The results showed that the effect of sexual abuse by mature adults was higher (75.0%) among the orphaned girl students. According to FAWE (1994) the effect of this relationship results highly into early pregnancy (58.2%) of such orphaned girls who are then expelled from schools, thus cutting short their school careers. It becomes also very difficult for such girls to return to school after the delivery of the baby because there would be nobody to remain at home with the child born. At the same time such girls fear of being ridiculed or feel stigmatized (Corcoran, 1995). The research carried out in sub-Saharan Africa found out that the widespread operation of patriarchal systems of social organizations on early pregnancy, on heavier domestic and subsistence duties of females (especially in rural areas) and generally lower regards for the value of female life, adversely affect the participation of girls in formal education ( USAID, 2004). This is an indicator that orphaned girls, because of their status and vulnerability are used as objects of sex, resulting into early pregnancy, thus adversely affect their enrolment and retention in secondary schools.

**Effects of premarital relationships and Early Marriage**

The effects of boy–girl (premarital) relationship were considered in the study because premarital relationship had been noted among the young people leading to early pregnancies on the rise among school girls. The effects of early marriage was also considered in the study because the tradition views early marriage of girls as a source of income whereby girls are considered as commodity for exchange, auctioned to the highest bidder so that their brothers can continue with their education.

Table 4: Effects of Early Marriage and Premarital Relationship on Orphaned Girl –Child’s Access and Retention in Secondary School Education

<b>Response</b>	<b>Early Marriage%</b>	<b>Premarital relations%</b>
Never	2.8	0
Rarely	52.8	83.3
Often	38.8	2.8
Always	2.8	13.9
Not applicable	2.8	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

N=36

The study also found out that 83.3% are rare cases of boy – girl (premarital) relationship. This kind of relationship may always be on the rise. This relationship could explain why pregnancy of school girls is on the rise leading to their leaving school prematurely. According to Tawanda& Gordon (2004) girls become pregnant as a result of mutually agreed sexual relationship with male pupils. This is due to the fact that both boys and girls in mixed schools pair up – a fact generated from the way they share classes, books, playfields, group discussions and many other facilities. The study also found out that rarely (52.8%) do orphaned school girls taken away to be married early. However, 38.8% stated that orphaned school girls are often taken away to be married early. The latter was consistent with what Rono (1990) states that in rural areas, it is not uncommon for poor families to endorse early marriage for girls to tighten the families’ economic burdens. This can be the case of 38.8% of the orphaned girls who leave schools prematurely in order to get married.

**The Students Parents’ Status**

The status of the students’ parents was also considered in the study because access and retention to schooling after bereavement seems to be linked to who died, and who the orphans live with afterwards.

Table 5: The Effects of Orphaned Girl-Child’s Parents’ Status and their Access and Retention in Secondary School Education

<b>Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Mother dead	102	21.9
Father dead	346	74.2
Both parents dead	20	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>100.0</b>

N = 468

The study observed that 74.2% of the orphaned girl –children had their fathers dead; 21.9% had their mothers dead while 3.9% had both parents dead. Children with their mothers alive are likely to access school and continue with education. These findings were in line with Ardington (2004) who showed that maternal orphans were significantly less likely to be enrolled in school and have completed fewer years than a child

whose mother was alive. It is also supported by Guarcello et al (2004) who also claims that paternal orphans attend schools in greater proportions than maternal orphans. They further claim that double orphans are less likely to attend school full time. These findings, therefore, showed that orphaned girls who had lost their mothers and both parents were likely to be more vulnerable with respect to access and retention in secondary school education. This finding was further supported by the mothers' level of education which was seen to have an effect on the access and retention of the majority of the orphaned girl-children in secondary school education (Answorth et al, 2005). The findings were further supported by Al Sammarai and Peasgood (1998) who suggest that the mothers' education has greater influence on the girls' secondary schooling. They further claim that educated mothers giving preferences to girls' schooling, implies that mothers have a relatively stronger preferences for their daughters' education and that their education affords them either increased households decision – making power or increased economic status. Lick and Sahn (2008) offer similar outcomes with Al Sammarai and Peasgood (1998) that the mothers' education has significant impact on the daughters' access and retention to secondary school education. This, therefore suggested that in a household where an orphaned girl – child was left with the mother alive, there was a more likelihood of such a girl accessing and being retained in secondary school education.

**Other Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting the Orphaned Girl-Child's Access and Retention in Secondary School Education.**

These factors in Table 6 below were considered in the study because they could easily be barriers to orphaned girl – child's access and retention in secondary school education.

Table 6: Effects of Other Socio-Cultural Factors on Orphaned Girl-Child's Access and retention in secondary School education.

Factors	Yes		No		N	%
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent		
Have a study room at home	224	41.1	244	51.9	468	100
Spend the night at a neighbour	54	10.5	414	89.4	468	100
Guardia/parent fight at home	64	13.3	404	86.7	468	100
Guardia/parent come home drunk	74	15.6	394	84.4	468	100
Take care of younger siblings	216	45.4	252	54.6	468	100

In Each Factor N=468

The study found out that 51.9% of the orphaned girl-children had no study rooms at home, 10.6% spent the night from a neighbour, 13.3% had parent/guardian fighting at home, 15.6% had drunk parents/guardians and 45.4% took care of younger siblings thereby not in school. This, therefore, means that some of the orphaned girl- children lived in poor and unstable households which consequently denied them access to schooling. These findings were consistent with Hunter and May (2003) who postulate that poorer and unstable households with fewer physical assets may consequently increase withdrawal and permanent dropout of children from schooling. This was likely to affect orphaned girl-child who depended on caregiver in such households. Al Samarai and Peasgood (1998) also claim that girls take on a heavier workload within domestic/ household setting. This responsibility, especially taking care of the younger siblings, had implications in their access and retention in schooling.

**Hypothesis Test on Socio-Cultural Effects of Orphanhood and its Influence on Girl-Child's Access and Retention in Secondary School Education**

To establish the socio-cultural effects of orphanhood and its influence on the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education, the following hypothesis was formulated:

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no statistically significant socio-cultural effect on orphanhood and the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education in Rongo District, Kenya.

The hypothesis testing on socio-cultural effects of orphanhood on the girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education used a chi- square test to analyze the data based on alpha 0.05 level of significance. One of the socio-cultural data tested included the effect of early pregnancies on orphaned girl – child and its influence in her access and retention in secondary school education. Table 7 presents the results of the chi-square test.

Table 7: Hypothesis Test on Socio-Cultural Effects of Orphanhood and its Influence on Girl-Child's Access and Retention in Secondary School Education

	Value	Df	Assymp. Sig
Computed chi-square	35.944	4	.000
Critical chi-square	9.188	4	.050

\* $P < 0.05$       chi-square = 35.944\*,     $df = 4$ ,       $N = 36$ ,       $P = .000$

The result of the test showed that socio-cultural Effects had statistically significant effect on the orphaned girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education,  $\alpha 0.05$  ( $P < 0.05$ ). From the result, the hypothesis was rejected. This was because in table 16 above the computed value of the chi-square were greater than the critical value of the chi-square. According to Mangal (2004), when the computed value of chi-square is greater than, or equal to the critical value of chi-square, then it is significant and consequently the null hypothesis is rejected. However, when the computed value of the chi-square is less than the critical value of the chi-square, then it is non-significant and consequently the null hypothesis is not rejected. For instance, Table 3 shows that early pregnancy, as one of the socio-cultural effects, was higher (58.2%) among the orphaned girl-child in secondary schools. It could therefore be inferred that socio cultural effects significantly encouraged the orphaned girl-child's drop out from school system; thus affecting their enrolment and retention. This agrees with USAID (2004) which claims that orphaned girl-children, because of their status and vulnerability are used as objects of sex, resulting into early pregnancies and early marriages

## V. CONCLUSION

Most of the respondents involved in the research indicated that there were several socio-cultural effects of orphanhood on girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education. This was found out to occur in the form of early marriages/ or forced marriages, girl-child's sexual abuse, early pregnancies, initiation rites and premarital sexual relationships among others.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study thus, had the following recommendation:

The results indicated that socio-cultural effects of orphanhood had a toll on girl-child's access and retention in secondary school education. The government should put in place quality interventions such as monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and increased community involvement in order to provide protection to the orphaned girl-child against these socio-cultural effects while at school, home and the community. Such orphaned girl-child needs protection against these cultural effects while at home, school and in the community.

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