ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PATHWAYS: PARTICIPATION OF GIRLS IN EDUCATION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KAJIADO COUNTY, KENYA

*Teresa Njue[1]
Corresponding author
Masai Technical Training Institute
P.O Box 125 – 01100 Kajiado - Kenya
Email: teresanjue2015@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

2015 deadline for achieving the Education For All (EFA) Goals of Education, revealed many countries were not on track to achieving the education targets rolled out in the Jomtien and reaffirmed in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. Today, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, is a roadmap to achieving the SDGs and ensuring that no one is left behind; especially girls and women. While the SDGs ensure prosperity for development for all, education has a multiplier effect on all other SDGs. The purpose of this study was to find out the participation of girls in education in Kajiado County. The study's objective was to find out: the extent to which a school facilities, safe and protective school environment and distance enhances the participation of girls in public primary schools in Kajiado County. A descriptive survey research design for data collection was used. Simple and purposive sampling techniques sampled the respondents. Collected data was analyzed using SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The research findings revealed that a safe and protective school environment is fundamental for the holistic participation of girls in education while advocating for an enabling environment for lifelong learning that empowers people especially girls to allow them make life choices and increase their chances of employability to improve their livelihoods. The study concluded retention of girls at primary school has to be improved significantly to enhance their transition to secondary school and meaningful participation in higher education and particularly in TVET courses. It recommended the construction of facilities, establishment of more schools, better learner friendly school environment and establishment of innovative and specialized programs that increase participation of girls and women in education. The research findings will be valuable to the government, education stakeholders and education policy makers to inform and provide a basis for special focus on Women and Girls participation in education while contributing to sustainable development in the 21st century that is characterized by industrial revolution.

Key words: Sustainable Development Goals, leaner friendly environment, participation, inclusive and equitable quality education

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Girls' participation in education has been a major battle in sub Saharan Africa. Majority of the countries in sub Saharan Africa have an average of 45% girls' retention rate compared to 78.9% in countries in Asia such as Japan (World Bank, 2010). UNICEF (2009) found out that Africa is still far much behind with regard to ensuring retention of girls in primary schools. Drop out of girls from school is noted as one of the contributing factors of poor retention in primary schools. Botswana however is a major example of a country that boasts of 85% retention rate of girls in primary schools compared to 34% in Somali, 39% in Congo and 56% in Nigeria (UNESCO, 2010). Kenya as a country still has major hurdles to ensure retention rate of girls is at par with that of boys (FAWE, 2009). In Kenya, the dropout phenomenon is reported to be significantly higher for females than for males. Of all the girls who enroll in standard one, only 34% completed standard eight as compared to 70% for boys. Other studies done in Kenya reveal that dropout occurs due to a number of reasons which varies from one region to another. With the introduction of FPE in 2003, school enrolment has increased but low completion and transition rates remain a problem, prompting the Government of Kenya to commit 100% transition from primary to secondary level.

1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Several studies on girls' education indicate, their retention and completion in public primary school remains low particularly in pastoralist areas. While socio-economic challenges and migratory trends are key areas of concern in education in Kajiado County, Kenya, information obtained from Education Office, depicts a general trend of pre-mature withdrawal of girls from primary schools leading to persistent gender disparities in education the education levels. The enrolment is declining as they moved up the ladder. This negatively impacts on the employability of girls and women. One of the factors that contribute to girls' poor participation in education is lack of a safe and protective school environment and distance from school (UNICEF 2009). The researcher intended to fill in this gap by carrying out the study looking at the a safe and protective school environment and including discussions into approaches to Alternative Learning approaches to promote the participation of girls in education.

1.2 GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of this study was to examine the extent to which a safe and protective school environment enhances the participation of girls in Education in Kajiado County, Kenya.

1.2.1 Specific objectives

1. To assess the influence of school facilities on participation of girls in education in public primary schools in Kaiiado County.
2. To establish the extent to which a safe and protective environment enhances participation of girls in education in public primary schools in Kajiado County.
3. To determine the effect of distance from home to school on participation of girls in education in public primary schools in Kajiado County.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Independent Variables   **Intervening variables**   **Dependent Variable**
 (Source: Author, 2019)
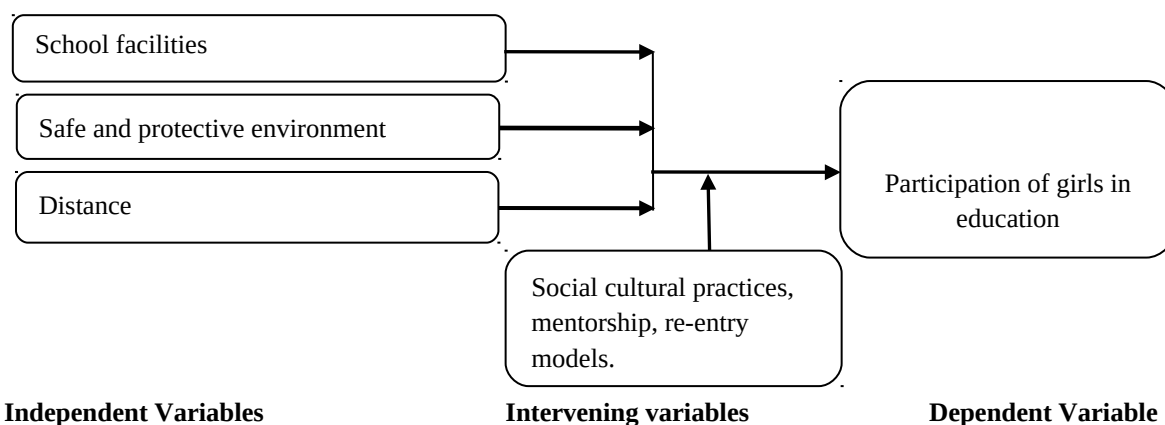
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A perspective of girl's school participation in education

Studies reveal that the richest and poorest countries share the problem of dropout and girls participation in education. In Kenya pastoralist communities are yet to enjoy the gains of free primary education. Education in pastoralist areas is threatened by climatic changes among other factors such as persistent drought and harsh climatic conditions (UN 2011). Such children in Kenya are likely to drop out of school especially where the conditions are not favourable. Inconsistent school attendance in these regions contribute to poor performance and eventually drop out. Dyer (2011) fears that provision of education in the nomadic setting is becoming more complex given that where the Government had introduced mobile schools, as alternative education programs had been suspended. However, stakeholders continue to explore Alternative Learning Pathways to mitigate education challenges in specific communities

2.2 Safe and protective School environment
A gender responsive school is one in which the academic, social and physical environment and its surrounding community take into account the specific needs of both girls and boys. The students, both girls and boys, are empowered to practice gender equality and to protect the democratic and human rights of both gender.

2.3 School Facilities
Since the introduction of the Kenyan Free Primary Education in 2003, the enrolment rate of students has tremendously grown leading to over enrolment and overstretched facilities. This increase in the number of pupils has not been matched by a proportional increase in the number of sanitation facilities. According to the Kenyan Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation, schools should adhere to a standard ratio of 1 toilet for 25 girls and 1 toilet for 30 boys (GoK, 2008). These ratios however remain unattained and currently, more than 60% of all schools in Kenya lack sufficient sanitation facilities.

2.4 Distance from School
Walking over long distances to and from school might lead to late coming at school and at home after school in evening. It was also explained that because of longer walking distance, fatigue and hunger lead students to drowsiness during learning. Girls expressed insecurities on their way to and from school including sexual abuse. In Kenyan rural districts, there are no roads and vehicles hence children have to walk for long distances through difficult terrain and dangerous environment which consequently affects their holistic participation and academic performance (Kimitei, 2010).

2.5 Child friendly schools
The main objectives of child friendly schools should be: to attract students; improve attendance rates; improve retention and completion rates; improve learning achievement; provide safe, inclusive, welcoming environments for all children; provide enabling learning environments including accommodating children with physical and mental/learning disabilities; build a sense of community within the school; involve parents and the community; cultivate harmony between the school and its community and harmonize buildings, school grounds and environment (UNICEF, 2009). This is echoed by ILO (2004) that child friendly schools increase girls' enrolment, improve their retention rate and enable them has an equal and quality education. A safe and protective school increases access, attendance, reduces truancy, enhances retention and completion, and enhances parents' and communities' confidence in investing in education (UNICEF, 2010).

2.6 Research Gaps
Concept of Alternative Learning Pathways remains unexploited jewel. Embracing Alternative Education Pathways is becoming inevitable if we hold to fulfil the commitment *for SDG 4* a 'post-2015 commitment to learning. Research indicates that alternative Learning programs are very effective in improving academic performance, developing academic goals, changing target behaviour, increasing attendance and serving 'at-risk' students (Hosley, 2003). These programs aim to provide opportunities for students to create, innovate and express their ideas and by linking vocational or technical training with entrepreneurship and community or corporate partnerships. Mainstreaming Alternative Learning Pathways in the parent education system remains a policy issue for Kenya. Discussions from the PCF9 Conference will give more insight into lobbying for policy framework.

2.6.1 Alternative Learning Pathways through TVET Programs
The emerging social and economic trends predicate the need for reforming the Technical and Vocational Training Systems in developing countries and Kenya in particular. This is in line with quest for industrialization as outlined in the Vision 2030 Blue print and reposition towards the call for Sustainable Development Goals agenda. Sessional paper NO. 1 of 2005 outlines the overall policy for TVET is to provide and promote life-long education and training

for self – reliance. This has been renewed in the call for mainstreaming of Competency Based Education Training in TVET institutions in Kenya. Basic vocational skills are crucial in improving a livelihood, increasing employability and contributing to a country's social economic development. However, 65% of the girls interviewed didn't show interest in TVET course, calling for vibrant sensitization.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed the use of descriptive survey research design. The study adopted both simple and purposive sampling techniques to sample its respondents. Questionnaires for pupils, education officers and interview schedules for head teachers and teachers were used for data collection.

3.0 FINDINGS

4.0.1 School Facilities

Figure 1: Whether Basic School Facilities are available in the School
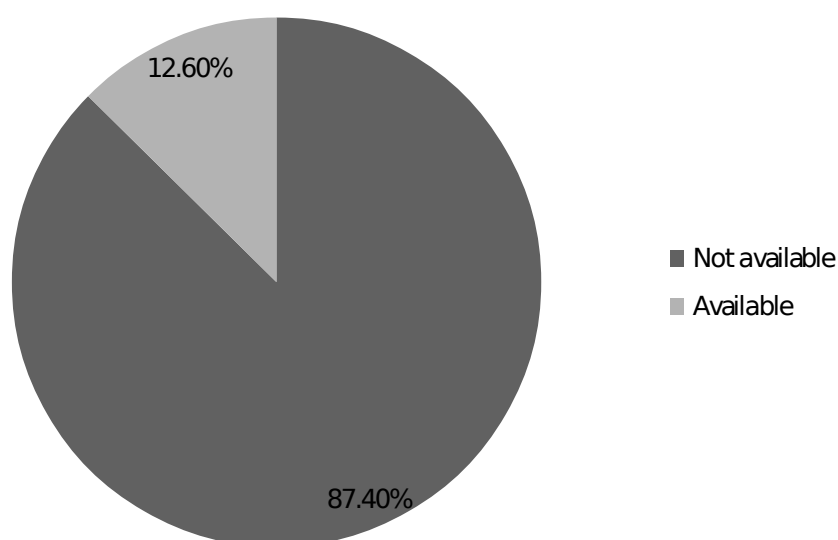
From the Figure 1, the results show that majority (87.4%) of the respondents reported that the basic amenities in the schools were not available. It is important to note that a few (12.6%) of the respondents said that the basic amenities were available in the schools.

Table 1: Adequacy and availability of basic school facilities

Basic facilities	Not available	Available but inadequate	Available and adequate	Mean score
Clean latrines	1	133	9	
	0.7%	93.0%	6.3%	2.05

Latrines with sanitary pads disposal facilities	132 90.2%	9 8.4%	1 1.4%	1
Sanitary pads	133 93.0%	11 7.0	0 0	1.07
Separate latrines for girls and boys.	36 25.2%	97 67.8%	10 7%	1.81
Boarding facilities for girls.	72 53.9%	70 43.3%	1 4.2%	1.51
Teachers houses	131 91.6%	10 7%	2 1.4%	1.94
Adequate class rooms	17 11.9%	124 86.7%	2 1.4%	1.90

The results in Table 1 show that a large number (94.3%) of the respondents reported that clean latrines were available but they were inadequate. Furthermore, 0.7% of the respondents said that the clean latrines were not available with very few (5%) of the respondents stating that their schools had adequate clean latrines. The researcher sought to find out whether the schools had adequate latrines with sanitary pad disposal facilities. The results in Table 4.1 indicate that most (90.2%) of the respondents reporetd that latrines with sanitary pad disposal facilities were not available in their schools. Some (8.4%) of the respondents said that their schools had latrines with sanitary pad disposal facilities but they were inadequate.

In an interview with on of the headteachers;
> *"There are only two toilets under one roof shared by girls and boys. The teachers share the other latrine. Just imagine in a school with a population of 190 pupilss and only 5 teachers. Isn't it risky? The pupils waste alot of time"*

Table 2: What need to be done to improve facilites in your school to enhance learning

Suggestion	Frequency	Percent
Improve security around the school	4	3.6
Build more classrooms	36	32.7
Build more toilets	11	10.0
Build dormitories	69	55.8
Improve access to water	23	20.9
Total	**143**	**100.0**

From the results in Table 4.2, most (20.9%) of the respondents proposed an improvement of access to water while (32.7%) of the respondents said that they needed more classrooms. A further 55.8% of the respondents pointed out need to build more dormitories while 10.0% of the respondents cited the need for more toilets.
This is depicted from one headteacher teacher who said;
> *"A low cost boarding school can improve the situation in this region. It would cater for girls from far places to not only provide a conducive environment but also a safe and protective place for them''.*

4.0.2 Safe and protective environment

Table 3: Whether environment in the school is important for the pupils

Response	Frequency	Percent
True	127	88.8
False	12	8.4

Dont know	4	2.8
Total	**141**	**100.0**

Table 4.3 shows that most (88.8%)of the respondents said that indeed the environment in which the school is based was important for the pupils. On the other hand, 8.4% of them said that the environment in which the school is based was not important for pupils while 2.4% of them said they did not know about this.

Figure 2: Unsafe environments for girls contribute greatly to high drop outs
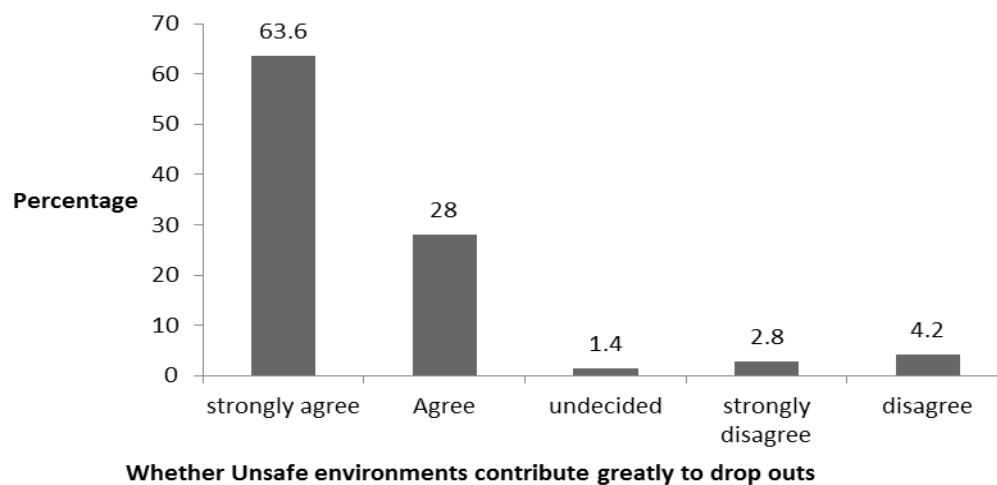

Figure 2 shows that majority (92.9%) of the respondents agreed with the fact that unsafe environments for girls contributed greatly to high drop outs, 5.6% of the respondents disagreed with that fact, while 1.4% of the respondents remained neutral on the fact that unsafe environments for girls contribute greatlty to high drop outs.

Figure 3: Whether the respondents had ever heard about case of harassment in their schools or neighbourhood
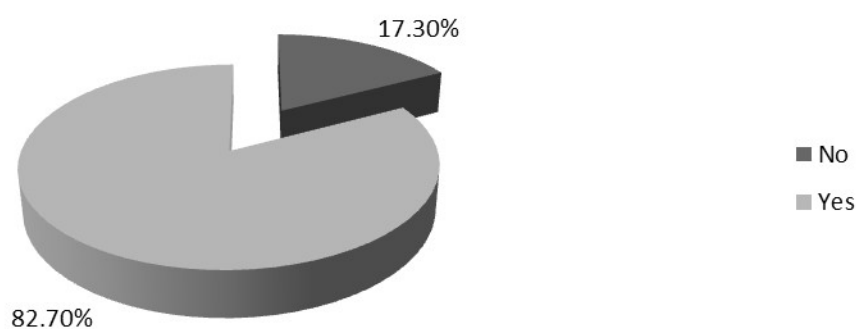

Figure 3 shows that most (82.7%) of the respondents reported that they had heard of cases of harassment in their school or neighbourhood, while 17.3% of the respondents said that they had never heard of cases of harassment in their schools or neighbourhood.

Table 4: Cases of harrasment in school or Neighborhood

Explanation	Frequency	Percent
Sexual harrassment/defilement in the neighbourhood	47	32.9
Girls beaten by brothers and father	2	1.4
Forced Female Genital Mutilation	41	28.7

Laughed at by boys when menses/blood stains clothes	8	5.5
Forced marriage of school girls	45	31.4
Total	**143**	**100.0**

Table 4, shows that the preference of harrasment among girls was (32.9%) sexual harrassment (31.4%) forced marriage and (28.7%) forced Female Genital Mutilation which were key factors hindering girls participation in education.

A headteacher from a mixed boarding primary school had this to say

> *"There are reported cases of harrassment in and out of school. They are usually physical, sexual or verbal. Girls feel withdrawn, suffer low esteem and perform poorly. Though as a headteacher i can intervene, sometimes its quite difficult as you hear of these cases too late. When you report them the community might turn against you. By the way gender violence in our community is a volcabularly. Most cases were not reported and only noticed when girls were expectant or forcly married."*

Figure 4: How the school environment can be improved to reduce drop out of girls
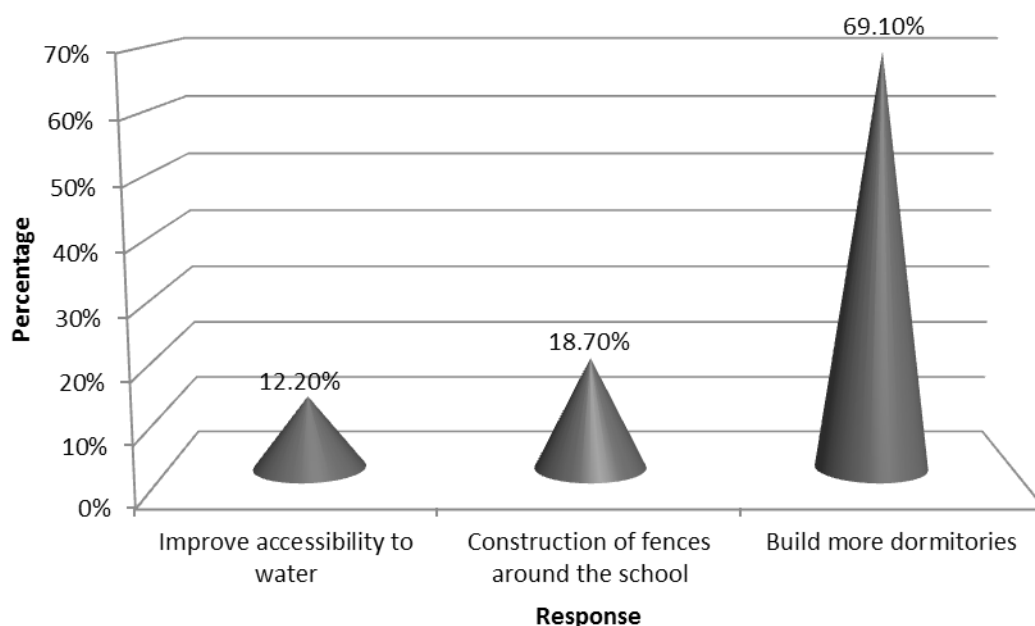

Figure 4 indicates that most (69.1%) of the respondents suggested the need to build more dormitories. In addition, 18.7% of the respondents proposed construction of fences around the school, while the rest (12.2%) of the respondents said that there was need to improve on the accessibility of water.

Table 5: Effect of safe and protective environment on girls' school attendance

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Strongly agree	Agree	Weighted mean
	Percent (n=13)					
Regular school attendance is interrupted when girls fear violence and abuse on their way to and from school.	2 / 15.4	0 / 0.0%	2 / 15.4	5 / 38.5	4 / 30.8	3.69
When girls are safe and protected in school, they can pursue their education o completion.	0 / 0.0%	0 / 0.0%	0 / 0.0%	10 / 76.9%	3 / 23.1%	4.20
A safe and protective school	2	0	0	10	1	

environment increases a girl's enrolment, retention and completion.	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	76.9%	7.7%	3.62
Lack of a clean environment may force girls to drop out	2	2	1	2	6	
	15.4%	15.4%	7.7%	15.4%	46.2%	3.62
Boarding schools are safe for girls than day schools	2	0	0	7	4	
	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	53.8%	30.8%	3.85

The results in Table 5 that respondents generally agreed with the all the statements on safe and protective environment as shown by the mean which is above three (3) in all cases. Particularly, 69.3% (by suming up strongly agree and agree percentages) agreed that regular school attendance is interrupted when girls fear violence and abuse on their way to and from school while 15.4 % disagreed and a further 15.4% remained neutral on this. All (100%) the respondents agreed that when girls are safe and protected in school, they can pursue their education to completion. On the statement that safe and protective school environment increases a girl's enrolment, retention and completion, majority (84.6%) of the respondents agreed with only a few (15.4%) disagreeing. Again, a further 61.6% agreed that lack of a clean environment may force girls to drop out while 30.8% disagreed with a further 7.7% remaining neutral on this. Similarly, on the statement that boarding schools are safe for girls than day schools, 84.6% of the respondents agreed while 15.4 % disagreed to this statement. An in-depth interview revealed that the girls who stayed in the boarding facilities during the holidays acquired basic vocational skills like pastry and cake making, domestic management, hairdressing and beauty, dress making and beadwork.

A beneficiary testified
'I don't regret staying here. Apart from my normal learning program, I can earn money when the schools reopen from making my friends hair. I look forward to staring my own business to help my family it is simple'.

4.0.3 Distance from home to school

**Table 6: Mode of transport used to get to school**

	Frequency	Percent
Foot	83	58
Matatu (Public transport)	6	4.2
Bodaboda (Motorcycle)	54	37.8
Total	**143**	**100.0**

From the results in Table 6 indicate that most 83 (58%) of the respondents reported that they use foot, while the (37.8 used *bodaboda* (motorcycle) and (4.2%) of the respondents said that they use matatu to get to school.

Figure 5: Long distance to school discourage girls from pursuing education
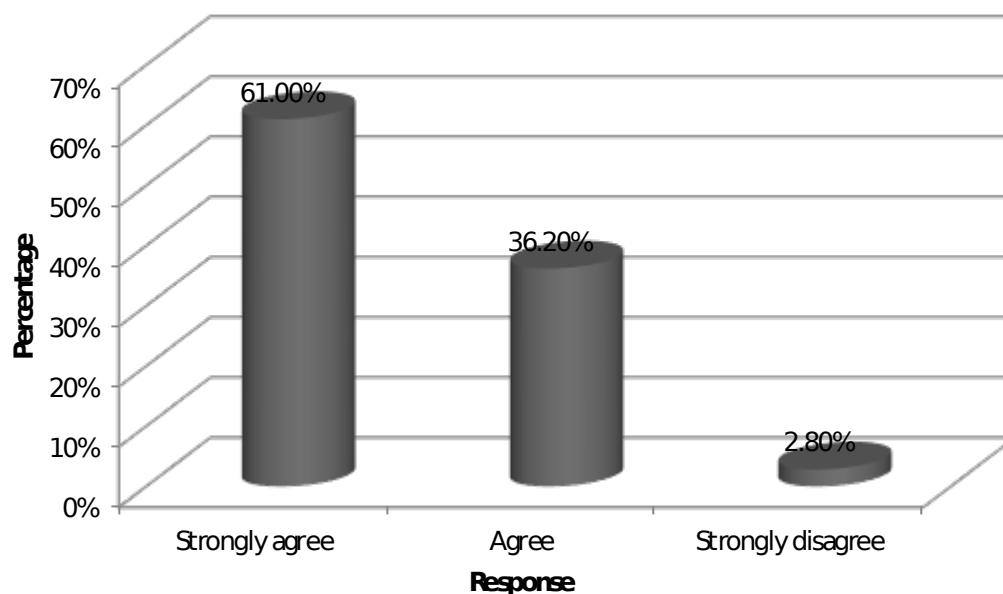
From the Figure 5, the results show that most (97.2%) of the respondents agreed that longer distance from home to school discourage girls from pursuing education and eventually drop out; but 2.8% of the respondents disagreed with this. Research points to distance to school being an important determinant of educational access. Walking for long distance have detrimental effects on the pupils. In an interview with one of the head teachers, he explained that;

> *"The pupils got to school as late as 9.00a.m. You cannot send the girl back home. This pupil is tired and cannot concentrate. It is unfortunate some colleagues will tend to punish such a pupil. In the evening, they got home late that they have no time to do their homework; bearing in mind the multiple chores that girls have to do. This contributes to poor academic performance, repetition of grade and low transition to secondary schools Like in the neighboring secondary school there are only 26 girls against over 300 boys."*

5.0 DISCUSSION

A learner friendly school environment characterized by a safe and protective school environment is fundamental for the holistic participation of girls in education. This calls for advocacy on an enabling environment for lifelong learning that empowers people especially girls. This will allow them make life choices and increase their chances of employability and improve their livelihoods through teaching, training and learning. A learner friendly school shall promote enrolment, access, retention and inclusive participation to all including girls.

An inclusive and right based approach to education ensures developing strategies to attract girls to school such as school infrastructure, basic school facilities, construction of low cost boarding schools to reduce the distance, ensure safety of girls, and proactively seeking out of school children and readmission. Among the factors hindering girls' participation in education included sexual harrassment, forced marriage and forced Female Genital Mutilation.

While girls were facing numerous challenges, there as little efforts towards alternative models and approaches to increase and sustain their participation in education. As such, Alternative Learning Pathways in Education, in all its permutations and combinations is a vital complement to mainstream education system that would manifest benefits to local communities, the broader society and more so, sustainable development.

Basic vocational or technical training skills demonstrated a reliable alternative pathway and capacity to engender entrepreneurship and basic skills for a diverse population including girls and young women, thus increasing their employability levels.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Alternative Learning Programs met the expectations of diverse students in the endeavor to fulfil the 2030 SDG Agenda and 2063 transformative agenda '*leave no one behind*'. This forms a solid foundation for re-engaging school dropouts especially girls with emotional and behavioral disorders or as a result of socio economic and cultural barrier that derail the gains of education among such communities.

Enhancing innovative models such as community engagement/participation and partnership, integrating technology in learning and strengthening Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) programs such as Competency based Education Training (CBET) short courses for out of school girls and women to increased girls' participation in education.

It recommended the construction of facilities, establishment of more schools, better learner friendly school environment and establishment of innovative and specialized programs that increase participation of girls and women in education.

REFERENCES
Dakar Framework for Action. (2000). Retrieved June 2nd 2019 from http://unescodoc.unesco.org/images.
Dyer, C. (2002). *Management challenges in Achieving Education For All.* London. Arnold.
………. (2011). *Education for pastoralists.* Retrieved from www.standard.co.ke on 8th April, 2018.
EFA Summary Report, (2010). *Reaching the Marginalized.* London: UNESCO.
FAWE News, (2006). *Closing the Gender Gap in Education Curbing Drop out;* Nairobi.

…………(2004). *Review of National Education Policies and plans for Scaling up Good practices in Girls Education.* Nairobi: FAWE.

ILO, (2004). *Child friendly schools.* Retrieved March 7th 2019 From http://www.ilo.org/public English/region/agro/ Bangkok/apec/download/unesco girls.pdf.

Kimitei, W. J. (2010). *Determinants of transition rate to secondary education among primary school girls in Kenya: A case of Keiyo District.* Unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya.

Ministry of Education, (2003). *Draft Policy on Gender and Education. A Ministry of Education Report.* Nairobi: Government Printers.

Rotich, E. K. (2010). *Challenges Facing Access to Secondary School Education in Arid and Semi-Arid Areas. A Case of Tunyo Division, Marakwet District, Kenya.* Unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, Eldoret: Moi University, Kenya.

Singh, P. (2013). Entrepreneurship and linkage between vocational education, management education, and entrepreneurship. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management, 2*, 46–55.

Smith, A., & Thomson, M. M. (2014). Alternative education programmes: Synthesis and psychological perspectives. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 30*, 111–119. doi:10.1080/02667363.2014.891101.

Tissington, L.D. (2006). History: Our Hope for the Future. *Preventing school failure: Alternative education for children and youth, 51*, 19–25.10.3200/PSFL.51.1.19-25.

Tobin, T., & Sprague, J. (2000). Alternative education strategies reducing violence in school and the community. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 8*, 177–186.

UNESCO (2006). *Challenges of Implementing Free Primary Education in Kenya.* Retrieved August 6th. from:unescodoc.unesco.org/pdf.

UNESCO (2010). *Education in Kenya* Retrieved *April* 12th from http://stats.uis.unesco.org//unesco/document.

UNICEF (2009). *Child friendly schools.* Retrieved on March 8th from www.unicef.org.

Uwezo Kenya (2010). *Are our Children Learning? Annual Language Assessment Kenya 2010.* Retrieved on 6th June from: http://uwezo.net/uploads/files/introduction.

………………(2011). *ALA Report,* Kajiado County. Uwezo Kenya.

Wilkins, J. (2014). Re-engaging school dropouts with emotional and behavioral disorders.