

**CONTRIBUTION OF FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND THE  
GOVERNMENT OF KENYA IN ADDRESSING GENDER DISPARITY IN  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL POKOT SUB COUNTY, KENYA**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL  
SCIENCES, DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND  
THEOLOGY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN RELIGION**

**MOI UNIVERSITY**

**2023**

**DECLARATION**

**Declaration by Student**

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**DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my husband and children.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to thank my supervisors Prof. Emily Choge-Kerama, Dr. Simon Gisege Omare for their support and advice that led to the writing and completion of this thesis.

I also thank Moi University for offering me a partial scholarship.

I pay gratitude and tribute to my late father Joel Maritim and mother Monica Bitok who inspired me to move ahead and have contributed immensely to my education. Thanks to my dear husband Abraham Kutto and our children Doxa, Agatha, Charis, Meliza and Belinda for their unconditional support during the entire period of study. Above all, I owe thanks to God for His sufficient grace, mercies and goodness.

## ABSTRACT

Gender disparity with regard to retention and completion of schooling continues to be a challenging issue to education of the girl-child in marginalized communities such as the Pokot whose literacy level stands at a lower rate (23% against the national indicator which is 43% KBS from 2013 government of Kenya (GoK)report). The Kenyan government has made strides in expanding educational opportunities through free primary education since the year 2002, yet the retention of girls in primary schools continues to be low, a factor necessitating inclusion of other stakeholders such as Faith Based Organizations (FBO). Apart from the Kenyan constitution, FBOs maintain that all humans are equal regardless of their gender. The purpose of this study was to establish the role of FBOs and GoK in addressing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot sub-county, Kenya. The specific objectives of this study were: to investigate factors leading to gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County, to find out how FBOs and GoK contribute to minimization of gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County and to explore challenges facing the GoK and FBOs in addressing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County. This study was guided by the cultural adaptation and Feminist education theories to determine factors leading to gender disparity. This is a qualitative study that adopted the exploratory research design which was cross-sectional in nature. Primary data was collected from 25 respondents from Central Pokot Sub County who were purposefully sampled for interviews and focus group discussions. Secondary data was derived from books, journals and archives. Collected data was analyzed qualitatively using narrative and thematic analysis. The study found out that socio-cultural and socio-economic issues such as nomadic pastoralism contribute to gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County; FBOs and the GoK have attempted to address the issue of gender disparity on girl child through a number of programs and there are challenges facing FBOs and GoK in their attempt to minimise gender disparity on girl child in primary schools such as insufficient funds. The study concludes that FBOs and the GoK have a role in minimizing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot sub-county, Kenya. The study recommends that, in order to minimise factors leading to gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County we should introduce alternative rites of passage. It also recommends that more funds should be allocated to FBOs and the GoK to support programs intended to minimize gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County. Lastly, it recommends that challenges facing the FBOs and the GoK in addressing gender disparity in Central Pokot Sub County can be minimized through implementing anti-discrimination policies.

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## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Church	A group of people who worship God and belief in Jesus Christ as the Messiah.
Enculturation:	The process of harmonization and dialogue between given culture and Christian faith to allow certain cultural values or practices to the Faith Based Organizations, it is a move by the two parties towards assimilation
Faith Based Organization	An organization whose values are grounded on beliefs.
Gender discrimination:	Unequal treatment of individuals based on their gender.
Gender disparity	The difference between the male and female in terms of ratio and representation in a particular locality or situation.
Gender equality	Equal treatment of males and females.
Gender equity:	The practice of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits, access to and control of resources, responsibilities, power, opportunities and services. It is essentially the elimination of all forms of discrimination based on gender.
Gender sensitization:	The process of developing people's awareness, knowledge and skills on gender issues.
Gender stereotyping:	The assigning of roles, tasks and responsibilities of men and women, boys and girls on the basis of preconceived prejudices.

Gender:	The socially determined power relations for male and female.
Girl child	Refers to the female child
Primary education	A stage of formal education after preschool/kindergarten and before secondary school.
Retention rates	Number of students that remain to complete a given academic programme or remain to continue with school.

**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

A.I.D.S	Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome
AMPATH	Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare
AMREF	African Medical and Research Foundation
ASALs	Arid and Semi-arid Lands
C.B. O	Community Based Organization
F.B. O	Faith Based Organizations
F.G. D	Focused Group Discussions
F.G.M	Female Genital Mutilation
F.P.E	Free Primary Education
GoK	Government of Kenya
H.I. V	Human Immune Virus
HELB	Higher Education Loans Board
KDHS	Kenya Demographic Health Survey
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
N.G.O.'s	Non-Governmental Organizations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
W.H. O	World Health Organization
WFP	World Food Program
WVK	World Vision of Kenya

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter explains the background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, and research questions, significance of the study, limitations and definition of terms.

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The United Nations (UN) 2015 Sustainable Development Goal 4, also known as "Quality Education" aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for people of all ages by 2030. It highlights the importance of providing access to education, improving the quality of education and promoting lifelong learning as essential components for sustainable development. The United Nations has been actively involved in attempts to promote gender equity through various conventions Beijing Declaration and Platform for action and initiatives such as Capacity building, support, research, campaigns, advocacy and nonviolence policies. Despite all the foregoing, gender disparity persists throughout the world.

The African Union recognizes the importance of addressing gender disparity and promoting gender equity across Africa. It has undertaken various initiatives to address the problem of gender disparity such as establishing an Africa Union Commission Gender Directorate, the solemn declaration of Gender Equality in Africa (2004), African Women's Decade (2010-2020), the Maputo Protocol (2003) among others. Despite the key resolutions and initiatives made in the series of conventions targeting gender equity, the problem still persists more especially Arid and Semi-arid lands.

The government of Kenya has implemented various strategies to promote gender equity through government policies, campaigns and implementation of the constitution.

Currently, in Kenya, the right to universal access to education is guaranteed in Article 28 of the 2010 Kenya`s constitution as a potential tool for the empowerment of women and girls. However, marginalized communities of Kenya have challenges which have kept girls out of school despite education parity being part of the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (Luca, 2012). The situation has remained the same despite the long history of formal education in Kenya since its introduction by missionaries in the 19th century (Sohoni, 2011).

Missionaries are credited for their contribution to education in the North Rift region of Kenya Turkana, and some parts of West Pokot (Kimosop, Otiso & Ye, 2015). Initially, indigenous Kenyans received the services of the missionaries with mixed reactions, some readily accepted them, while others rejected them. By 2016, we had 503 primary schools with 156,272 students and 3005 teachers in West Pokot (Chebitwey, 2016). The county has 58 secondary schools with 15,550 students and eleven tertiary institutions. As of 2022, the county had a student-teacher ratio of 1:5.

The 2010 constitution of Kenya advocates for equal access to education and representation among all gender groups (Ombati, 2012). In response to the foregoing, the Ministry of Education has strive to promote gender equality in schooling through various education policies such as lowering the entry mark for females to join universities and colleges. However, despite the government`s effort to encourage local communities to embrace education, the level of illiteracy stands at 67% in West Pokot County (Chai, 2019). The foregoing means that boys have more access to education opportunities compared to girls in the county. It reveals a need to seek ways of increasing gender parity in Central Pokot Sub County.



As a response to addressing gender disparity, the county government is investing a substantial budget in education, to create awareness on the need for equal access to education regardless of gender (Chebitwey, 2016). Further, the foregoing initiative is supported by FBOs, non-government organizations (NGOs) that have made several strides in Central Pokot Sub-County to promote equal access to education alongside the GoK. Since primary schools are the foundation of education, this study entails tracing their contribution towards addressing gender disparity among pupils in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County. This study identifies three knowledge gaps on factors that lead to gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County, contributions of the FBO and the GoK in minimizing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County and challenges facing the Kenyan government and FBO in addressing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The 2020 UN report on education policy maintains that education is a fundamental human right that is key to individual, social and national development. Chapter four of the 2010 Kenyan constitution stipulates that, all children have a right to equal opportunities in access to basic education regardless of their gender. The literacy levels in marginalized communities such as the Turkana, Pokot, Maasai, Rendille, Pokomo and others stands at a rate of (23%) against the national indicator of 43%. Further, gender representation in schooling in these areas stands at 18% against a national indicator of 34% (KNBS, 2010) hence disadvantaging the girl child. This means that there is problem in Central Pokot Sub County in terms of retention and completion of primary education among girls yet the FBOs and non-governmental organizations have teamed up with the government on a number of initiatives. As a control measure of gender disparity, the GoK has enacted several legislative measures and policies to

forbid gender discrimination such as National Gender and Development Policy (2007), free primary education policy (FPEP)(2003), the 2/3rd Gender Rule and the Education Sector Gender Policy. Consequently, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) have undertaken the review of the Gender in Education Policy (2007), to incorporate emerging issues that have implications on gender equity and equality in the education sector. One wonders, if we have these wonderful initiatives, why is it that the rate of gender disparity is higher in marginalized areas compared to non-marginalized areas? This study sets out to answer the foregoing questions by finding out how the GoK, NGOs and the FBOs have encountered gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County. Specifically, it sought to answer questions on; what factors have led to gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County? How have FBOs and the GoK contributed to minimizing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County? What challenges are facing the government of Kenya and FBOs in curbing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to examine the role of the government of Kenya and FBOs in addressing gender disparity in Primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County, Kenya.

The specific objectives of this study were:

- a) To investigate factors that lead to gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County.
- b) To assess the contribution of the FBOs and the GoK in addressing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County.

- c) To explore challenges facing the FBOs and the GoK in addressing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

- a) What factors have led to gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County?
- b) How have FBOs and the government of Kenya contributed to minimizing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County?
- c) What challenges are facing the FBOs and the GoK in addressing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Denying equal access of education opportunities to the girl child is likely to hurt the future generations since, women are key pillars to families in terms of provision of basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing. Educating a woman is likened to educating the whole family and better standards of living. Gender disparity denies girls the potential to be instruments of positive societal change. Therefore, educating a girl child in Kenya is the easiest way of achieving the sustainable development goals. This study seeks to unveil ways in which we can curb gender disparity with an aim of promoting equity in access to education opportunities with an overall picture of promoting social development in agreement with goals of vision 2030.

It is hoped that findings from this study will help the overall society in seeking for answers to researches geared at promoting more education opportunities for women hence the overall benefit of reduction of poverty, improved healthcare, reduced violence against women and social economic stability of the society through women.

Marginalized societies are likely to benefit from this study on the social wellbeing of the girl child. It is hoped that the research findings will influence scholarly research, theory and practice on gender equity in elementary education. In general the study is geared to promote the SDGs and the targets related to gender equality and education universally.

## **1.6 Literature Review**

This section deals with a review of literature that focuses on gender disparity in education. The section is structured under three major themes: factors that lead to gender disparity in education; the contribution of FBOs and the GoK to minimizing gender disparity in education and challenges facing governments and FBOs in addressing gender disparity. The section unveiled that gender-related issues continue to adversely affect the lives of millions of people globally.

### **1.6.1 Gender Disparity in Education**

Gender is defined as the socially constructed power relationships between men and women. According to Barasa (2014), structural relationships of inequalities between men and women are reflected in the roles and responsibilities, they play and the different values they place on the work they do. In the late 1970s, the term "gender" became popular as a term for equity. According to Chai (2019), gender refers to the qualitative and interdependent nature of men's and women's positions in society. The perspective of gender awareness did not emerge until the 1980s, when a set of common concerns regarding women's exclusion from the productive sector were presented. The worry was that ladies were overlooked and rejected from advancement projects and this prompted the disappointment of the improvement interaction (Bamora, 2010). It was abundantly clear that development efforts and "male made world" initiatives did not

include women. According to Brady (2021), a number of academics began to examine the oppressive situation faced by women as a result of traditional societies marked by authoritarianism and male dominance. This means that both men and women should be educated about gender issues and how they affect their lives in order to achieve sustainable development. In order to attain sustainable development, concerns about gender discrimination must be incorporated into the development process (Dubel, 2018).

Gender disparity refers to the difference between the male and female gender in terms of ratio and representation in a particular locality or situation. Gender related issues are universal in almost all the countries of the world. The gender gap in education lies in a complex of cultural and economic factors that are derived from home and community at large. Ruether (2006) points out that patriarchy is a manufactured social system by which the fathers, the ruling class, and males have used power to establish themselves in a position of domination over women and society education. The main obstacles to the advancement of women's education and training in Africa include gender discrimination, entrenched gender stereotypes, and unfavourable societal attitudes regarding girls' education (UNESCO, 2011).

In order to attain sustainable development, legislation and policy making should be fair to everyone (Behera, 2006). Society should be made to understand that women have the same rights, responsibilities, opportunities, and benefits as men do, and that they should be treated in the same way. According to Fletcher (2017) of gender studies this would enable women to compete on an equal footing with men. Women, particularly those who live in rural areas, have not been made aware of this. They actually practise their customs and are further not mindful of their freedoms as ladies. They have never

been able to compete with men on an equal basis because the majority of them have always been limited to household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, getting water, firewood, and taking care of the elderly and sick. Such a perception has affected the exposure of the girl-child to education opportunities compared to their male counterparts.

Both men and women should be aware that they cannot ignore their multiple gender identities. However, gender involvement in development is encouraged, and the use of sexual differentiation for classification is discouraged. This means that the roles that are assigned to men and women ought to be determined by gender rather than sex. Additionally, they ought to be aware of the existing structural disparities (Isika, 2012). The foregoing can be attained through evaluation of policy design, decision-making, resource access, procedures, practices, methodology, implementation, monitoring, and exposure of both boys and girls to equal education opportunities.

Gender mainstreaming emphasizes the importance of implementing appropriate gender planning measures to guarantee equal outcomes and conditions for men and women. According to Ombuya (2017) this pertains to the family, domestic life, and the organization of both the political and economic spheres. Women should be given more agency so that they are seen as active agents rather than as passive recipients of development. Women's participation is regarded as the approach's most crucial component. Psaki (2016) maintains that women's inequality is caused by the fact that they are not included in the development management structures, which prevents them from gaining access to resources which always come after formal education. Therefore, apart from legislation cultural matters must be analyzed to seek for ways in which

gender equity with regard to education can be promoted; a purpose which this study entailed at finding out.

Gender inequalities in education have an impact on Kenya's development. Although there are a number of other indicators of development, economists typically focus on per-capita income as the primary indicator of economic development. Education typically has a positive coefficient and is regarded as one important component of human capital in mainstream economic theory (Talle, 2016). This means that lower male or female instructive levels convert into lower human resources. Therefore, in theory, female education has a direct correlation with income (or growth). Beyond this direct effect, there are solid arguments in favour of additional beneficial influences, such as female education and economic development. These include the effect on fertility rates, the health and education of the child, and the mother's health. In general, empirical data have confirmed the existence of these indirect effects. Women with higher levels of education are more knowledgeable mothers, which may help reduce infant mortality and malnutrition.

Gender inequality in education as a factor in income or growth (national development) has been the subject of several empirical studies. This implies that gender inequality in education has a negative impact on income or economic growth. In support for the foregoing, Swawn (1988) demonstrates that gender inequality has a direct negative effect on countries since decreasing human capital influences a country's level of investment and population growth.

Sohoni (2011) studied the relationship between growth in per ca-pita GDP and gender inequality in primary education in the base year using data for about 87 countries. She found out that increasing the ratio of female to male primary education leads to higher

economic growth. In a similar way, Simatwa (2002), employed a neon-classical growth model and cross-sectional data from a large number of countries (approximately 72), and unveiled that, male education has no clear effect while female education does. According to these studies, gender disparities in education do, in fact, influence a nation's development, and Kenya is not an exception; a factor that necessitated this study.

Further, an assumption is made that women are key stakeholders towards Kenya's development through formal education. Through formal education, Kenya's economy is projected to improve hence a higher economic growth rate. In order to achieve the foregoing, education of the girl-child should be promoted. The study revealed that in Pokot, access to education is biased towards boys. The study opines that the foregoing should be changed since gender parity – in terms of the relative “stocks” of education held by men and women in the population – affects growth prospects independently of their absolute levels (Shultz, 2014), and increasing the education levels of girls will have a favourable impact on economic growth, particularly for Kenya due to its lower income levels.

In addition, a postulation is made that female education has a positive influence on levels of agricultural productivity. Seemingly, education institutions should play a significant role in the democratic process in Kenya by providing women and men with the opportunity, knowledge, and commitment to influence society's nature and direction. This study maintains that, without education, individuals cannot fully participate in society or develop to their full potential. The study asserts that girls' inability to participate in school negatively impacts their sense of autonomy and limits their participation in civic and political life (Shisanya, 2018). Notably, the shift in



household behaviour and practice that are brought about as a result of society investing more in the education of girls and women are a very important consequence. Shisanya further unveils that a mother's level of education is associated with her children's improved nutrition than the father's, a factor that came up in Pokot during focus group discussions. Therefore; mothers are key when it comes to children's birth weight, mortality, nutrition, morbidity, early school entry, and persistence in school.

Prioritizing the education of girls a more effective strategy for ensuring its long-term viability when the current generation of school-age children will have children of their own (Shultz, 2014). The foregoing is possible because an assumption is made that the level of female parents' education increases the likelihood that both sexes' children will attend school. Consequently, Shultz links education to decreased birth rate in Africa that positively affects the economy of the society hence increase in per capita income. Some estimates suggest that this demographic effect of declining birth rate was responsible for up to 2 percentage points of annual per capita income growth in East and South-East Asian countries.

All of the foregoing benefits indicate that society loses when women have less access to education than men do. Equal opportunity in terms of school enrolment may positively influence Kenya's development process.

### **1.6.2 Impact of Gender Discrimination on Formal Education**

In some areas, gender roles restrict boys' educational opportunities, requiring them to work rather than attend school. Boys often have more financial responsibilities as they get older, making it hard for them to finish schooling in some areas. However, when it comes to pursuing education, girls are frequently the targets of gender discrimination in many parts of the world. For instance, many African girls attend school for only five

years. This means that nearly 33 million girls between the ages of 6 and 15 in the sub-Saharan region do not attend school. According to UNICEF (2010), 56% of them never enter any classroom, compared to 41% of boys who are not enrolled in school. Additionally, poor rural girls with uneducated mothers are the most likely to miss out on educational opportunities. More than 40% of secondary school-aged girls in West and Central Africa do not attend school. Women account for more than 60% of the world's illiterate youth (UNICEF, 2010). Gender parity and the realization of the human right to education are linked in a variety of ways. A striking example of gender discrimination is the widespread denial of women's and girls' human right to education, as demonstrated by the fact that two thirds of adults worldwide lack literacy skills.

According to Luca (2012), education is expected to be liberating and trans-formative. In the developing world, discrimination against girls and women is a devastating reality, Kenya included as it leads to millions of individual tragedies that result in the loss of the potential for nations. The foregoing is begged on the assumption that a nation's social and economic progress is directly correlated with its attitude toward women. Consequently, the entire society is likely to suffer when one component fails- the education of the girl child (Linda, 2014).

During this research, it was revealed that most people in Pokot emphasize on the education of the boy-child with an assumption that he will get a job and help in maintaining bills and inherit his father's property but see daughters as just "expenses" to them. For Example, in some parts of India, it is customary to announce, "The servant of your household has been born," when announcing the birth of a girl, a situation portraying their perceived less value for girls. The foregoing prevents girls from realizing their full potential, a condition that exposes them to severe emotional and

physical harm. According to USAID (2016), the declared “servants of the household” eventually come to accept that life will never be the same again. Seemingly, education is an instrument that can assist in breaking the pattern of gender discrimination and bringing about long-term change for women in developing nations. To end gender bias, educated women have a potential of reducing poverty in developing nations by getting better-paying jobs. An assumption is that, women who have completed education are more likely to marry later, to survive childbirth, to have fewer children who are healthier, and to ensure that their own children complete school. Additionally, they are more likely to visit health care facilities to prevent disease and have a better understanding of nutrition and hygiene. According to UN estimates, a woman’s risk of having a premature child is reduced by 8% for every year she spends in primary school.

Child marriage is most prevalent in the world’s poorest nations, where it frequently affects the poorest households. It is closely associated with low economic development and poverty. Child marriage is frequently viewed as a means of providing for their daughter’s future in low-income families. However, young brides are more likely to become and remain poor. Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia, the two of the world’s poorest regions, have a high rate of child marriage. According to UNESCO 2015 report, putting an end to child marriage may aid in the development and reduction of poverty in developing nations. A significant threat to a child’s well-being is early marriage. The most fundamental rights of a child bride—to survive and develop—are undermined by the practice, which affects both boys and girls. She has little to no control over her sexuality or the number, timing, and spacing of her children.

According to UNESCO (2005), the only way to end such violations of rights is to advance gender equality within and outside of marriage. Their educational

opportunities are significantly hindered by early marriage; it puts their reproductive health at risk; adolescent girls are physically, mentally, and emotionally unprepared for childbirth, making it extremely risky for both mother and child. In every region, girls who receive less education are more likely to marry at a younger age (UNICEF, 2001) hence violating their right to education. This is because early marriage cuts off their opportunities for personal development.

Talle (2016) adds that the widespread practice of child marriage makes it increasingly difficult for families in the developing world to escape poverty. As a result, crucial international efforts to combat poverty, HIV/AIDS and other development challenges are undermined, and billions of dollars in development assistance are rendered less effective. The foregoing is because they frequently aid in determining which children attend school and how long they do so, parental attitudes toward education are a significant factor. Parents' attitudes are a reflection of society as a whole and are deeply ingrained in cultural norms and values. When it comes to a child's attendance at school and academic performance, a child's positive attitude toward education is crucial.

According to Otiato (2016), lack of basic teaching materials such as textbooks, blackboards, and pens and paper results in many children who do attend school receiving an inadequate education. Inability to pay for school fees, as well as the costs of uniforms, shoes, transportation, and stationary, as well as the opportunity costs of what children might be contributing to household labour, saps scarce resources and prevents children from attending school. Parents will likely prioritise boys over girls if all of their children are unable to attend schooling (Ombati, 2012).

Efeybera *et al* (2017) in their article 'Girl child marriage as a risk factor for early childhood development and Stunting' argue that gender inequality in education is a

persistent problem within Indian society particularly for girls belonging to economically weaker sections of the society. Just like India, the Kenyan government manifests inequalities in various dimensions of society, such as education, health, employment and leadership. As much as the Kenyan government has struggled against the foregoing, it seems that the role of government policy in addressing gender gaps in education seems to stop at formulation stage (Shultz, 2014). The preceding reality can be attributed to improper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In his study on gender inequality in access to education in Ghana, Bamora (2010) found that girls' education is influenced by practices associated with adolescents and the rights of passage, which related to the construction of sexuality of young boys and girls. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is identified as harmful to the well-being of women and girls and contributed to low enrolment of girls in education.

In his book, *Contemporary Problems of Education*, Sharma (2016) observes that, in the early 1980s, Indian women faced some challenges in education. He noted that the girl child was discriminated against in rural areas in India due to illiteracy, backwardness and traditional outlook. To Indians, the birth of girls was supposedly a curse, a burden and a liability, while giving birth to a boy was a joy to society. Just like India, this study revealed that the people of Central Pokot Sub County do not believe in providing formal education for girls, but seem to think of the gains in terms of early marriages for the girls. It seems the Pokot community fails to realize the place of girls and their importance in the economic, social and political fields restricting them to household affairs only.

Nherera (2019) contends in his book, *Capacity Building Research in S. Africa* that, culture has a considerable role in structuring and reproducing gender stereotyping

which in turn directly affects the education of the girl-child. This is done particularly through branding of boys and girls by parents, girls are oriented into motherhood and boys into fatherhood through the culturally stipulated regulations which are rigid and not flexible. Similar sentiments are echoed by Psacharopoulos & Woodhall (2015) that, in most African communities, it is ironic that mothers favour the education of male children because they provide 'old age' insurance. In his research, Mwangi (2012) notes that parents invest in schooling of boys who are believed to remain and provide 'continuity of their roles and responsibilities'. In her book *The Teens of Childhood. A Global Inquiry the Status of Girls* Sohoni (2011) also realizes that, in most African communities, the boy child is presumed by their parents as a social security and a provider of 'pension' in old age.

Despite advancements in legislation and policy throughout time, women are still underrepresented in Kenya's higher education sector. The school sector's inability to recognize and nurture women's brilliance limits their capacity to make significant contributions to society as a whole. According to Akmal (2020), Kenya's constitution provides every person the right to an education regardless of gender, sex, or socioeconomic class.

While much progress has been made in Kenya to address gender imbalance in education and development, girls remain woefully outnumbered in schools (Ombati, 2012). A recent report compiled by the county government of West Pokot (2018-2022) revealed that many girls drop out of school for reasons such as negative cultural values and practices that foster teenage pregnancy, early marriage, excessive domestic chores and the disregard of the importance of girls' education. This shows that gender inequality

permeates all levels of learning thus girls drop out of school automatically as victims of poverty, insecure environment and long-distance walk to school.

In light of Kenya's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) concerning universal primary education, gender disparity arises from sociocultural institutions that prevent the retention of girls in primary education (Mwangi, 2012). Despite the introduction of free primary education, retention and completion of primary education still remains a dream to many Kenyan girl children. Shultz (2014) observes that, as girls advance in age, obstacles that reduce their chances of completing the primary cycle increase, doubling their being disadvantaged in education.

Shisanya (2018) points out that, among the Abaluhya of Western Kenya, patriarchal structures relegated women to an inferior status in political, social, intellectual and economic spheres. She further notes that women's value among Abaluhya is mostly seen in terms of the bride wealth. It seems from the foregoing that women's value is reduced to a mere materialistic plane. She further alleges that many young Abaluhya girls drop out of schools since most parents perceive their education as a luxury. In addition, Shisanya notes that a report conducted by an education task force in western Kenya observed that several factors have led to the disparity among them include; lack of equity in distribution of resources, high cost of secondary education, retrogressive cultural practices, divisive politics and poor dialogue between education officers and teachers. The report further indicated that, at the primary school level, the number of girls exceed that of boy factor attributed to child labour among boys and the lure of boys to the *boda* business. During primary school education, most parents prefer to send boys to school than girls who then end up in early marriages (Mwangi, 2012).

Free primary education in Kenya has had a positive impact on enrolment, retention and completion, enrolment currently stands at 89% and transition to secondary schools stands at 66%. However, education continues to experience several challenges such as overstretched facilities, overcrowding, low teacher-pupil ratio, retrogressive cultures, nomadic lifestyle and inaccessibility of education facilities. A UNESCO statistical report (2011) points out that variation in cultural practices explains a good part of the variation in gender inequality in education meaning achievement of equal enrolment ratios does not necessarily mean the balance of disadvantage against the schooling of girls is removed. There could be other entrenched discriminatory factors where families might be using their children as a source of labour meaning if the girls go to school the benefits of labour will be a lost opportunity for the family. Therefore, it was vital to investigate, explore programs and measures that are focused upon making provision of equal opportunities and rights to girls, not only within the course of acquisition of education, but also in the implementation of other job duties. It was found out that the FBOs are in the forefront to address matters concerning gender disparity in primary education.

### **1.6.3 Factors Promoting Gender Disparity on girl child in primary education**

Gender disparity refers to unequal treatment and opportunities based on gender. Despite progress made in gender equality over the past century, several factors promote gender inequality in different areas of life (UNESCO, 2017). They include cultural, social, economic, and political aspects that can affect education, employment, health, and social status.

One significant factor promoting gender disparity is cultural and social norms that influence gender roles. From a young age, individuals are taught to conform to specific



gender stereotypes, reinforcing them through media, advertising, and social interactions (Eagly, 2012). These stereotypes value certain traits over others based on gender, leading to discrimination against women, especially in education and employment.

Limited access to education and resources for women is another factor promoting gender disparity. UNESCO reports significant gender gaps in education worldwide, with millions of girls out of school in 2016. This lack of access to education limits women's opportunities and perpetuates gender inequality since education is vital in achieving economic independence and social empowerment (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). Gender pay gap is also a significant economic factor contributing to gender disparity, with women paid less than men for doing the same job, despite having equal qualifications and experience. This can lead to financial insecurity and limit women's ability to achieve economic independence and equality which in turn translate into demoralization of girl child.

Biology is another primary factor contributing to gender differences, including differences in sex chromosomes, hormone levels, and reproductive organs (UNESCO, 2021). These differences impact behaviour, cognition, and physical abilities, such as men's higher competitiveness in various settings due to testosterone levels. Brain structure and function also differ between males and females, contributing to differences in cognitive abilities. However, cultural and social factors also shape individuals' experience and behaviour from a young age.

Political factors, such as the under-representation of women in positions of power, can limit women's ability to influence policy and decision-making, perpetuating gender inequality (World Bank, 2021). Gender socialization is another cultural factor that is

likely to promote gender differences by internalizing norms, values, and expectations associated with gender, which can limit opportunities and perpetuate inequality.

Social and cultural factors impact on the opportunities and experiences of individuals from different genders, with women traditionally underrepresented in leadership positions, which can be attributed to gender bias, discrimination, and lack of support and resources (Eagly, 2012). The gender pay gap also limits economic opportunities, perpetuating gender inequality on women who previously was girl child.

Addressing gender disparity on girl child requires a concerted effort from individuals, organizations, and governments to challenge gender stereotypes, increase access to education and resources, close the gender pay gap, and promote gender equality in leadership positions. This will create a more just and equitable society for all.

#### **1.6.4 Contribution of Faith-Based Organizations and the Government in minimizing gender disparity**

This section of the literature sought to answer the question on how FBOs and GoK has contributed in addressing gender disparity on girl child in primary education.

One in the first central theme in FBOs teachings is the fundamental dignity of human life. Brandy (2021) observes that the transcendent worth, ' of every human being human is created in the image of God: therefore, to be human is to be "a manifestation of God in the world, a sign of God's presence, a trace of God's glory. Being made in the image of God confers dignity to every human being hence all humanity ought to be treated equally`.

Education in Kenya owes a lot to the FBOs that took the established missionary work and schools in Africa (Barasa, 2014). Churches provide health care services,

evangelism, and social work but with particular emphasis on education. Dubel (2018) observes that African Christian missionaries who pioneered African education were middle-class educated men who were endowed with Victorian ideals of gender relations. Although they did not approve of some of the traditional customs and practices, the encouragement of girl child's education was motivated by the need to provide educated African men with literate wives which is the opposite of what the African men do. Yet, in almost all churches, women dominate the congregations but they are led by few men (McKewn, 2010). The most notorious case is the Catholic Church where the leadership hierarchy seems to show prejudice against women who are subordinate to male priests; who conduct Church mass and ordinances. Solely, there is a wide gulf of misunderstanding in the Church in gender disparity due to controversies that revolve around hermeneutics. It seems the same bible advocates for equality of all genders before advocating gender disparity. Evidently, most of the Old Testament prophets were men and all the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ were men. It is paramount to note that, the same Bible categorically states in Galatians 3:28-29 that, *there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female . . . . .*a statement that indicates that all people are equal in the eyes of God.

Somaskhar (2017) in his article, *The Role of the Church in Education Today*, maintains that the role of the Church in education is noble. He argues that, in Africa, the Church has pioneered and reached areas where government agencies have not reached; where no one else would go to underprivileged sections of society such as the untouchable and women who received seeds of emancipation through the efforts of the Faith-Based Organizations who dared to educate them.

Shahindul (2015) observes that irrespective of the challenges concerning gender disparity, the Church has had a major influence on the development of education in Kenya. The wake-up call is for the Church as an education practitioner to re-strategize by involving other parties in dialogue as far as local beliefs, customs and education are concerned in the field. This study revealed that the church is involved in matters of education in the Central Pokot Sub County.

Mwaura (2013) also conducted a study on the role of the Church in promoting gender equality in education in Kenya. The study found that FBOs could play a critical role in promoting gender equality by providing education which is an equalizer in status of girls and women sensitization in the community. Another study conducted by Murgor (2016) explored the role of the church in promoting gender equality in Central Pokot Sub County. The study focus had a significant influence in shaping cultural beliefs and practices in the area and could, therefore, be used as a platform to address gender disparities on girl child.

The foregoing literature review revealed that several factors contribute to gender disparity in primary education in Africa. It further indicates that many communities in Kenya prefer giving better and higher education to boys than girls, particularly communities in the lower socio- economic class of people (Akmal, 2020). Research that has been done in other parts of Kenya shows marked generalization and impractical policies that are not applicable in the different settings across Kenya (Ayub, 2018).

#### 1.6.4.1 Faith-Based Organizations and gender disparity

Through their teachings and outreach initiatives, FBOs are instrumental in advancing gender equality. Many Churches support gender equality, highlighting the worth of every person, regardless of gender. Churches have developed initiatives that educate

and equip women and girls with the tools they need to realize their full potential. For instance, Catholic churches have promoted women's rights through their social teachings, which also include the advancement of social justice and the value of human dignity. To give women the education and training they need to pursue careers and positions of leadership, the Churches have also established colleges and universities (United Nations Development Programme, 2018 UNDP). Churches have made efforts to increase the number of women in leadership roles. They have made efforts to expand the number of women in leadership roles. For instance, the episcopal churches ordained women as bishops and priests, and other denominations have since imitated this practice. This has given women the chance to advocate for gender equality and serve as spiritual leaders who automatically are girl child role models.

Like many other Churches, Anglican Faith-Based Organizations have played a key role in eliminating gender inequality in society. The Anglican Church (ACK) has promoted gender equality via its teachings and activities and has taken steps to support women and girls in numerous ways. Through its doctrines, the ACK has made a significant contribution to reducing gender inequality. All persons, according to Church doctrine, were made in the likeness of God no matter their gender, God and inherent worth and dignity. This message has the potential to alter societal norms that support discrimination and gender inequality (Eagly, 2012). The Anglican Church has established programs and efforts that support gender equality in addition to its teachings. For instance, the Anglican Church formed the Mothers' Union, an organization that works to empower and support mothers all around the world. Women are given resources and education by the Mothers' Union, which helps them create strong families and communities.

ACK has made efforts to expand the number of women in positions of leadership. The Anglican Church has recently ordained women as bishops, priests, and deacons in numerous dioceses and provinces. Women now have the chance to lead spiritually and act as role models for other women and girls because of this. In addition, the ACK has made a strong case for gender equality. The "This is Me" campaign, started by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby in 2018, aims to showcase the experiences of women who had been victims of gender-based violence. The campaign's objectives were to increase public awareness of the occurrence of gender-based violence and to motivate individuals to adopt preventative measures. The ACK support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is another illustration of its commitment to gender equality. In particular, the fifth goal is to achieve gender equality and give all women and girls more influence.

In addition, the Anglican Church has committed to pursuing this objective through both its projects and activities as well as advocacy for changes in national and international policy. To overcome these obstacles, gender equality must remain a top priority and be actively promoted by both the church and the US government. To achieve this, it is necessary to combat gender stereotypes, improve access to education and resources, eliminate the pay gap between men and women, and support gender diversity in positions of leadership. Together, we can make society more just and equitable for all by striving for gender equality. Despite these obstacles, several churches have taken action to advance gender equality and balance. For instance, the Episcopal Church in the United States has led the charge in pushing for more women to hold positions of leadership. The Church chose Katharine Jefferts Schori as its first female presiding bishop in 2015, and Carlye J. Hughes as its first female African-American diocesan bishop in 2018. Similar progress has been made by the Anglican Church of Canada in

advancing gender equality and expanding the participation of women in leadership roles. Linda Nicholls, the archbishop of the Diocese of Huron, was chosen as the Church's first female primate in 2019. Many churches have launched programs and activities to promote gender equality and empower women in addition to these efforts to enhance the participation of women in leadership roles. One organization that promotes women's leadership and deals with concerns like poverty, violence, and prejudice is the United Methodist Church.

Over 25 million people worldwide belong to the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA), a Protestant Christian denomination (United Nations Development Programme, 2018). The SDA Church has long been devoted to advancing gender equality and giving women more influence, although, like many other Churches, there have been significant difficulties and roadblocks to getting there. The SDA Church has advocated for gender equality by reaffirming the worth and dignity of every person, regardless of gender. According to Church doctrine, both genders are invited to serve and minister both within the Church and in the broader community since they are equally valuable in God's eyes. The SDA Church has taken active measures to advance gender equality and give women more influence in addition to its teachings. For instance, the Church has supported women in pastoral ministry and leadership positions ever since it first ordained women as pastors in the late 1800s. In addition, the SDA Church has developed projects and programs to deal with problems like discrimination and gender-based violence (SDA church 2021). For instance, the Church's Women's Ministries Department aids women and girls all over the world with information, tools, and assistance, with an emphasis on problems like domestic abuse, human trafficking, and female genital mutilation. Participation in the SDGs of the United Nations, which include a goal of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, is

another illustration of the SDA church's dedication to gender equality. The church has committed to pursuing this objective through both its programs and endeavours and by advocacy for legislative reforms at the local, state, federal, and worldwide levels.

FBOs can do a lot to advance gender equality and lessen gender inequality. Many churches have started to question conventional readings of the Bible that have been used to support discrimination and inequality against women. For instance, the ACK has been a leader in advancing gender equality, ordaining women as bishops and priests in certain of its branches. In addition, the SDA has made tremendous progress in advancing gender equality by allowing women to hold positions of leadership within the Church (The EBO. Women's Ministries, 2021). Churches can offer assistance and services to women who have been the victims of discrimination and violence based on gender. For instance, the Catholic Church founded groups like Caritas International and the sisters of Mercy that aid women who have faced prejudice and gender-based violence.

#### **1.6.4.2 Governments and Gender Disparity**

Similarly, the United States Government has made efforts to minimize gender disparity through legislation and policies that promote gender equality. One of the most significant pieces of legislation in this regard is the Equal Pay Act, which prohibits employers from paying men and women different wages for the same job. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, religion, or national origin. Further, they emphasize on the importance of equal treatment for all individuals. Moreover, the government has established various programs that support women's education, employment, and health. The Women's Business Centre Program, for instance, provides resources and support to women entrepreneurs, while the Women's



Health Initiative aims to improve the health and well-being of women across the country (Civil Rights Act of 1964).

The government has been working to boost the number of women in positions of leadership in recent years. The United States' first female vice president, Kamala Harris, was inaugurated in 2021; breaking a major barrier for women in politics. Many young women and girls have been motivated by this to pursue careers in politics and leadership, furthering the cause of gender equality in all walks of life. To reduce gender inequality, there is still considerable work to be done. Women still encounter obstacles in a variety of spheres of life, including leadership, employment, and education (U.S. Small Business Administration. Women's Business Centers, 2021). Furthermore, gender-based violence continues to be a serious problem, with many women often being harassed, attacked, and mistreated.

Governments are also essential in reducing gender inequality and advancing gender parity. Governments may accomplish this in one of the most efficient ways possible by passing laws and policies that support gender equality and safeguard women's rights (Equal Pay Act of 1963). For instance, the government of India has passed legislation outlawing sex-selective abortions and offering financial support to families with female children. The government of Sweden has passed laws encouraging work-life balance, such as substantial parental leave and flexible work schedules, which have lessened gender inequality. Governments can also create projects and programs to advance gender equality and support women who have faced prejudice and violence based on their gender. For instance, the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children was formed by the Australian government to reduce violence against

women and advance gender equality. The Gender Monitoring Office was formed by the Rwandan government to advance gender equality and empower women.

### **1.6.5 Challenges facing Faith based Organization in addressing Gender disparity on Girl child in Primary schools**

The fact that many traditional readings of the Bible have been used to support gender-based discrimination and injustice is one of the biggest issues Faith-Based Organizations face when it comes to gender balance. As an illustration, some Churches have cited the Apostle Paul's directives that women should observe silence in the Church and should not have influence over males as proof that women should not take positions of leadership in the Church (Walker, 2019). Many academicians contend that these passages have been misinterpreted and that Paul's teachings should be interpreted in light of their historical and cultural settings. FBOs still need to do a lot of work before gender equality and balance are achieved, notwithstanding these efforts.

Continued efforts are necessary, in particular, to refute conventional readings of the Bible that have been used to excuse discrimination and inequality based on gender (Ampaire, 2020). Additionally, there is a need for churches to build more inviting and inclusive spaces that empower women and encourage their full involvement in Church's life. Promoting gender equality within the SDA church has come with various difficulties and roadblocks. For instance, there have been arguments and disputes inside the church regarding the ordination of women, with some believers saying that they shouldn't hold positions of authority within the institution. Additionally, the SDA Church has come under fire for allegations of gender-based harassment and discrimination, particularly in regions of the world where conventional gender roles are still prevalent.

Through programs for education, training, and awareness-raising, the SDA Church has been attempting to solve these problems through conventional interpretations of the Bible. It might be tricky to challenge the customary readings of scripture that have been used to support gender-based injustice and discrimination. For instance, some Churches have cited biblical verses to support their claims that men should be in charge of women and that women should not assume leadership roles (Sen, 2019). Traditional gender roles and attitudes are strongly embedded in society and cultural standards in many regions of the world. It can be challenging to confront these norms, which could obstruct efforts to advance equity and gender parity in the Church.

Due to established beliefs or a sense of threat from changes to the status quo, some Church goers may oppose initiatives to promote gender equality and balance. It can be challenging to get past this resistance, and it might take a lot of teaching and awareness-raising work. Lack of representation: It may be challenging to establish gender equality and balance in Churches when women are underrepresented in leadership roles (Walker, 2019). The established gender norms and attitudes might be reinforced by this lack of representation.

Gender-based prejudice and abuse are regrettably widespread across the world, and Churches are not exempt from these problems. It can be challenging to address these challenges, and it might take considerable education, training, and awareness-raising activities (Ampaire, 2020). Despite the government and the church's efforts to reduce gender inequality, there are still big problems that need to be solved. Traditionalist opposition to changes in established gender roles and attitudes is one of the key obstacles. It is challenging to advance gender equality due to the under representation of women in positions of leadership within churches and in politics.

According to Kimosop (2015), the issue with the majority of societies is that they treat women as distinct, homogeneous groups although they are diverse groups in terms of class, ethnicity, history, and culture. Poverty is another factor that contributes to gender inequality. Global equality will be achieved if developing nations eliminate poverty. Gender mainstreaming needs the efforts of both developed and developing nations to be successful.

This literature review set to fill the following gaps: factors that lead to gender disparity on girl child in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County; the contribution of the FBOs and the GoK in minimizing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County and how GoK and the FBOs are addressing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by two theories, the Cultural Adaptation Theory and the feminist educational theory. Both theories guided the researcher to explore the causes of gender disparity, understand the role of the GoK and the FBOs in addressing gender disparity on girl child in Central Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County and explore the challenges they face when addressing gender disparity on girl child.

### **1.7.1 Cultural Adaptation Theory**

The cultural adaptation theory developed by Kim (2012), refers to the process of adjustment to change in individuals to be able to function in an unfamiliar culture. Cultural adaptation theory has several aspects: - culture shock, adaptation stages, cultural learning, retention of original cultures, selective adaptation and cultural identity.

Cultural adaptation theory helps us understand the dynamic process by which individual groups adapt to new cultural context. It acknowledges the challenges and the rewards of cultural integration and highlights the complex interplay between retaining ones cultural heritage and embracing elements of the new culture. Cultural adaptation emphasizes the importance of understanding the local culture and context when addressing issues related to migration and cultural change. In Central Pokot sub county cultural norms and practices may contribute to gender disparity on girl child. Understanding these cultural factors is designing effective interventions.

Applying cultural adaptation theory include efforts to address gender disparity on girl child by considering ways to work within the existing cultural framework instead of imposing external solution but find ways to adapt educational practices to align with local cultural values and beliefs regarding gender roles and education. Retaining positive cultural aspects this theory recognizes that individuals retain certain aspects of their original culture during adaptation. In central Pokot Sub County this could mean preserving and celebrating positive cultures elements that promote gender equity in education and challenging harmful practices that hinder girls` access, retention and completion of primary education. This theory guided in examining contributions of FBOs and GoK in addressing gender disparity on girl child in Central Pokot Sub County. The theory helped in understanding the cultural dynamics in Central Pokot and how it has influenced gender disparity on girl child in primary education.

Specifically, this theory was instrumental in guiding the study on gender disparity in Central Pokot Sub County where women are marginalized and struggle with social devaluation by unearthing the underlying causes of gender disparities in primary education, the factors that hinder attempts to reduce inequalities and suggest ways to

minimize gender disparities in Central Pokot Sub County. Through the theory, the study revealed that the Pokot cultural norms dictate the lifestyle of the people and are the major hindrance in bridging the gap of inequality.

Kim (2012) proposed a structural model that considers various factors influencing individuals' cultural adaptation to a new society. Her comprehensive model includes factors related to individuals' predispositions such as ethnic proximity, preparedness for change and adaptive personality as exogenous variables influencing the process of intercultural communication. The researcher utilized this theory in studying outreach mobilization programs in the community, and in investigating enculturation programs through dialogue with the Pokot culture. It concentrated on culture and the search for accommodating cultural practices without losing focus of the intended mission to reach out.

### **1.7.2 Feminist Education Theory**

The Feminist Education Theory championed by Olesen in 1994. Olesen identifies education as a critical arena where women's emancipation and social justice are rewarded. This theory has the following aspects: - gender equity, critical examination of power structures, student-centered approach, inclusive curriculum, empowerment and self-esteem, collaborative learning, social justice and activism and teacher as facilitator. It aims to transform educational systems to be more inclusive, liberating and empowering for all students. It challenges the status quo and encourages educators and students to actively work toward a more just and equal society.

Feminist education theory aims to transform educational systems to be more inclusive, liberating and empowering for all students. It challenges the status quo and encourages educators and students to actively work towards a more just and equal society. In

Central Pokot Sub County, implementing this theory means education principles will help create an environment that actively promotes girls education and challenges traditional gender norms that hinder their access to schooling. By using feminist pedagogy, educators can encourage students to critically analyze and challenge the gender based power structures that contribute to gender disparities in education. This involves questioning norms and stereotypes that affects girls` participation and achievement in school.

This theory seeks to empower students and promote a curriculum that includes diverse perspectives. In the context of Central Pokot sub county means fostering an inclusive curriculum that highlights the achievements and contributions of women and girls making education more relevant and empowering for female students. Adopting feminist approach to teaching can empower educators to address gender disparity actively. Teachers can become facilitators of change by promoting inclusive classroom environments, encouraging girls` participation, and creating space for open discussions on gender issues. Feminist education theory served as the researcher's guidance on investigating the causes of gender imbalance in Central Pokot Sub County and investigated the difficulties the Kenyan government had in addressing the issue. Understanding the causes, cultural effects, and educational origins of gender inequity were made easier. According to this view, education systems exhibit equitable treatment and opportunity for women, much as many other institutions of society (UNESCO 2001; World Bank 2001).

It holds that gender equality in education policy must be re-imagined to promote girls' well-being in the classroom, contribute to developing their capabilities and oppose their oppression in society at large. Feminist education theory helped in guiding,

understanding and interpreting data on gender disparity in education in Central Pokot Sub County. Through this theory, the researcher was able to investigate and understand more about unequal access, retention, completion and differential treatment that girls and women face in educational institutions in Central Pokot Sub County.

In this study the application of cultural adaptation and feminist education theories provide a comprehensive and contextually relevant framework for understanding and addressing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County. By acknowledging cultural values and norms and promoting gender equity, these theories guided in the development of interventions that empower girls, challenge existing power structures, and foster a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

### **1.8 The Scope of the Study**

The study was limited to gender disparity of girl child in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County between 2017 and 2022. This study focused on FBOs in Central Pokot Sub County. It was guided by cultural adaptation theory and the feminist education theory which helped the researcher to understand more about the factors causing gender disparity, the role of the Gok and the FBOs in addressing gender disparity in schools Central Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County, Kenya.

### **1.9 Research Design and Methodology**

#### **1.9.1 Introduction**

This section presents the research methods used. It includes subsections such as research design, study area, target populations, sample size, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, data analysis and presentations, reliability and validity of research instruments and ethical consideration.



### **1.9.2 Research Design**

This is a qualitative study that was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Qualitative approach entails conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders. Through open ended questions, participants had the opportunity to express their views, beliefs, experiences related to gender disparity on the girl child in education. Qualitative approach allows for a deeper understanding issues from the perspectives of different stakeholders, shedding light on the complexities and nuances involved.

The exploratory nature explored and uncovered new insights and perspectives on the topic of gender disparity in education among pupils in Central Pokot Sub County to discover novel ideas and potential solutions. The open ended nature of qualitative interviews and focus groups allowed participants to share their unique experiences and opinions, on gender disparity.

The descriptive design aspect of the study involved presenting detailed account of the current situation and practices regarding gender disparity in education. Through the qualitative data collected, the study described the existing roles and interventions of faith based organizations and the Kenyan government in addressing the issue of gender disparity. It also provided an in-depth description of the experiences of the pupils, their challenges and the impact of the implemented interventions.

### **1.9.3 Study Population**

The study population was the entire Central Pokot sub county and the sample size was obtained from six selected primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County that was purposefully sampled. The primary schools included St. Mary, Runo, Lokarkar, Masol, Marich and Wei primary schools.

### **1.9.4 Sources of Data**

This study relied on primary and secondary sources of data.

#### **a) Primary sources of data**

Primary data was obtained from the field where the researcher conducted interviews, and focus group discussions (F.G. Ds).

#### **b) Secondary sources**

Secondary data was obtained from both published and unpublished literature in both private and public libraries. These included books and journals written about gender disparity as well as newspapers and magazines, reports by the government, faith-based organizations, and community-based organizations.

### **1.9.5 Tools for data collection**

#### **1.9.5.1 Interview schedules**

An interview schedule with semi-structured questions was used to obtain primary data from the sampled population. Five interviews were conducted with key informants who were purposively sampled. The sampled respondents included a head teacher, a religious leader, a chief, a county education officer and a parent. The researcher used in-depth interviews to get insight into the actual contribution of F.B.O.s in minimizing gender disparity and to investigate cultural factors that contribute to gender disparity in primary school education in Central Pokot Sub County. This resulted in the generation of data on related issues such as the future strategies to be pursued to ensure that F.B.O.s and religious communities help the Pokot community to minimize gender disparity (See the appendices for the interview schedules).

### **1.9.5.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

The study relied on two FGDs which consisted of ten members each from the three selected primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County. The ten members included; a PTA chair, a Head teacher, two parents (man and woman), 2 teachers (Man and Woman), and 4 pupils (2 boys and 2 girls) who were purposely sampled. The agenda was expressed in broad themes: (open ended questions captured under appendices)

### **1.9.6 Validity and reliability of the instruments**

A team of subject experts in the FBO's such as pastors, evangelists, deacons and Pokot cultural experts participated in scrutinizing the nature of questions to validate them in terms of contents. The experts were useful in validating the relevance of the secondary sources utilized by the study.

### **1.9.7 Data Analysis**

Data generated was analyzed qualitatively using thematic and content analysis where the data was categorized into themes of sociocultural and socioeconomic factors that cause gender disparity. Furthermore, descriptive cases, histories, quotations and examples were used to analyse the information qualitatively. Data was reviewed after the FGDs and interviews were analyzed, and interpreted into themes and meanings. The analysis of data used responses from both the FGDs and interviews. From these sources, the emerging themes were categorized and coded. Once the categorization was completed, the data were coded according to the indicators from the literature. This study used an open-coding system to analyse participants' narrative responses line-by-line, phrase-by-phrase and word-by-word. The final analysis led to the development of a report presenting the interpretation of results, limitations, individual and independent insights, and generalizations of the study in the form of a thesis.

### **1.9.8 Ethical considerations**

To ensure that there was ethical conduct of the study, an introduction letter was sought from the School of Arts and Social Sciences Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Moi University. The researcher obtained permission from NACOSTI who are in charge of all research studies in Kenya. In ensuring that ethical standards were maintained during this study, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study so that their informed consent was obtained before pursuing the study.

The privacy and confidentiality of the participants were ensured by first not requiring them to reveal their names or department to ensure the anonymity of their responses and protect them from any retributive action, secondly it was by ensuring that the data collected were not disclosed to unauthorized persons. Care was taken to minimize any harm caused to the respondents, by ascertaining at the outset whether they had any objections to participating in the study or whether they foresaw any negative impact being caused to them by participating in it. It was also agreed that the outcome of the research would be shared with the Central Pokot Sub County for future reference.

Participation in this study was voluntary and the purpose of the study was well explained to respondents before the interviews and assured of their confidentiality. Since the study involved minors, consent was sought from responsible adults interviewed in their presence.

Written consent from each participant in the study was obtained by attaching a statement of consent to each interview schedule. Consent was sought from parents of the minors who were interviewed for this study. Identification of the respondents was not recorded anywhere on the instrument and confidentiality was assured by analyzing the data in the aggregate.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS**  
**DESCRIPTION OF WEST POKOT COUNTY**

**2.1 Introduction**

This chapter highlights the background of West Pokot County and narrows it to Central Pokot Sub County focusing on location, climate patterns, economic activities, history and origin of Pokot people and its relationship to gender disparity in primary schools. Central Pokot is a Sub County of West Pokot County. It was crucial to study the geographical background that may have contributed to understand the setting which cultural practices are rampant and which might have backed gender disparity of girl child.

**2.2 Location of West Pokot County**

West Pokot County is located on the northern side of Kenya at coordinates of 1° 29' 39.1848" N and 35° 2' 49.9740" E. The county has a total area of roughly 9,169.4 Km<sup>2</sup> and is located between the longitudes 34° 47' and 35° 49' East and the latitudes 1° and 2° North (Chebitwey, 2016). It is one of Rift Valley region's 14 counties. Along Kenya's western border with Uganda, it is located in the North Rift. Elgeyo Marakwet County and Baringo County to the East and South, respectively, and Turkana County to the north and north-east, Trans Nzoia County to the south, are the neighbouring counties (Kumar, 2019). Following is a map of Kenya showing the location of West Pokot Sub County.



**Figure 2.1: Location of West Pokot County**

Source: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/WairoreNdungu/publication/281712355/figure/fig1/AS:284533757890565@1444849542347/Location-of-West-Pokot-County-in-Kenya.png>

### 2.3 Geographic Characteristics of West Pokot County

Several different topographic features define West Pokot County. The Cherangani Hills run through the county's eastern region, while Mount Kadam, the highest mountain in the county, is located in the western region. Other notable hills in the county include

Kainuk Hill, Kanyerus Hill, and Siketwe Hill (Kimosop, 2015). Towards the south-eastern side, we have escarpments of more than 700 metres found in this altitude range while the medium-altitude regions are between 1,500 and 2,100 metres above sea level.

The county is home to several valleys and plains, including the Kerio Valley and the Kacheliba Plains. Dry plains, less than 900 metres above sea level, are found in the northern and north-eastern portions. These areas receive little rainfall, which forces the locals to rely on pastoral farming, which has contributed to gender disparity in access as seen in chapter three. The low-altitude regions in the county, include Alale, Kacheliba, Kongelai, Masol, and some of Sigor (Murgor, 2016). These areas have a history that suggests they are vulnerable to soil erosion brought about by flash floods. According to a Ministry of Agriculture Report from 2016, historical weather analysis in West Pokot shows that dry spells of between 65-80 days are most frequent and unpredictable in the second half of the year. During this period moisture levels are low. The Suam River and Turkwel River, which are important sources of water for the county, flow through the lowlands of the region. Other smaller rivers and streams in the county include the Konyao and Kasecherer. Lake Kamnarok, a small seasonal lake, is located in the eastern part of the county. Suam, Kerio, Weiwei, and Muruny are among the county's major rivers (Macleay, 2015). While Mt. Elgon is the primary source of the rivers Suam and Muruny, Cherangani Hills serve the area's primary water catchment. Rivers Muruny, Kerio, and Weiwei drain into Lake Turkana from the North, while other small rivers join and drain into the river Nzoia, which then empties into Lake Victoria, and the River Suam empties into the Turkwel dam, which produces hydroelectric power.

West Pokot County has a semi-arid climate with high temperatures, with average daily temperatures ranging from 25°C to 32°C. The rainfall pattern is bimodal, with the long rains falling between March and May; the short rains fall between October and December. According to the World Food Programme, rainfall levels were generally below average for the time of year (Adelakun, 2018). The cumulative county's rainfall for November 2021 was 11.4 mm, this is less than the 63 mm that was recorded in the month of October. The measured totals are 34% of the average rainfall. Lowland areas experienced low rainfall during the review period, while highland areas experienced average rainfall, (Kenya Meteorological Department, West Pokot County). In general, rainfall totals fell below average, with an unfavourable spatial and temporal distribution. The amount of precipitation varies significantly from South to North, with the southern parts of the county receiving more than 1500 mm of precipitation annually while the northernmost parts of the county received less than 250 mm (Ayub, 2018). 500 to 1000 mm of precipitation falls across the majority of the county. Late rains and unpredictable rainfall cause more frequent and severe droughts that have a significant impact on the productivity of rain-fed crop systems as well as the quantity and quality of pastures.

Between 2020 and 2060, there will likely be more heat and drought stress. With between 65 and 80 consecutive days of moisture stress, dry spells are the greatest and most variable in the second half of the year (Akmal, 2020). An average of 60 to 65 days of nonstop moisture stress occurred in 2021 during the first half of the year (January-June). Flood risks and extreme precipitation tend to rise.

Risks of flooding and extreme precipitation have tended to rise. Although this extreme precipitation happens throughout the year, it tends to happen more frequently in the



first half of the year, where about 60% of the years had at least one day with more precipitation than 20mm/day (Ayub, 2018). The records imply that there has also been a rise in rainfall start and end variability, which has led to more erratic crop seasons. The average annual temperature varies significantly, from about 15°C in the south to more than 25°C in the northeast.

Most of the forests in the sub county are found at Cherangani Hills with a covering of 20,857 ha. The forest has plants like bamboo (*Aredinaria Alpina*) and *Juniperus procera*. The vegetation in the county consists mainly of thorn bushes and acacia trees, with some patches of grasslands in the highlands. The county is also home to various wildlife species, including elephants, buffalos, zebras, and giraffes. The County has significant mineral deposits, including limestone, iron ore, and gold. These resources are a potential source of economic growth for the county.

The County forests have been negatively impacted by human encroachment, resulting in a decrease in the amount of land covered by trees. Environmental hazards endanger the County's ecosystems, including its dry forests, savannah woodlands, and mountain rain forests. A huge variety of wide species of flora and fauna are found in the county's ecosystems, which boast rich biodiversity. The Cherangany, Kamatira, Solion, Chebon, Kamalokon, and Kalabata forests have suffered as a result of deforestation. Reforestation, charcoal burning, encroachment into national and county forests, unsustainable farming practices, overgrazing and significant soil erosion due to flash floods and improper disposal of both solid and liquid wastes are a few of the main causes of environmental degradation in the county. All centres can see the effects of poor waste management, but Makutano Trading Center stands out because there is no

sewer system there. In Mtembur, Kongelai, Kodich, Nakuyen, Samor, Marich, and Sigor, charcoal trade can be found frequently.

## **2.4 Political Organization**

West Pokot County is organized into several administrative and political units. The county is headed by a governor, who is the elected political leader of the county government. The governor is assisted by a deputy governor and a county executive committee (CEC), which is responsible for overseeing the various departments of the county government. The county is made up of four (4) constituencies, twenty (20) wards, sixteen (16) divisions, sixty-five (65) locations, and two hundred and twenty-four (224) sub-locations. The four constituencies include Sigor, Kacheliba, Pokot South, and Kapenguria. Sigor and Pokot South each have four wards, while Kapenguria and Kacheliba constituencies have six wards each.

The County Assembly has 30 elected members, representing the various wards in the county. The twenty wards are Alale, Chepareria, Kapenguria, Kasei, Konyao, Kookol, Korion, Lelan, Masol, Murkwijit, Muino, Riwo, Sook, Suam, Tapach, Tiati, Tirioko, Weiwei and West Pokot. West Pokot County is further divided into four sub-counties, each headed by a sub-county administrator. The sub-counties are: Pokot Central, Pokot North, Pokot South and Kacheliba.

Each sub-county is divided into several locations, each headed by a location chief. The locations are further divided into sub-locations, each headed by a sub-location assistant chief.

Central Pokot Sub-County is one of the four sub-counties in West Pokot County, Kenya. It is located in the central region of the county and covers an area of approximately 2,479.2 square kilometres. The sub-county is home to several ethnic

communities, including the Pokot, Samburu, and Turkana. The sub-county is characterised by rugged terrain and diverse topography, including hills, valleys, and plains. The Cherangani Hills run through the eastern part of the sub-county. The Sub-County has a semi-arid climate, with high temperatures and low rainfall. The average daily temperatures range from 25°C to 32°C, while the average annual rainfall is between 500 and 800 millimetres. In addition, the sub-county is mainly covered by acacia trees, thorn bushes, and grasslands in some parts. The main economic activities in Central Pokot Sub-County are livestock rearing, subsistence farming, and small-scale trade. Livestock rearing, especially cattle, goats, and sheep, is the primary source of livelihood for many people in the sub-county. The sub-county has several health facilities, including dispensaries, health centres, and a sub-county hospital. There are also several primary and secondary schools in the sub-county, providing education to the local population

## **2.5 Demographic Characteristics**

According to estimates from the GoK, the population of West Pokot County was 777,180 in 2018 and was expected to increase to 987,989 and 1,338,990 by the years 2022 and 2030, respectively (Psaki, 2016). Climate and socioeconomic progress have an impact on how people are distributed throughout the county. Population density and distribution are higher in urban areas and agriculturally productive areas. The population of Central Pokot Sub-County was estimated to be 89,343 people in the 2019 census.

The two largest towns in West Pokot County are Kapenguria and Cheperaria. As of the 2009 census, 18% of county residents resided in urban areas. The population of cities is expected to rise by 30% and 55%, respectively, by the years 2022 and 2030, (Nherera,

2019). Individuals between the ages of 15 and 64 who are economically active make up the majority of this urban population. The main economic activities in the county's urban areas include retail and wholesale trading, fresh produce and cereal businesses, entertainment and hospitality industries, service sectors such as auto repair shops, cyber cafes, law firms, livestock auctions, private education businesses, honey processing, banking and financial services, real estate businesses, and road transport services. Urban areas in West Pokot's County face numerous development challenges. According to Chebitwey (2016), county policies on urban planning and development control, county urban integrated development plans, and local physical development plans appear to be lacking in urban areas. Most roads are not all-weather; they have inadequate drainage systems. This creates a significant transportation challenge during rainy seasons. Additionally, there is no designated location for the disposal of solid waste; the current temporary dump site is situated along a riverbank. A liquid sewage system is absent from the county. The county is characterized by high rates of unemployment and poverty, a result of many girls quitting school to make room for the education of boys, as seen in chapter three (Odaga, 2015).

In 2018, the county had 268,739 children under the age of five, or 20.2% of the total population. It is anticipated that the same number will be 341,634 in 2023 and 463,006 by 2030 (Nduru, 2013). This age group is crucial when making plans, particularly for health and education, as it serves as the foundation for the county's future human resources. For this group, the Early Childhood Programmes (ECDE) provides a foundation for addressing their cognitive, psychological, moral, and emotional needs. On the other hand, good health guarantees a population of healthy children. The risk of morbidity and mortality is particularly high for this age group. For instance, compared to the national estimate of 54/1,000, the county's estimated under-five mortality rate

(U5MR) is still high, estimated at 127 deaths per 1,000 live births (Ombati, 2012). The country's U5MR is double this, so efforts to address this are extremely important. Inequitable access to healthcare services, high costs of care due to widespread poverty, and a lack of adequate medical staff and drugs in public facilities are the main obstacles to reducing child mortality. Therefore, it is important to concentrate on improving access to healthcare services by building new medical facilities and ensuring the availability of crucial pharmaceuticals.

There are 554 primary schools in the county, serving a total of 186,708 students. The teacher-to-student ratio is 1:52. The schools have a total of 3005 teachers. A total of 89 percent of children in the county are enrolled in primary schools. Lack of sanitary pads, inadequate teaching staff, early marriages, female genital mutilation, child labour, sexual abuse, inadequate learning and reading materials, inadequate access to water and healthcare, insecurity, high levels of household poverty, inadequate parental care, and a lack of electricity connections in some schools are problems that have affected primary school-aged students in the county (Chebitwey, 2016).

## **2.6 Children and Elementary Schooling**

West Pokot County has a significant population of primary school children. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the county had a total of 161,528 primary school pupils in 2019. Primary education in West Pokot County is provided by both government and private schools. The government schools are managed by the Teachers Service Commission, while the private schools are run by private individuals or organizations.

According to projections, the number of people in this age group will rise from 208,651 in 2018 to 265,247 in 2022 and 359,482 by 2030 (Robinson, 2015). This age group

comprises 26.8% of the entire population. Although not entirely as expected, free primary education has had a slightly positive impact on the county's enrolment and completion rates. This means that performance has improved, but primary education still faces several challenges, such as overcrowded classrooms, archaic cultures, nomadic lifestyles, and inaccessible educational facilities. This study found that to increase this group's access to education, it is necessary to build new schools, expand the infrastructure of those that already exist, assign teachers to those schools, and build boarding facilities for families who lead nomadic lifestyles.

During this study, it was revealed that the county government of West Pokot is committed to improving access to quality education for all children in the county, including primary school children. Some of the measures being taken to improve primary education in the county include the expansion of school infrastructure by building new classrooms, libraries, and laboratories to accommodate the growing number of primary school children in the county. In addition, the county government is recruiting and training more teachers to ensure that there are enough qualified teachers in all primary schools in the county. Consequently, the county government is providing textbooks, exercise books, and other learning materials to primary school children to enhance their learning experience. Similarly, the county government is promoting the education of girls by providing sanitary pads and building separate toilets for girls in primary schools. Further, the county government is implementing school feeding programs in primary schools to improve the nutrition and health of the children.

## **2.7 Economic Activities in West Pokot**

Agriculture is an important economic activity in West Pokot County, providing livelihoods to a significant portion of the population. The county is located in the arid

and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of Kenya, and as such, the agricultural practices are adapted to the harsh climatic conditions. The major crops grown in West Pokot County include maize, beans, sorghum, millet, and cowpeas. Farmers in the county also grow vegetables such as kale, spinach, onions, and tomatoes, which are mainly consumed locally or sold in nearby markets.

The typical farm size in Central Pokot Sub-County is 5 hectares for small farmers and 25 hectares for large-scale farmers. Due to the determination of land ownership, farmers in Central Pokot Sub-County can now access credit. Most farmers in Pokot Central struggle to obtain credit because the land is communally owned, hindering them from access to funds to educate their children.

Livestock rearing is also a significant agricultural activity in the county. Farmers keep cattle, goats, sheep, and camels for meat, milk, and hides. The county is known for its breed of Zebu cattle, which are adapted to the arid conditions. Most farmers in Central Pokot Sub-County are pastoralists keeping; indigenous cattle (Zebu), sheep, goats, chickens, and donkeys. Dairy cattle, camels, Sahiwal cattle, Galla goats, dairy goats, Dorper sheep, exotic poultry, and rabbits have also been introduced to the county Robinson (2015). According to estimates, there are 789,300 native cattle, 74,500 dairy cattle, 200 Sahiwal cattle, 634,355 native goats, 6,000 *galla* goats, 400 dairy goats, 529,376 native sheep, 95,550 wool sheep, 4,000 dorper sheep, 533,000 native chicken, 55,980 exotic chicken, 35,271 camels, and 41,943 donkeys. Various livestock are dispersed across the sub-county, depending on the climatic conditions and the rate of adoption of introduced breeds. These animals produced 6,000,000 litres of milk in 2018. Most of the farmers sell the milk to cooperatives. There are currently 14 milk coolers, the majority of which are located in Lelan and Tapach wards Shahidul (2015).

Besides milk the cattle give meat. It is estimated that a total of 4,140,000 kg worth Ksh. 750,950,000 are produced in the county per year. Most of the livestock are sold outside of West Pokot County. In addition, 50,000 sheep and goat skins are produced annually. The Central Pokob County children's educational development is directly impacted by the livestock of the Pokot community, which is a very resourceful asset.

## **2.8 Trade and Industry**

Trade and industry are still in their early stages of development in West Pokot County, with most economic activities revolving around agriculture and livestock rearing. However, the county government is working to promote trade and industry in the county as a means of diversifying the economy and creating employment opportunities. The major industries in the county include food processing, leather processing, and handicrafts. The county is known for its high-quality leather, here are a few tanneries in the county that process leather for export and local consumption. The county is also home to a few small-scale food processing enterprises that process maize, beans, and other crops into finished products such as flour and canned foods.

The largest markets in the county are Chepareria and Kapenguria (USAID, 2016). Other markets include; Ortum, Kabichbich, Sigor, Lomut, Chesezon, Kacheliba, Orolwo, Sarmach, Cheptuya, Kanyarkwat, Serewo, Kiwawa, Kamelei, Kasei, Tamkal, Nyangaita, Orwa, Sina, Tapach, Kamketo, Kachemogen, Kapsangar, Chepkon, and Kaptabuk. Retail and wholesale trade, fresh produce and cereal businesses, entertainment and hospitality businesses, service businesses like auto repair shops, cyber cafes, law firms, livestock auctions, private education businesses, honey processing, banking and financial services, real estate companies, and road transport



services are the main economic activities in the county's urban areas. The majority of these investments go to small, medium-sized, and micro businesses.

This study revealed that the retention and completion of both boys' and girls' primary education are more closely correlated with economic activities that advance human development and, consequently, with the welfare improvement of a community (Akmal, 2020). The county's economy is based primarily on the livestock and agriculture industries, with more than 80% of the population employed in agriculture and related fields. According to the KNBS 2019 report, raising livestock and cultivating crops are the main economic drivers in West Pokot County (Kumar, 2019). Maize, which is also grown there along with finger millet, onions, sweet potatoes, green gram, peas, mangoes, oranges, bananas, coffee, beans, potatoes, and pyrethrum.

Women in Central Pokot play distinct roles within the household economy. Kamerback (2015) observes that these roles are eroding as both engage in entrepreneurship due to growing financial needs. Traditional gender roles are constantly changing and evolving, which has led to an increase in the workload for women. To achieve financial independence, more and more women are working in small-scale businesses like selling farm products and rearing chicken. However, they are prohibited from working in some occupations that have traditionally been dominated by men, such as owning cattle. Because the availability of stable economic activity and basic food is a crucial factor in determining the development of all communities' educational systems, favourable circumstances significantly help to ensure that the Pokot community pursues education.

The county government is implementing various programs to promote trade and industry in the county. Some of the initiatives include the establishment of industrial

parks to attract investors and create employment opportunities. The county government is working to build the capacity of local entrepreneurs by providing training in business management and entrepreneurship. It is working to create market linkages for local industries by linking them to regional and national markets. Further, the county government is investing in infrastructure development, such as roads and electricity, to improve access to markets and lower the cost of doing business. Lastly, the county government is providing support to small and medium-sized enterprises through grants, loans, and technical assistance.

## **2.9 Health Patterns in Pokot County**

Health is a major concern in West Pokot County, with a high prevalence of communicable and non-communicable diseases, limited access to healthcare services, and poor health outcomes. Some of the health challenges facing Pokot County include: Communicable diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS are prevalent in Pokot County, and account for a significant proportion of the disease burden. Limited access to healthcare services and poor health infrastructure contribute to the high rates of communicable diseases in the region. Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease are also a growing concern in Pokot County, due in part to changing lifestyles and diets.

West Pokot County has a shortage of healthcare workers, with just one doctor for every 35,000 people. This coupled with a lack of health infrastructure, limits access to healthcare services and makes it difficult for people to receive the care they need. The shortage of health workers has led to poor health outcomes such as high rates of infant mortality, maternal mortality, and malnutrition. These outcomes are influenced by a

range of factors, including limited access to healthcare services, poor health infrastructure, and poverty.

Consequently, health patterns in West Pokot County are shaped by a range of factors, including poverty, limited access to healthcare services, and cultural beliefs and practices. Some of the key health patterns in the region include High rates of communicable diseases: Communicable diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS are prevalent in Pokot County, and account for a significant proportion of the disease burden. Poor sanitation and hygiene, limited access to clean water, and a lack of health education contribute to the high rates of communicable diseases in the region. In addition, the shortage of healthcare workers and health infrastructure, which makes it difficult for people to access the care they need. This, coupled with long distances to health facilities and inadequate transport systems, further limits access to healthcare services in the region. Certainly, due to aridity, malnutrition is a major health challenge in West Pokot County, particularly among children under the age of five. Limited access to nutritious food, poor feeding practices, and a lack of health education contribute to high rates of malnutrition in the region. Finally, traditional beliefs and practices, such as the use of traditional healers and herbal remedies, are common in West Pokot County. While these practices may have some health benefits, they can also lead to delays in seeking medical care and may not be effective in treating certain illnesses.

Family planning is an essential component of reproductive health and is crucial in promoting the well-being of women and children in West Pokot County. The county has a high fertility rate, with an average of 6.2 children per woman, which is higher than the national average of 3.9 children per woman. The County is second highest in

the nation. Currently, there are 7.2 births as opposed to the 3.9 estimated nationally for each woman. However, according to KDHS 2014 data, the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR any method) decreased from 14 points 2 percent to 12 points 2 percent in 2017 (Wafula, 2018). Due to cultural norms, religion, and low levels of education, this continues to be a significant challenge. Thus, achieving meaningful change requires a multi-sector approach.

This study revealed that the county government, in collaboration with various partners, is implementing various programs to promote family planning in the county. Some of the initiatives include the Provision of family planning services through health facilities, community health workers, and mobile outreach services. The county government is working to educate the public on the importance of family planning and the various methods available. In addition, the county government is building the capacity of health workers to provide quality family planning services. Further, it is integrating family planning into other health services, such as maternal and child health services, to improve access to family planning services. In all, the county government is engaging the community through sensitization campaigns and working with community leaders to promote family planning.

### **2.10 Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Self-Help Groups**

Several NGOs are operating in West Pokot County in various sectors, including health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, and livelihoods. The county is home to several non-governmental organizations active in a variety of fields (Wafula, 2018). The county's notable public benefit organizations include Pokot Outreach Ministry, Life in Abundance, AMREF Health Africa, World Vision, Palladium, and AMPATH Plus. Others include the Kenya Red Cross, Fred Hollows Foundation, UNICEF, USAID, and

Impact Research and Development Organization. Local NGOs such as Yangat, *Maendeleo ya Wanawake*, and others work with the local communities. The agricultural, food, water, disaster relief, health, and educational sectors of these public benefit organizations will continue to assist rural communities.

Pokot Outreach Ministry is a Christian-based organization that works in the areas of health, education, and community development. The organization runs a hospital in Kasei and provides health services to the local community. Life in Abundance (LIA) is a faith-based organization that works in the areas of health, education, and livelihoods. The organization runs a community health program that focuses on maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS prevention, and nutrition. AMREF Health Africa is an international NGO that works to improve health in Africa. In West Pokot County, the organization works in the areas of health system strengthening, water and sanitation, and community health. World Vision is a Christian-based organization that works in the areas of health, education, livelihoods, and child protection. In West Pokot County, the organization focuses on improving access to clean water, promoting education, and empowering communities to improve their livelihoods.

Several Self-Help Groups and community-based organizations (CBOs) have registered as a result of the establishment of government-devolved funds and grants (Wasamba, 2005). These non-profit organizations and groups engage in small- and medium-sized business (SME) activities like mixed farming, table banking, capacity building, environmental protection, and other economic activities. The county wants to develop its social and human capital by using these organizations. Since 1973, 4,297 groups—including SHG 2204, women's groups 992, youth groups 935, men's groups 5, people with disabilities 35, community projects 117, and CBO 6—have been registered. Self-

Help Groups are still a way to get grants and devolved funds from the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), the Youth Enterprise Fund (YEF), and other sources. The YEF has helped 127 groups overall, whereas the WEF has helped 80 groups. Totalling Ksh. 4.05 million has been spent on WEF and YEF.

Local self-help groups play an essential role in community development in West Pokot County. These groups are formed by community members to address common challenges such as poverty, lack of access to basic services, and social exclusion. They work to mobilize resources, develop local solutions, and implement development projects. Some of the self-help groups operating in West Pokot County include the Pokot Community Development Association which focuses on improving access to water, education, and health services. The group has implemented various projects, including the construction of water tanks, school classrooms, and health facilities. Another self-help group is Kasei Women's Group which focuses on women's empowerment and economic development. The group provides training in entrepreneurship, financial management, and market access to women. In addition, we have Chepkinagh Women's Group which focuses on promoting sustainable agriculture and livestock farming. The group has implemented various projects, including the construction of greenhouses and irrigation systems. Kapchok Women's Group focuses on promoting education and improving access to clean water. The group has implemented various projects, including the construction of school classrooms and water tanks. Lastly, Konyao Youth Group focuses on youth empowerment and community development. The group has implemented various projects, including the construction of youth centres and sports facilities.

### **2.11 The Pokot's Historical Ancestry**

The Pokot people are a Nilotic ethnic group found in the northern part of Kenya and the eastern part of Uganda. Their ancestry is believed to trace back to the earliest migrations of Nilotic people into the region around 5000 years ago. According to oral tradition, the Pokot originated from the Bahr el Ghazal region in present-day South Sudan (Kumar, 2019). From there, they migrated southwards in search of better grazing lands for their cattle. They settled in present-day West Pokot County in Kenya, where they established their homesteads and engaged in pastoralism.

The Pokot people have a rich culture that is deeply rooted in their history and way of life. They have a unique system of governance, which is based on age sets. Each age set has a specific role to play in the community, and members of the same age set are expected to support and protect each other (Kimosop, 2015). In the past, the Pokot were involved in frequent raids and conflicts with their neighbouring communities, such as the Turkana, Samburu, and Karamojong. These conflicts were often over resources, such as grazing lands and water points, and were driven by the need to protect their cattle.

The Pokot people have a rich history and culture, which is reflected in their social organization, customs, and beliefs. They traditionally practised pastoralism, with cattle being a crucial part of their way of life. They also engaged in subsistence agriculture, growing crops such as maize, beans, and sorghum.

Today, the Pokot people have largely embraced modern ways of life, although many still practise pastoralism. They have also made significant strides in education and other aspects of development, with several prominent Pokot individuals holding positions of leadership in government and other spheres of life. Despite these changes, the Pokot

people remain proud of their heritage and continue to hold on to their cultural practices and traditions.

### **2.12 Pokot Religion**

The Pokot people are an ethnic group who predominantly inhabit the Pokot District in Kenya, as well as parts of Uganda. Their traditional religion is animistic, meaning that they believe in the existence of spirits in natural objects and phenomena, such as rocks, trees, and rivers (Psacharopoulos, 2015). The Pokot worship a supreme being known as *Asis* who is believed to have created the world and all living things. They also believe in the existence of ancestral spirits, who are believed to play a significant role in the daily lives of the Pokot people. The ancestors are considered to be intermediaries between the living and the divine and are often called upon for help and guidance.

The Pokot community traditionally believe the world has two realms, the world below and the world above. The realm below was taken as the abode of vegetation, people and other creatures while the realm above was the abode of the deities such as *Tororot*, *Ilat* (rain) and *Asis* (sun) (Talle, 2016). *Tororot* is believed to listen to His creatures below, *Asis* is taken as a witness of their activities while *Ilat* serves as a messenger between the two realms. This means that, in the Pokot indigenous religion, the concept of God is not clearly defined, and there is no single, dominant deity. Instead, there is a belief in a higher power or force that is responsible for creating and governing the universe. The Pokot people believe that this higher power or force is manifested in various spirits and supernatural beings that inhabit the natural world. They believe that these spirits have the power to control events in the world and provide protection and guidance.

The Pokot have a strong belief in the power of divination and use divination rituals to seek guidance from the spirits. They also practise sacrifice, where animals such as



goats, sheep, and cattle are offered to the spirits as a form of appeasement or thanksgiving (Psaki, 2016). Deities are believed to have the ability to communicate with humans, warning and rebuking them about their misconduct.

The people of Pokot also believe in the power of their ancestors, who are believed to have a direct connection to a higher power or force Janzen (1978). They believe that their ancestors can intercede on their behalf and provide guidance and protection. Ancestors play a significant role in the Pokot indigenous religion, and they are believed to be powerful spirits that can influence the lives of their descendants. Ancestors are believed to have the ability to provide guidance, protection, and blessings to their living descendants. In Pokot culture, the ancestors are often revered and honoured through various ceremonies and rituals. Offerings of food, drink, and other items are made to the ancestors, and prayers and songs are often sung to invoke their blessings. Ancestors are also believed to play a role in the afterlife, and it is believed that they can influence the fate of their descendants in the afterlife. As such, it is important to maintain a good relationship with one's ancestors through offerings and prayers. In addition to ancestors, the people of Pokot also believe in various other spirits that are believed to inhabit the natural world. These spirits are believed to govern different aspects of nature, such as rain, wind, and animals. Offerings and prayers are also made to these spirits to ensure that they continue to provide blessings to the community.

The people of Pokot have various ways of worship, and their practices are closely tied to their indigenous religion and cultural traditions. One of the primary ways that the people of Pokot worship is through traditional ceremonies and rituals (*Ibid*, 1978). These include initiation ceremonies, ancestor worship ceremonies, and various ceremonies to honour the spirits and supernatural beings that are believed to govern the

natural world. In addition, the Pokot people also have various ceremonies and rituals to honour their ancestors and the spirits that are believed to govern the natural world. These ceremonies involve offerings of food, drink, and other items to the spirits, and they are often led by religious specialists.

Religious specialists are an essential part of the Pokot indigenous religion, and they play an important role in the community (Kiprop, 2015). The two primary types of religious specialists in Pokot culture are Laibons and diviners. Laibons are traditional healers who are believed to have the ability to communicate with the spirits and provide healing and protection. They use various herbs, roots, and other natural remedies to treat illnesses and ailments. Laibons also lead ceremonies and rituals to honour the spirits and ancestors, and they are often consulted for advice and guidance. Diviners, also known as "Kamururs," are responsible for interpreting signs and omens to determine the will of the spirits. They are believed to have the ability to communicate with spirits through various methods such as interpreting dreams, reading the movements of animals and birds, and using divination tools such as bones or shells. Both Laibons and diviners are highly respected members of the community, and their services are sought after for various reasons. They play an important role in maintaining social order and resolving disputes within the community, and they are often consulted for guidance on important decisions such as when to plant crops or go to war.

Rituals and rites of passage are an important part of the Pokot religion, and they serve as a way of marking important transitions and milestones in the lives of individuals within the community (Janzen, 1978). One of the most significant rituals in Pokot culture is the initiation ceremony, which is performed on both boys and girls. For boys, this involves circumcision, while for girls, it involves clitoridectomy. During the

initiation ceremony, the initiates are secluded for several weeks and taught about their cultural traditions, values, and responsibilities as members of the community.

Another important ritual in Pokot culture is the marriage ceremony. Marriage is seen as a way of strengthening ties between families and communities, and the ceremony involves several traditional customs such as the payment of a bride price and the exchange of gifts. Other rites of passage in Pokot culture include the birth of a child, which is celebrated with a naming ceremony, and the death of a community member, which is marked with mourning rituals and funeral ceremonies.

Ethics in Pokot religion are based on a strong sense of community and respect for the natural world. The Pokot people believe that they are part of a larger web of relationships that includes not only other people, but also animals, plants, and the environment (Waiyaki, 2012). One of the key ethical principles in Pokot culture is the importance of hospitality and generosity. It is believed that guests should always be welcomed and provided with food and shelter and that it is the responsibility of the community to care for its members. Another important ethical principle in Pokot culture is the importance of honesty and integrity. It is believed that individuals should always speak the truth and honour their commitments and that dishonesty and deceit can have serious consequences for both the individual and the community. The Pokot people also place a strong emphasis on respect for authority and traditional values. Elders and religious leaders are highly respected, and their wisdom and guidance are sought in important matters such as marriage and community disputes. Finally, the Pokot people believe in the importance of respecting the natural world and living in harmony with nature. The land is considered sacred, and various taboos and customs are designed to protect the environment and ensure that its resources are used sustainably.

Taboos play an important role in Pokot religion and culture (Waiyaki, 2012). These are customs or practices that are considered sacred or prohibited and are often associated with spiritual beliefs. One of the most well-known taboos in Pokot culture is the taboo against eating certain types of meat, such as the meat of certain animals, or meat that has been killed using certain methods. These taboos are often associated with the belief that certain animals are sacred and should not be killed, or that certain methods of killing are cruel and should be avoided. Another important taboo in Pokot culture is the taboo against certain behaviours or actions, such as disrespecting elders, stealing, or committing acts of violence. These taboos are often designed to promote social harmony and ensure that individuals act under the community's values and norms. In addition to these more specific taboos, there are also broader taboos that are associated with the natural world. For example, it is considered taboo to disturb certain natural features, such as sacred trees or rivers, or to hunt certain animals during specific times of the year. Taboos are enforced through a combination of social pressure and religious beliefs. Violations of taboos can result in ostracism from the community or spiritual punishment, such as illness or misfortune

In recent years, Christianity and Islam have made significant inroads among the Pokot people, leading to a decline in the practice of traditional religion. Nevertheless, many Pokot still retain elements of their traditional beliefs and practices alongside their new faiths. The Pokot religion has a significant impact on gender roles within the community. Men are generally seen as the leaders and decision-makers, while women are expected to take care of domestic duties and raise children (Murgor, 2016). Women are also subject to traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriage, which are believed to be necessary for their social and cultural identity within

the community. However, efforts are being made to empower Pokot women and challenge these traditional gender roles.

Majority of the Pokot practice traditional indigenous religion, which is based on a complex system of beliefs and rituals that are closely tied to the natural world. However, there is also a significant Christian population in Pokot, particularly in urban areas and among younger generations. Christianity was introduced to the Pokot people by European missionaries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and has since grown to become a significant influence on Pokot culture and society. While some Pokot people have fully converted to Christianity, others continue to practice a hybrid form of Christianity that incorporates traditional indigenous beliefs and practices (Kiprop, 2015). In addition to traditional indigenous religion and Christianity, there are also smaller populations of Muslims and adherents of other faiths in Pokot. However, these populations are relatively small and have less influence on Pokot culture and society compared to traditional indigenous religion and Christianity.

### **2.13 Faith-based Organizations in Central Pokot Sub- County.**

In Pokot County, there are several FBOs that are actively engaged in various community development initiatives, including education, healthcare, social services, and empowerment programs. While the list may not be exhaustive, here are some examples of FBOs operating in Pokot County: The World Vision is an international Christian humanitarian organization that works in Pokot County to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities. They focus on areas such as education, health, child protection, and economic empowerment.

The Catholic Church has a significant presence in Pokot County, with several parishes and mission centres. The church is involved in providing education, healthcare, and

social services to the community. They often manage schools and health facilities in the region.

The Africa Inland Church (AIC) is a Protestant denomination with multiple churches and congregations in Pokot County. They actively participate in community development projects, including education, healthcare, and social welfare initiatives. In addition, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) is a Christian denomination with a presence in Pokot County. They are involved in various community outreach programs, including education, healthcare, and empowerment initiatives.

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church operates in Pokot County, focusing on holistic development, including education, healthcare, and community services. They often run schools, health clinics, and other social welfare programs. In addition, the Full Gospel Churches of Kenya is a Pentecostal denomination that has congregations in Pokot County. They engage in activities that promote education, healthcare, and community development, with a particular emphasis on spiritual growth.

The Anglican Church has a presence in Pokot County and actively participates in community development projects. They provide education, healthcare, and social support services to the local population. These Faith-Based Organizations operating in Pokot County have their specific programs and initiatives aimed at addressing various community needs and promoting the well-being of the local population.

## **2.14 Conclusion**

This chapter gives the background of the area of study on the location, geographical characteristics, political organization, demographic characteristics, early schooling, economic activities, health patterns, non-governmental organizations, history of the Pokot and the Pokot religion. It reveals that arid and semi-arid conditions have

influenced economic patterns and food security affecting schooling as they contribute to gender discrimination in terms of access to education. This chapter lays the ground for matters discussed in the following chapters.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**FACTORS CAUSING GENDER DISPARITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN**  
**CENTRAL POKOT SUB COUNTY**

**3.1 Introduction**

This section presents qualitative reports and analysis on the state of factors causing gender disparity in primary school education under the guidance of feminist theory. It starts by discussing the enrolment in primary schools found in the central Pokot sub-county. It discusses the present state of education in Central Pokot, the retention figures in the chosen schools and factors causing gender disparity in primary school education. The overall purpose of this section is to highlight and understand the factors causing gender disparity.

**3.2 Enrolment in Early Primary Schools in Central Pokot Sub County**

Nduru (2013) points out that Kenya has implemented several policies to improve enrolment in primary education. However, the increase in the number of women and the girls in education does not necessarily translate into the expected end of gender discrimination in education or gender equality. According to the records like register, during the early stages of schooling in West Pokot, there is no significant difference between boys and girls from standard one to three in enrolment as seen in the table below. However, it was found that in Lokarkar and Central Pokot primary, the ratio of girls to boys is higher. This means that there is no gender disparity of girl child at the initial stages of school when the girl child is below ten years. Notably, girl child problems begin to unfold at the adolescent stage after female circumcision. The following table shows the ratio of boys to girls in early primary school.



**Table 3.1: Sample of enrolment in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County in class 1-3 in the year 2011**

Primary school/Sponsor	Boys class				Girls class			
	Std 1	Std 2	Std 3	Total	Std1	Std 2	Std 3	Total
Central Pokot (ACK)	50	38	45	133	45	50	60	155
Runo (Catholic)	35	40	45	120	30	45	50	125
Lokarkar (AIC)	40	35	30	105	40	32	30	102
Masol (Catholic)	28	36	22	86	26	36	30	92
Marich (ACK)	25	34	21	80	24	22	24	70
WeiWei (Catholic)	42	27	36	105	35	30	36	101

*Source: Mwangi (2012)*

**Table 3.2: Retention Figures of Pupils in Primary Schools in Standard 1-3 in the year 2018**

Schools/ sponsor	Boys class				Girls class			
	Std 6	Std 7	Std 8	Total	Std 6	Std 7	Std 8	Total
Central Pokot (ACK)	40	28	40	108	10	12	12	34
Runo (Catholic)	30	40	44	114	15	10	15	40
Lokarkar (AIC)	42	34	25	101	12	14	12	36
Masol (Catholic)	30	34	28	92	8	10	8	26
Marich (ACK)	25	30	25	80	8	7	5	20
Wei (Catholic)	30	25	14	69	6	8	10	24

*Source: The West Pokot County Development plan*

The foregoing quantitative report shows that at the end of eight years many girls dropped out of school due to cultural practices culminating in early marriage. It shows major changes as far as retention is concerned in comparison to the early stage of access when the number of girls was higher than that of boys. It was found out through interviews that gender disparity came up as a result of girls dropping out of education for early marriage while boys continue with their education. The researcher found out that there are different treatments in terms of gender due to cultural beliefs in Pokot.

During an interview schedule, a key informer attributed that there was gender balance between boys and girls up to the age of adolescence, when they undergo initiation the second rite of passage after birth. The foregoing was because they are still young and unable to undergo the cultural rites of passage such as clitoridectomy at this point of their life (An interview with the chief, on November 2017). The foregoing persists despite Kenya's Anti-FGM Bill 2011 that criminalizes clitoridectomy age or status and banned the stigmatizing of a woman who had not undergone it. Further, the Act of Parliament NO. 32 of 2011 stipulates that it is illegal to aid someone to perform FGM or force someone into early marriage. Further, this is against the Marriage Bill that sets the mandatory minimum age for marriage at 18 irrespective of the customary tradition (Shahindul, 2015). The foregoing implies that despite the condemnation of FGM internationally and nationally, the Pokot Community has continued to embrace this practice.

During one of the FGDs a member lamented;

*'I was 13 when I got pregnant, married, circumcised and divorced.' My husband dumped me because of the effects of FGM I developed a condition known as fistula, after the rite of passage. Aftermath, I developed problems during delivery leading to the death of her newborn baby. The foregoing conditions interfered with my education, social life and health condition (An interview with Lokarkar Headmistress on 17th November 2017).*

In the same case, a Headteacher of a primary school in Central Pokot lamented that the cultural practice affects the schooling of these girls as they are forced to drop out of school to serve their households.

During the study, the researcher observed that genital mutilation affects girl education directly since the ritual is performed during school days and healing takes a long period. Normally, girls between ages 9-14 are removed from school to undergo the procedure

and later married. Further, it was noted that the initiation of girls made the initiates feel superior to their female teachers.

However, a Catholic Church evangelist of St Mary Central Pokot said FGM has been reduced due to efforts from World Vision to discourage the practice. Further explained that Catholic Faith-Based Organizations have programs discouraging FGM and although most people are aware of its effects, most of the Pokot' practice it in secrecy in Central Pokot.

### **3.3 Factors Causing Gender Disparity in Primary School Education**

This sub-section discusses the research findings on the socio-cultural and socio-economic factors that contribute to gender disparity in Central Pokot Sub County. 'Culture is a way of life which permeates all spheres of human beings; it is closely related to the values and belief systems of a given people. The section identifies entertainment dances, gender roles and expectations, nomadic pastoralism, circumcision of the Pokot girls, *sapana*, traditional dance, cattle rustling, early marriage and high bride wealth, insecurity, poverty and high illiteracy.

One elder from Lokarkar interviewed stated;

*The Pokot perceived formal education as watering down core cultural values which in turn would influence their lifestyle so they fear being influenced towards the Western culture. (An interview with, J. Lomuria, on 15th Nov 2018).*

This response was justified by the extent to which the Pokot are rooted down to cultural practices and beliefs more than education. In embracing the missionaries, the Pokot community was sceptical concerning education by missionaries.

The Pokot are a community that predominantly inhabits the north-western parts of Kenya, along the border with Uganda. They have a unique culture and socio-economic

practices that have shaped their way of life over the centuries. In this essay, we will examine the various socio-economic factors that have influenced the Pokot community. The Pokots have a traditional pastoralist lifestyle, which is heavily reliant on their livestock (Chebitwey, 2016). They keep cattle, goats, and sheep and move from one area to another in search of pasture and water. As such, their economy is primarily driven by livestock rearing and trade. The sale of livestock and animal products such as hides, milk, and meat is their main source of income.

The Pokot people have also been involved in small-scale agriculture, particularly in the areas with more fertile land. They cultivate crops such as maize, beans, and millet, which provide food for their families and sell in local markets (Shahidul, 2015). However, as seen in chapter two, due to the frequent droughts and unpredictable weather patterns in the region, agriculture is often not reliable, and the Pokot people rely mostly on their livestock. In addition to their traditional economic activities, the Pokot people have also been involved in trade. They have a long history of trade with neighbouring communities, particularly Turkana, with whom they share a common language and cultural practices. The Pokot trade livestock, animal products, and other goods such as beads, skins, and honey with their neighbours.

The Pokot have a social structure that is based on age sets, which are groups of people who are born around the same time and go through life together. These age sets are important for social organization, as they determine the roles and responsibilities of individuals within the community. The age sets also serve as a form of social security, as members are expected to support each other in times of need. In terms of education, the Pokot people have been historically disadvantaged due to their remote location and traditional way of life (Wafula, 2018). However, there have been efforts to improve

access to education in recent years, and there are now schools in some parts of Pokot. The literacy rate among the Pokot remains low, particularly among women.

### 3.3.1 Entertainment Dances

A key respondent who is a H.O.D. in Masol primary complained that;

*'Night dances lead to many children not being able to attend school because of exhaustion. Further, parents do not see the value of education but rather consider it a waste of time in cases where children are used to herding cattle. In some cases, they fear that if the girls are educated, they may not get people to marry them (An interview with M. Lorupe, on 15th Nov. 2018).'*

The Pokot, a pastoralist community found in Kenya, have unique cultural practices that have been passed down through generations. Among these practices are night dances, which are viewed as a way of preserving their culture and promoting social cohesion. However, these night dances have negative consequences, particularly on the education of children in the community.

One of the major effects of night dances is that children are often too exhausted to attend school the next day (Adelakun, 2018). This leads to absenteeism and poor academic performance, which may ultimately result in children dropping out of school altogether. Furthermore, the Pokot community does not always see the value of formal education, with some parents regarding it as a waste of time. This attitude towards education is compounded by the fact that many children in the community are used to herding cattle and do not see the relevance of formal education. Another concerning issue is the reluctance of some parents to educate their daughters. Some parents fear that if their daughters are educated, they may not find suitable partners to marry. This demonstrates a cultural bias against educating girls, perpetuating gender inequality and limiting the potential of female members of the community.

The Pokot cultural practices, such as night dances, have both positive and negative impacts on their community. While these practices promote social cohesion and cultural preservation, they also negatively affect children's education, perpetuate gender inequality, and limit the potential of the community (Daily Nation, 2013). It is therefore important to strike a balance between preserving cultural practices and promoting education, especially for girls, to ensure that the Pokot community can thrive and succeed in the modern world.

### 3.3.2 Gender Roles

The organization of the Pokot community in terms of labour is a crucial determinant of gender disparity. A respondent observed that;

*'A woman has no voice in any public and no authority within her homestead she is considered "foolish" "like the cows that are being traded for her' (An interview with D. Kudoo on 15th Nov. 2018).*

Kudoo seems to imply that women among the Pokot are looked upon as inferior members of society. They occupy household chores such as building houses, taking care of the children, and searching for food. On the contrary, men spend their time in social gatherings socializing, basking in the sun and ensuring there is enough security.

The Pokot community is patriarchal men dominate all the social relations. In circumstances where women work, they are required to bring all their earnings to their husbands. During one of the Focus group discussions, a respondent revealed that;

*'Fathers make decisions on behalf of the whole family, and their decisions are final. In cases where fathers are convinced to abandon FGM and embrace religion, it was respected by the girls and mothers and no one questioned their authority while in cases where the father was absent or deceased, the eldest son always made decisions on behalf of the family (An interview with S. Koibei on 16th Nov. 2018).*

The perceived superiority of the male gender in Pokot shows that women cannot make any decision concerning education and they are required to lie low. Many respondents

agreed that this is the reason that contributes to gender disparity in schools because a girl child is dependent on the father's decision to take her to school or not. The finding concurs with Somasekhar's (2017) study which observes that households have a negative attitude toward the education of girls which impedes the education of girls. Mothers favour the education of male children because they provide for them with old-age insurance.

An informer in Central Pokot Sub County observed that;

*In the informal sector of employment, women have made significant gains concerning their increased participation. Their work is unaccounted for in the family but there remain inadequate laws that do not eliminate all forms of discrimination against women's economic advancement. The majority of Pokot women are the primary producers of subsistence for families. Many women are working to produce food in farm activities, craft production and informal trade. For example, women provide the bulk of the workforce under challenging conditions to get food at Weiwei Irrigation Scheme. The girl-child encounters many challenges from different dimensions; they are abused through child labour, circumcision and forced early marriages. Women bring all their earnings from manual work contracts to be subjected to their husbands' control and direction (An interview with M Jepkemoi on 16th Nov. 2018).*

According to a study by Kimosop (2015) on spatial and gender inequality in primary education, preference persists for educating boys reflecting traditional limitations on women's roles, customary patrilineal inheritance systems and perceptions that boys will have greater prospects for modern sector employment. Moreover, in rural areas, the opportunity cost to parents of educating girls seems higher. Consequently, the gender roles that society assigns to its children will have a determining effect on their future such as schooling, labour force participation and status in relationships.

### **3.3.3 Nomadic Pastoralism**

It was revealed that some of the people in Pokot rely heavily on nomad-ism to search for pastures for their animals. Normally, nomadic pastoralism is an economic activity

that requires vast land, frequent movement of people and their animals from one place to the other in search of water and pasture. The practice of nomadic pastoralism does not only threaten peace between the Pokot and her neighbours but also with the settled farming communities (Luca, 2014). The pastoral nature of the Pokot community is a major challenge to education programmes and initiatives by the government. The land in Central Pokot is communal, this which is best suited for grazing sheep, goats and cattle. Only indigenous animal species cope with the harsh climatic conditions because of the search for water and pasture. During pastoralism, the Pokot move with their belongings from one region to another in search of greener pastures.

During nomad-ism, schoolchildren are forced to drop out to migrate to another place with their families. During interviews, respondents explained that boys drop from school to herd cattle while girls drop out to assist their mothers in domestic chores.

#### **3.3.4 Rites of Passage**

Rites of passage in this case initiation revolve around social definitions of femininity and attitudes towards women's sexuality. Rites of passage in Pokot are performed at the request of the family and to promote cultural identity. The practice is of great significance to the Pokot as it indicates a sense of loyalty to family, a value system that is mandatory among the Pokot community. The practice is meant to prepare adolescents for higher responsibilities in society that involve taking care of children and husbands for girls. After initiation, the initiates are secluded for a period that ranges from one to three months. During this period the initiates go through rigorous training on the community's values, beliefs and taboos of the community.



One respondent explained that;

*‘Immediately after circumcision, the girls are ready for marriage. Any man who can raise the required dowry of sixty cows and forty sheep and goats will be allowed to marry the girl. The Pokot allow polygamy therefore a rich man can marry many young girls as long as he can pay the bride wealth’* (An interview with M Jepkemoi on 16th Nov. 2018).

The findings from focus group discussions indicated that the Pokot prefer marrying their young girls than letting them attend school. The foregoing is supported by a study by Chebitwey (2016) who connects it to FGM; a practice that hampers advancement in education for girls since they are bogged down by rituals in the initiations rather than being engaged in education work. Concerning the foregoing, Adalakun (2018) while studying another region discovered that families in lower socio-economic structures tend to marry off their daughters for economic support through bride wealth, hence denying them an opportunity for education. However, it could not be understood well why some parents in West Pokot County could not see the fruits of education which were seen by more women competing with men in all sectors of the economy.

### **3.3.5 Sapana Traditional Festival**

*Sapana* is a traditional rite of passage that graduates and transfers young men into being elders in the Pokot community. Speaking on *Sapana*, a respondent stated that;

*‘The function is very important to the community. The initiates spear a bull or he goat at sunrise and the raw blood from the animal is mixed with milk. The bull is not slaughtered but roasted and eaten directly, including its skin. Some blood and beer are sprinkled by elders on the initiate for cleansing in case the initiate may have committed any evil by commission or omission. During the ceremony, they pray to God for favour and blessing. Sapana has a spiritual implication: it is a way of worshiping and appeasing the ancestors’* (An interview with S Koibei on 16th Nov.2018).

From the foregoing, it can be seen that *Sapana* is a communal ceremony that involves a lot of feasting, singing and dancing. This festival is highly regarded; it is among the

top most sacred functions of the Pokot community. Interviews indicated that this communal ritual is all-inclusive as it involves elders, warriors, men, women and children since every community member has a role to play during the festival. Generally, the *Sapana* festival takes three months hence affecting school-going children who get absent from school to attend the ceremony.

On explaining the significance of the festival one respondent echoed:

*'During the function communities' core values are instilled in the children therefore after the festival is well regarded compared to the pursuit of education leading the youth into dropping out of school. During Sapana festivities everything in the community including schools is shut down in favour of the ceremony; because everybody will be rushing to the functions in the community. (An interview on 16th Nov.2018)*

The foregoing indicates that the *Sapana* cultural festivity holds a royal position in the life of Pokot in the Central Pokot division compared to formal education. *Sapana* is a very important rite of passage in which every member of the Pokot community yearns to participate. Consequently involvement in such details and affects education in Central Pokot Sub County.

### **3.3.6 Cattle rustling**

The origin of cattle rustling among the Pokot stems from traditional beliefs about livestock as wealth. Those who successfully raid cattle are held as heroes. It is also held as a source for bridewealth payment for some while others get into the practice to generate money for *the Sapana* festival. Some conduct cattle rustling for fun as a 'cultural game' among the nomadic communities as it has been part of pastoralism culture for centuries. Most respondents seem to have taken it as a normal act despite it being a lawless act. It is good to note that most respondents were in agreement that cattle rustling was never done within the community among themselves but done to the

non-Pokot. Surprisingly, the myths among the Pokot taught the community members that all cattle belong to them, whenever they go on raids, they claimed to be an act of regaining what belonged to them- all cattle were given to them by Asis' Mainly, the acts of were blessed and sanctioned by the Pokot elders who often looked for some moral reasons to order the raid (Kimosop, Otiso & Ye, 2018).

During interviews, one respondent retorted:

*‘Cattle rustling is an acceptable cultural practice, we do not consider taking cattle from other communities to be a problem. This is because the Pokot believe that all the cattle on earth belong to them. Most importantly, a higher status for Pokot men is achieved through raids, wars and fighting (An interview with D Kudoo on 15th Nov.2018).*

It seems that the practice is held in high esteem and it is the wish of every Pokot man to achieve a higher status. However, during this study, it was noted that cattle rustling was not an easy task since some men died because of the regular wars to defend cattle during raids. In interviewing young men, most of them boldly raised their desire to conduct raids at one point in life or another. The desire per society's expected norm required every young man to work hard to ensure that they achieve their community's expectations.

Luca, (2014) observes that in nomadic communities just like the Pokot, a successful fighter is judged by the number of opponents he has killed, the number of animals he has raided and the ability to organize successful defence and attacks. Seemingly, the practice among the Pokot is not seen as negative compared to how it is interpreted and perceived by other communities. Despite it being a manly affair, women burst into songs and dances to encourage young men to prove their bravery and gain wealth by raiding for livestock.

On commenting about cattle rustling, a respondent retorted that;

*‘cattle rustling act is also a traditional commercial survival mechanism whereby nomadic pastoralism from arid and semi-arid areas restock their livestock after they die due to natural disasters such as acute drought. The act enabled Pokot to survive and maintain the household economy (An interview with S. Letuwo on 15th Nov. 2018).*

The cattle rustling phenomenon is captured in the concept of ethnicity and identity of the Pokot community. In the midst of cattle rustling, a sizeable number of schools going children drop out of school. In most cases, interviews revealed that the Pokot view cattle rustling as a natural response to disaster and an attempt to increase yield and survival (Wasamba, 2005).

In addressing the issue of cattle rustling, a chief argued that;

*‘Among the Pokot community, it is right and justified to kill, raid and evict the enemy communities. It is not a sin to kill an enemy but it is a duty and responsibility of each member of the community hence the honour one gets. Conflicts and fighting are enshrined in the communities` history and identity hence all other communities are described as vicious aggressors. Often, cattle rustling practice affects the education of girls because they would be victims of circumstances, with the available cows the men would marry off the girls in primary school’ (An interview with J. Lomuria 15th Nov. 2018)*

The findings clearly show that it is another contributor to gender disparity in primary schools.

### **3.3.7 Early Marriage and High Bride Wealth**

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman as a husband and a wife. Marriage is legal among the Pokot from the age of eight for girls and extended to old age for men. The Pokot normally practise polygamy and women do not have any choice but to oppose arranged marriages. It is the pride of all women to be married as it is a way of ensuring the continuity of the community through procreation. An informant in Runo reported that;

*'Marriage in the Pokot community' is a rite of passage that takes place as soon as an individual has been circumcised. One is considered an adult and responsible member of the community. Girls as young as eight years get engaged to older men who can pay the bride price. It is expected that during seclusion girls learn all the responsibilities of motherhood and how to take care of a man and to fulfil all the duties of a woman' (An interview with S. Kokwo on 17th Nov.2018)*

The foregoing indicates that the Pokot allowed early marriages. Generally, early marriage imposes negative effects on the early education of individuals, particularly girls. This is because, when girls are married at a young age, they are deprived of the acquisition of education, getting engaged in formal employment opportunities, and enjoying participation in other childhood activities. They must stay in their homes, carry out household duties, and attend to the needs and requirements of their family members as a result of their marriage. This study found that although girls typically show resistance to obeying their parents, they are nonetheless expected to. Rural residents often marry off their daughters at a young age because they hold onto traditional beliefs and perspectives. It was realized that, many parents fear that, if girls are educated and get older, then it would be difficult to find suitable grooms for them. For this purpose, they even train their girls in terms of implementation of household chores from the initial stage of their life. Early marriage and high bride wealth have directly contributed to early marriages among young girls who in turn drop out of school in Pokot. Some men also lamented that educated women seemed to be unmanageable as wives. The foregoing point was disputed by women in FGD's with a claim that men suffered from inferiority complex that arose due to the higher status acquired through formal education.

An elder interviewed further explained that;

*'The traditional marriage takes place at night and a lot of rituals are involved. The bride and the groom share milk from the same guard,*

*both of them shave their hair and it is buried in the middle of the homestead by the master of ceremony after invocation of the community spirits and ancestors. The burial of the hair of the newly married couple symbolizes that their union is permanent and there is no thought of divorce.*

A chief in Lomut pointed out that;

*'Payment of bride wealth before marriage is a mandatory requirement for a bridegroom. Bride wealth is given in the form of livestock (such as cattle, sheep and goats). The bride price is normally sixty heads of cattle and forty sheep and goats. The high bride price is among the reasons for cattle rustling by the young men. Those boys prefer to be involved in raids to get the required heads of cattle to cater for the bride price instead of going to school (An interview with S. Leduwo on 17th Nov. 2018).*

The emphasis on the importance of marriage results in a low level of development in terms of lower primary school enrolment and a high drop-out rate. Instead of boys pursuing education, they utilize the available time to be involved in other activities to be able to get the required bride wealth.

A chief stated that;

*'The Pokot community believes in families; this implies that intervention that targets changing the Pokot culture should address the family as a social unit of change and in this case, the head of the family who is the father should be targeted' (S. Kokwo 17th Nov. 2018).*

Focused group discussions revealed that; 'fathers make decisions on behalf of the whole family, and their decisions are final. The autocratic leadership among the men shows that key decisions regarding education and cultural practices in the Pokot community are among the factors causing gender disparity in education.

### **3.3.8 A sense of unease**

The researcher discovered that young boys help to strengthen security through a key informant. There is presently a fragile state of peace between the Pokot and Turkana communities. The Kenyan government deployed a lot of police to maintain this peace.

This implies that when security is removed, violence will increase, which will have an impact on students' ability to learn (Dubel, 2018). Schools are frequently closed due to attacks by nearby communities or cattle rustling. Leaders of pastoralism are insecure because they lack political goodwill. *'Politicians do not emphasize the importance of education, but rather the importance of cattle bride wealth,'* he continues (E. Laktabai, 16 Nov. 2018).

According to the findings, the region's high levels of insecurity have a direct impact on student's academic growth. Because of the ongoing unrest, there is a chance for an arms race in the area, which increases the amount of illegally obtained lethal weapons in civilian hands. This has led to a security dilemma where various ethnic groups are unaware of the effects of their actions on others (Wasamba, 2005).

The F.G.D., it was revealed that *"insecurity originates from the weak state security structures that have given rise to a situation of anarchy, as each group provides for its security,"* (An interview with D Marich, 12/08/2022). Since Central Pokot Sub County is located on the border between Pokot and Turkana, there is a constant sense of unease, and every community is on high alert because they never know when their enemies will attack. People flee their homes due to insecurity, schools are temporarily closed, vacant medical facilities are left in place, and pastoralists are compelled to relocate to safer areas (Efevbera, 2017).

Further, a respondent argued that when explaining insecurity;

*The life of the schoolchildren is in danger during the raids because the parties are seeking retribution and may even shoot schoolchildren. Additionally, when conflict occurs, parents are compelled to move their families to a safer location Donald (2010). Children's education is negatively impacted by migration, particularly the education of girls, who spend less time in school. When safety and peace are restored, families return to their homes, but unfortunately, young girls*

*are unable to do so because they must be circumcised between the ages of 11 and 14 before they can get married (Chongwony, 17th Nov. 2018).*

The results highlight the detrimental effects of gender inequality in primary schools and how insecurity contributes to it.

### **3.3.9 Poverty**

The poverty rate in West Pokot County is 69 percent, according to the KNBS and Population the long-lasting drought in Central Pokot Sub County, which leads to famine, is blamed for this. Numerous domestic animals are frequently wiped out by the ongoing drought, leaving people without any other viable sources of income (Fletcher, 2017). This worsens the poverty, leaving the community with no other option for surviving besides resorting to raids and stealing to obtain animals for restocking and selling to purchase food. West Pokot County is one of those supported by the Government of Kenya (GOK) and other donors, including the World Food Program (WFP) and Food for Work (FEW) relief programs, as a result of the widespread drought and poverty experienced in Central Pokot.

The researcher noted that the climate in Central Pokot Sub County is hostile and harsh, making it unsuitable for crop planting. The land could accomplish wonders if the government provided water. Only traditional breeds of sheep and cattle can survive. The only means of subsistence, according to an elder in Runo, is a pastoral lifestyle (Flick, 2015). They thus prefer to focus their limited resources on the education of boys. When a girl gets married, but not when she pursues education, she is viewed in terms of her economic value. The 60 cows, 40 sheep, and 40 goats that make up the dowry are eagerly anticipated by the parents. They see it as a waste of the small family resources to spend on the girl when she will eventually marry someone from a different



family. However, some parents in the FGDs were positive with provision of formal education as they saw it as a way of increasing bride wealth.

The majority of the Pokot community's elites received their education through the sponsorship of missionaries, who also provided for all of their other basic needs from elementary school through college. The Pokot community still relies on well-wishers to fund education. Free primary education isn't free because students still have to pay for things like uniforms and exam fees (Kimosop, 2015). Prof. Lonyangapuo, the former governor of West Pokot County, made an effort to inspire the locals by awarding full and partial scholarships to university students. An elder in Runo observed that.

*"The girls in the Central Pokot division lack role models." People who are educated and have renounced cultural customs do not get married. For instance, the parents of their daughters discourage them from being like the world marathon Tecla Lorupe because she is very intelligent but not married (M. Jepkemoi, 16th Nov. 2018).*

The results demonstrate that a lack of role models and extreme poverty have contributed to a decline in academic performance in the study area, resulting in gender disparities in primary schools. People who live in poverty face a variety of difficulties and obstacles when trying to make ends meet. They occasionally have trouble getting the necessary nutrition each day (Narayan, 2014). The main goal of those living in poverty is to make enough money to maintain their standard of living. They have insufficient financial means necessary to cover the costs of pursuing an education. Although education is free, those who live in poverty have trouble paying for stationery items like books, bags, uniforms, transportation costs, and other costs associated with education (Psaki, 2016). It was alleged that the poor hold the opinion that sons should receive an education so they can pursue rewarding careers in the future. Girls, on the other hand, receive training in how to carry out household duties and minor jobs so they can support their families financially.

### 3.3.10 High Illiteracy Level

The main cause of illiteracy in West Pokot County's Central Pokot Sub County is negative cultural practice. Due to the high illiteracy level it seems that finding and choosing alternative sources of income like farming, entrepreneurship, and both formal and informal employment is difficult (Otiato, 2016). Generally, since illiteracy impedes all forms of development, it makes illiterate people more susceptible to conflicts and violent crimes. This means that, without good formal education, young community members' socialization is only focused on the community's defensive and offensive roles. It was revealed that the majority of West Pokot County, particularly in the northern arid and semi-arid region, has a high illiteracy rate of up to 80%. An elderly Lokarkar resident who affirmed that in some incidents people bribed the chief for children to be excused from attending school; an allegation which the chief denied. The foregoing is an indication of how the gender gap problem is being made worse by the perceived illiterate. An elder in Lomut retorted.

*"Education isolates youth from their surroundings and the community". Their chance to learn about cultural customs and practices is thus lost. However, since interactions lead to the development of harmonious relationships, the fact that students have the chance to interact with members of various communities gives them the chance to learn to respect one another (an interview with S. Kokwo on November 17, 2017). 2018).*

From the foregoing statement, it seems that some people in West Pokot are against formal education. Most respondents retorted that there are numerous cases of some families opposing the exposure of their children to formal education. This means that, the Kenyan government's effort to implement free primary education hasn't had fully expected impact (Mwaura, 2013). The foregoing has not been achieved despite the government heavily investing in free primary education by lessening the burden of fees. Consequently, the study recommends that the county government and the national

government should gear more efforts to promote access to education for all. They should also invest in infrastructure, security, and food security to enable schools run effectively.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter was guided by the feminist theory to discuss the present state of education in Central Pokot, the retention figures in the chosen schools and factors causing gender disparity in primary school education. It was revealed that the main factors that encourage gender disparity in access to early primary education are: early marriage and high bride wealth, insecurity, poverty, and high illiteracy are entertainment dances, gender roles, nomadic pastoralism, the Sapana traditional festival, and cattle rustling.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**THE ROLE OF THE FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND THE  
GOVERNMENT OF KENYA IN ADDRESSING GENDER DISPARITY IN  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL POKOT SUB COUNTY**

**4.1 Introduction**

This chapter was guided by the Cultural Adaptation Theory to highlight the role of the GoK and FBOs in gender disparity in the girl child among pupils in the Central Pokot sub-county. It begins by explaining the Kenya government's response to gender disparity in Kenya, the role of FBOs in providing education in modern Kenya and the participation of FBOs in managing gender disparity in education in Central Pokot sub-County.

**4.2 The Kenyan Government's Response to Gender Disparity**

To elevate women's status in society, the GoK has taken several steps and continues to work toward this goal. Different plans, programs, and policies have been established to place an emphasis on women's empowerment and increase women's participation in politics, the economy, education, and other spheres to parity with men's (Ombati, 2012).

The GoK has put in place a legal and policy framework to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination against women. This includes the Constitution of Kenya 2010, which provides for gender equality and prohibits discrimination based on gender, as well as the National Gender Policy, which sets out a comprehensive framework for promoting gender equality in all spheres of life. In addition, the government has implemented a range of affirmative action measures to address gender disparities in education, employment, and political representation. These include policies such as the

two-thirds gender rule, which requires that no more than two-thirds of any elected or appointed body be composed of one gender.

The GoK has mainstreamed gender into its policies, programs, and budgeting processes, to ensure that gender considerations are taken into account in all areas of governance. In addition, the government has taken steps to address gender-based violence (GBV), including through the enactment of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act 2015 and the Sexual Offenses Act 2006, as well as the establishment of specialized GBVe units within the police force and the courts.

The GoK has prioritized women's economic empowerment, recognizing that economic empowerment is a key factor in promoting gender equality. This has included initiatives such as the Women Enterprise Fund and the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, which provide loans and business training to women and young people.

Kenya's Ministry of Education has worked hard to ensure that gender inequality is eliminated from the primary to the university levels. In light of Vision 2030, which aims to ensure equal opportunities and development in Kenya, progressive change is evident but relatively slow (Vision 2030). According to Mwangi (2012), there have been significant reforms made to the educational system. Programs and initiatives have been launched to support women's education such as Elimu Scholarship Program, Girls' Education Challenge, Zawadi Africa Education Fund, Kenya Girls' Schools Foundation and Women's Education Project Kenya. The Elimu Scholarship Program provides financial support to economically disadvantaged girls in Kenya, enabling them to attend secondary school. The program mainly focuses on areas with low enrolment rates for girls intending to increase their access to education. The Girls' Education Challenge is a global initiative that operates in Kenya and other countries. It aims at addressing

barriers to girls' education, such as poverty, early marriage, and gender-based violence. The initiative supports innovative approaches to improve girls' enrolment, retention, and learning outcomes.

Zawadi Africa is a nonprofit organization that provides scholarships and leadership development programs to academically gifted girls from disadvantaged backgrounds in Kenya and other African countries. The program supports girls throughout their education journey, from secondary school to university. The Kenya Girls' Schools Foundation works to improve access to quality education for girls in Kenya. The foundation supports the establishment and development of girls' schools, provides scholarships, and implements programs to enhance girls' educational opportunities. The Women's Education Project Kenya focuses on empowering women through education and skills training. The project provides scholarships and mentoring to young women from low-income backgrounds, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge for personal and professional development.

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

removing the financial barriers, more girls have been able to attend school and benefit from quality education. However, despite the policy's implementation, there are still challenges to achieving gender equality in education.

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

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

The SDGs Goal 4 specifically addresses the importance of high-quality education and seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." This is specifically addressed in Target 4.5, which states: "By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure that all disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations, have equal access to all levels of education and vocational training." The assumption is that educating girls and achieving the SDGs for gender equality will have a variety of positive effects on developing countries (Shultz, 2014).

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

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



management committees have been given more power to make decisions that will support the delivery of high-quality education.

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

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

A study conducted by Wafula and Juma (2018) examined the effectiveness of government policies in promoting girls' education in Central Pokot Sub County. They

found that although policies had been put in place, cultural beliefs and practices remained significant barriers to girls' education. The government has not yet developed primary school education while also addressing socio-cultural and socioeconomic factors in the Central Pokot sub-county.

This study heeds to the UN SDG 5 which advocates for major efforts to eliminate discrimination, exploitation and violence against women. However, it seems the efforts listed in the SDG represent a West-centric approach to providing global solutions to world problems; yet, discrimination against women continues unabated globally, West Pokot County included. In the spirit of decolonizing development, we hold that Ubuntu can be a solution. Ubuntu is an indigenous African value-based worldview that may be applied to promote women's equality and empowerment globally. Ubuntu can provide insights and creative ways in which it may be applied to meet global aspirations for justice while evaluating its limitations. For instance, Ubuntu holds that `I am because we are, since we are therefore I am` (Mbiti, 1969). This means that, if the world adopts a worldview that women have their place in development fully, they will be appreciated as humans who deserve what others have.

#### **4.3 The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Providing Education in Central Pokot Kenya**

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

In the early years after independence, the GoK faced significant challenges in providing education to all citizens, and Churches stepped in to fill the gap. Missionary

organizations such as the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and the Presbyterian Church played a critical role in establishing schools and training teachers. These schools provided education to Kenyan children, regardless of their social or economic background.

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

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

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

shape their character, and spread their faith as a way to transmit morals and beliefs and reinforce the moral fabric of Kenyan society, the FBOs established schools in West Pokot.

To support the aforementioned, Mwangi (2012) points out that Canon 795 of the Catholic Church categorically states that education must take into account the formation of the whole person to assist everyone in achieving their eternal destiny and advance society as a whole. A harmonious development of a child's physical, moral, and intellectual faculties must be encouraged while raising children and young people (Wasamba, 2005). They can acquire a greater sense of responsibility, learn how to exercise their freedom responsibly and prepare for active participation in society in this way. This claim amply supports the Church's correct view of education.

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

A study done by Van Peter (1996) also holds similar views, arguing that religious education is sufficient because people have moral and spiritual tendencies. Christian education, therefore, involves the development of constructive attitudes that transform a person's life into one that emulates Christian living as demonstrated by Christian character and conduct. Since many of the respondents who provided information for this work held this opinion, Magee (1967) found that religious studies are essential for a comprehensive education.

According to Bishop Mckeown (2010), the Catholic Church established its schools because it sees them as a unique way to promote the development of the whole person because the school serves as a centre for the development and dissemination of specific concepts about the world, the human being, and history. Faith-based education involves more than just teaching people about Christianity (Wafula, 2018). It specifically deals with whole-person formation to help everyone reach their eternal destiny and advance societal harmony.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Additionally, FBOs are involved in capacity-building programs that equip girls with life skills and knowledge that will help them succeed in school and beyond. They

provide training on leadership, entrepreneurship, and financial management, helping girls to become self-sufficient and contributing members of society. The FBOs provide scholarships and financial assistance to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, enabling them to access education. These scholarships can cover school fees, uniforms, textbooks, and other educational expenses, making education more affordable and accessible for girls.

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

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



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

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

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

hours in consultation with the administration and that they were frequently involved in staffing decisions. Additionally, the Churches in Pokot have made use of education as a tool to carry out their program of evangelism, bringing the good news into every situation in which humanity is found to renew humanity (Barasa, 2014). Early missionaries in Pokot saw education as a way to advance social, technological, and economic development in addition to preaching (Nganga, 2008). As a national education agent with a moral obligation to create a different kind of future for Kenyan youth through education and community development in Central Pokot Sub County. Isika (2012) emphasizes that Churches take an all-encompassing, spiritual, intellectual, economic, and physical approach to solving problems. To properly address a person, their entire being—soul, body, and spirit—must be taken into consideration. Religious organizations, among other elements of ethnic society, were crucial in connecting African society to the revolutions that were brought about by education (USAID, 2016). It is assumed that gender inequality will be reduced to some extent if the Faith Based Organizations support and collaborate with the government on educational issues.

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

According to Mwangi (2012), Christianity has systematically spread, allowing the majority of young people to embrace it. This value has aided in the development of a fully integrated society with a solid Christian foundation. The Church has been

successful in reducing egoistic tendencies in young people and cultivating a strong altruistic base thanks to its central role in tele-evangelism. On the basis of her history and contributions to the field of education, the Church, which serves as the moral foundation of society, has the authority to help address issues related to gender disparity in primary education (Summers, 1992).

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

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

to address them one by one (Mwangi, 2012). FGM featuring as the main cause of gender disparity in primary education can be addressed through enculturation by the FBOs through alternative rites of passage.

According to Ruether (2006), the missionary's goal was to spread Christian understanding among the people living in a tribal setting. For evangelism to be successful, the young converts would need to be educated so they could read the Bible in their native tongue. Due to the majority of Pokot residents' unwillingness to give up their cultural practices due to illiteracy, it was necessary to use other tactics to ensure that children were drawn to education. In addition, providing a stepping stone for the emancipation of women was the mission schools' greatest accomplishment, outside of offering general education. The school helped the girls develop a new consciousness and prepared them for fresh challenges in life (Olesen, 1994). Due to the powerful traditional forces that prevented parents from releasing their daughters for formal education in West Pokot County, this educational strategy proved to be slow (Otiato, 2016). But the arrival of the Sister Congregations in Kenya gave the development of the education of the girls a new impetus that strengthened it even more. For instance, the expansion of girls' education in the larger Kitale diocese was facilitated by the arrival of the Congregations of Sisters by the end of 1970 (Nganga, 2008). These Congregations started several girls' schools. Saint Mary was founded by the Mary Rehabilitation School, which is currently a shelter for young girls. The establishment of Father Leo Girl's Secondary School in Central Pokot Sub County, later on, has greatly aided the education of girls throughout West Pokot County. After teaching children how to read and write, they would be given food that was special compared to what they typically ate at home. Likewise, the clothing was different from what was considered appropriate for school (Odaga, 2015). Religious instruction, reading,

writing, maths, hygiene, gardening, and drills were all taught in the early schools. Through the promotion of games, sports, and music, schools served as social hubs for a new social life.

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

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

in Kenya (Jaetzold, 2010). Most of the learned people in Central Pokot Sub County attribute their education to sponsorship and support from Faith-Based Organizations.

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

A Seventh Day Adventist church elder stated that;

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

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

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

An ACK evangelist noted that;

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

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

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

World Vision Kenya, an FBO, is actively involved in promoting gender equality and empowering girls to access education. Vision Kenya has been working in Central Pokot Sub County to address gender disparities in education by providing support to schools and communities. The organization has been working with local leaders and community members to raise awareness about the importance of educating girls and to challenge harmful cultural practices that perpetuate gender disparities in education. The

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

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

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

*Lack of education encourages harmful traditional practices including FGM and early marriage. Teaching the benefits of Education to girl children is important in FGM eradication and should be done to improve the level of literacy among women in Central Pokot Sub County. WVK as an FBO has the potential and responsibility to change the community attitude from FGM to Alternative Rite of*



*Passage using Christian-based teaching and examples* (C. Chongwony 17th Nov. 2018).

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

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

One WVK worker stated further that;

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

WVK girl child sponsorship in Central Pokot Sub County is recommended; it has contributed to the improvement of girls’ education; they have put a lot of effort to secure girls’ futures by reinstating the drop out to the rescue centre schools (Luca, 2012). This enables them to make better decisions in the short and long run.

A key informant reported that the retention rate of the sponsor is high since there are no setbacks like influence from parents to remain at home or lack of school fees. The

Christian approach used by WVK has contributed to the success of Central Pokot Sub County (Linda, 2014). This is further elaborated by the project assistance in building boarding facilities, donation of cows to schools, construction of classrooms, the introduction of anti-FGM clubs, payment of school fees, provision of school uniforms and construction of rescue centres to cater to girls threatened by FGM and early marriages. In collaboration with other CBOs like Mercy Vocational Training, *Anyiny Sapon*, *Ywaleteke* and *Cheptiangwa*, WVK partners to promote girl-child education by training girls to be self-reliant; encourage girls not to undergo FGM; promote anti-FGM advocacy and support vulnerable girls with income generating activities like catering, garment making, hairdressing, and artisan (Kumar, 2019).

One of the chiefs stated that;

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

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

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

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

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

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

FBOs engage in advocacy and policy influencing to address systemic barriers to girls' education. They work with local and national government entities to advocate for

policies that promote gender equality in education and allocate resources for girls' education programs. FBOs amplify the voices of marginalized communities and advocate for inclusive and equitable educational policies. Their holistic approach, encompassing advocacy, programs, empowerment, and community engagement, helps create an enabling environment for girls to thrive academically and overcome gender disparities in education.

The FBO and government should help create an inclusive and more supporting learning environment for all students

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

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have played a crucial role in managing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County. One such example is the Ywaleteke CBO, which has been working with schools and communities to promote gender equality and empower girls to access education.

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

leadership, entrepreneurship, and financial management, helping girls to become self-sufficient and contributing members of society.

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

One key informant from *the Ywaleteke* CBO group stated that;

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

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

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

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

#### **4.5 Points of Interaction between the Kenyan Government Faith-Based Organizations in Addressing Gender Disparity**

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

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

The government collaborates with faith-based organizations in providing social services that address the specific needs of women and girls. This includes healthcare services, educational programs, vocational training, and economic empowerment initiatives. FBOs often have networks and resources at the grassroots level, making them valuable partners in reaching marginalized communities.

The GoK and FBOs work together to advocate for legal reforms that protect women's rights and promote gender equality. This involves lobbying for changes in laws related to gender-based violence, inheritance rights, child marriage, and other discriminatory practices.

The government supports capacity-building efforts within faith-based organizations to enhance their understanding of gender issues and equip them with the tools to address gender disparities effectively. This includes providing training on gender-responsive programming, human rights, and leadership development.

The GoK and FBOs collaborate on research projects and data collection initiatives related to gender disparities. By pooling their resources and expertise, they generate evidence-based insights that inform policies and interventions aimed at addressing gender inequality.

The government facilitates interfaith dialogue platforms where representatives from different religious communities, including faith-based organizations, come together to discuss gender-related issues. This dialogue fosters mutual understanding, challenge stereotypes, and promotes collaborative efforts in addressing gender disparities.

The government engages FBOs in monitoring and evaluating the impact of gender-related programs and policies. Faith-based organizations contribute their on-the-ground perspectives and experiences, helping to assess the effectiveness of interventions and identify areas for improvement. By emphasizing the collaboration on these points of interaction, the Kenyan government and faith-based organizations can leverage their respective strengths and resources to address gender disparities more comprehensively and effectively. Such partnerships can lead to positive social change and the promotion of gender equality in Kenyan society.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

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



**CHAPTER FIVE**

**CHALLENGES FACING FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND THE  
KENYAN GOVERNMENT IN CURBING GENDER DISPARITY IN  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS ON GIRL CHILD IN CENTRAL POKOT SUB  
COUNTY**

**5.1 Introduction**

This chapter unveils the challenges the FBOs and the GoK have gone through in curbing gender disparity. In chapter four, this study revealed that both FBOs and the GoK have done a lot to curb gender disparity. However, they have not achieved their goal leading to the question of what obstacles they face in their endeavour to mitigate gender disparity.

**5.2 Challenges Facing the FBO and GoK in Curbing Gender Disparity in Primary  
Schools in Central Pokot Sub County**

Addressing gender inequality is critical across sectors responsible for delivering justice, social, and health and security services to survivors and to those responsible for the education of boys and girls. Adelakun (2018) noted that some laws were changed and others were established by the GoK and international organizations. But despite this, women still face numerous social, economic, and political disadvantages because attitudes did not shift as quickly as laws did. Since gender issues are ideologically driven, both men and women must change their attitudes and behaviours in all areas.

The GoK has made attempts to reduce gender inequality in Central Pokot Sub County's primary schools, but these initiatives have run into a number of obstacles. Several of these difficulties include:

### **5.2.1 Negative Cultural Practices**

Traditional practices such as early marriages and teen pregnancies are common challenges that contribute to girls dropping out of school at a young age. Addressing these issues requires not only educational interventions but also broader community engagement and support. Resistance to change, especially from conservative elements within the community, can hinder efforts to promote gender equality and challenge traditional gender roles.

Deep-rooted cultural and traditional norms can perpetuate gender disparities in education. In Central Pokot Sub County, certain cultural practices and beliefs may prioritize boys' education over girls', leading to lower enrolment and retention rates for girls. These beliefs can be difficult to challenge and change particularly when they are deeply engrained in the community's traditions. Overcoming these norms requires sustained efforts to change mind sets and promote the value of girls' education. For example, early marriage is still prevalent in some communities, with parents opting to marry off their daughters at a young age rather than send them to school. This undermines the government's efforts to promote gender parity in primary schools (Society for International Development, 2010).

Early marriage and teenage pregnancy are prevalent challenges in Central Pokot Sub County. Girls who are married at a young age or become pregnant often drop out of school, leading to significant educational gaps. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive strategies that involve community engagement, awareness campaigns, and access to reproductive health services. Parents opt to marry off their daughters at a young age rather than send them to school. This deprives girls of the opportunity to pursue their education and limits their prospects. Additionally, some cultural practices dictate that girls should focus on domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, and taking

care of younger siblings, while boys are encouraged to attend school and pursue careers. This reinforces gender roles and stereotypes that limit girls' opportunities and perpetuate gender inequality. Such cultural practices undermine the government's efforts to promote gender parity in primary schools and need to be addressed through education and awareness-raising campaigns.

Additionally, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM) as a rite of passage can have serious health consequences and can also prevent girls from attending school, as they may be forced to drop out due to the physical and psychological effects of the procedure. Such cultural practices perpetuate gender inequality and undermine efforts to achieve gender parity in education. It is important to work with communities to raise awareness of the negative impacts of such practices and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls. During this study, an elder clarified that most girls are affected by cultural practices such as early marriages and rites of practice such as female genital mutilation (FGM)".

In the Pokot community, male children are preferred over female children, and girls may not have the same access to resources and opportunities as boys. For instance, inheritance laws favour male heirs, which means that women and girls may not have the same access to property and resources as men.

As a result, a large portion of Kenyan society still needs to comprehend the value of educating women to prepare them for leadership and development. The achievement of gender equity, which goes beyond simply empowering women, would be aided by this. The majority of participants in the focus groups believed that Central Pokot Sub County needed to be empowered for development to occur. All these should be done while having in mind that women's empowerment is key to achieving long-term development

and has been embraced among almost all governments of developing countries. This is due to the crucial role women play traditionally which is essentially managing households.

### **5.2.2 Discrimination and Limited access to quality Education**

Despite having comprehensive laws addressing gender disparity in primary education there seems to be a lack of political goodwill, inadequate legal protection, improper enforcement, insufficient resource allocation and poor implementation of national commitments to gender disparity in education.

Respondents in one of the FGDs complained that West Pokot County governments may have laws and policies that discriminate against women and girls, such as laws that restrict women's rights to own property or policies that do not provide equal opportunities for girls' education.

The remote and rural nature of Central Pokot sub county hassled to limited access to quality education for both boys and girls. Inadequate infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, and limited educational resources can hinder efforts to provide a conducive learning environment.

It seems the government pays limited attention to marginalized groups; insufficient attention has been paid to gender disparity in primary education due to the absence and analysis that helps develop an understanding of gender disparity in Central Pokot Sub County. USAID (2016) notes that high advocacy messages without data hinder the government's effort to ensure policy commitments and investments are adhered to, however, none is making a follow-up on girl child education.

### 5.2.3 Access and Control of Resources

The county government of West Pokot in trying to curb gender disparity in primary school is largely affected by a lack of access to and control of resources which is highly divided along gender lines in favour of men. The inequality is especially manifested in the discrimination that is involved in the access to necessities and services such as education, land, credit financing as well as markets (Chebitwey, 2016). Central Pokot Sub County is also experiencing a general decrease in access to formal employment and this affects the women harder than it does the men. One of the head teachers argued that;

*“A lack of access to opportunities and control over key resources has been fuelled by many factors such as a lack of women representation in the key decision-making organs of governance and other aforementioned factors such as culture and traditions which inhibits Central Pokot Sub County in trying to curb gender disparity in primary school” (Laktabai 17th Nov.2018).*

It has also been driven by the slow growth the country experienced in the past as a result of poor governance. Slow economic growth significantly impacts the country's poverty hence making the situation worse. As a result, the slow growth acted as an impediment to attaining gender equity or any form of progression in the economic and political spheres of Kenyan society thus further restraining any advancement that the country could make in line with achieving middle-income status by the year 2030.

### 5.2.4 Representation of the Female Gender in key decision-making Organs

The findings further indicated that the low transition rates of girls to positions of higher education as well as other factors such as poverty and culture have inhibited the Kenyan government in trying to curb gender disparity in primary school. This has resulted in the proportion of women in professional positions being quite small in comparison to

the fact that in Kenya women account for slightly more than half of the total population.

One elder interviewed stated that;

*“Under representation of the female gender in key decision-making organs has resulted in increased gender disparities in primary schools within the region”*

Efevbera, Bhabha, Farmer & Fink (2017) observe that “women are quite a few in strategic decision-making positions as compared to other developing countries, for instance, Rwanda which serves as an ideal example regarding having equity in representation. The fellow East African nation had female legislative representation at 48.8% as of 2015 and as it is well known, having representation increases the attention to gender-specific areas, such as education development. In Kenya, gender equity still requires a lot of intervention for its achievement to be realized (African Development Forum VI, 2015). Lack of female role models: The absence of educated and successful female role models in the community can limit girls` aspirations and hinder their motivation to pursue education. This is the case in my study area of Central Pokot that needs to be taken into consideration. Despite efforts by the FBOs and government, there is limited awareness and understanding of the importance of gender equality and girls` education within the community. Effective advocacy and awareness campaign are necessary to challenge prevailing norms.

### **5.2.5 Poverty**

Poverty and lack of economic resources can make it difficult for families to prioritize education, especially for girls. Girls may not be seen as potential contributors of household income through marriage or labour, leading to decisions that prioritize immediate economic needs over long term education. Poverty and limited access to resources can hinder girls' education. Families facing economic hardships may prioritize limited resources for boys' education or require girls to contribute to

household chores or income generation. Financial constraints, lack of school fees, and the cost of school supplies can disproportionately affect girls' access to education. Poverty is a significant challenge in Central Pokot Sub County, with many families unable to afford basic needs such as food, shelter, and education. Poverty affects girls more than boys, as families often prioritize boys' education over girls' education. This makes it difficult for the government to achieve gender parity in primary schools.

Education throughout the world enhances any type of development since it gives people the knowledge and skills needed in social, economic, and political sectors. Women form the majority of the uneducated population in Kenya and as such they are more vulnerable to being victims of poverty. This has continued to contribute to the gender disparity in Kenya and thus poverty is one of the great challenges that will continue to hinder the country's achievement of gender equity as well as middle-income status as it has been proposed in the country's Vision 2030. Looking deeper into how poverty restricts the country's progression in terms of gender equity shows how much this aspect has greatly held the country back on the road to development. This was according to an interview response from a chief who alleged that;

*Poverty which is a result of many other factors such as corruption, natural disasters, poor governance as well as the aforementioned such as rapid population growth and culture has in turn affected many other areas that are of great impact on the country's development and initiatives to curb gender equality in primary schools" (An interview with, Rotino 15th Nov.2018).*

Some of these areas are education, leadership, and health which are viewed as fundamental requirements for development. A lack of these skills affects society in many ways. Another interview response indicated that;

*"Poor parents would prefer investing in a boy's education than in a girl with the belief that the girl will only enrich her husband's family when she gets married. As a result of this ignorance, many women lag as they lack basic empowerment avenues that would equip them with*

*skills which would help them make major contributions to the country's development” (An interview with, Lorupe 17th Nov. 2018).*

According to Narayan (2014), persistent hunger and starvation that affects the country almost every year and the inability to access fundamental services such as healthcare, education, shelter, and clean water is presently defined as a humanitarian crisis in Kenya. A lack of these facilities continues to restrict the country's advancement towards attaining gender equity and this is because all the aforementioned factors affect Kenyan women in a worse capacity compared to men since women are more marginalized and excluded.

### **5.2.6 Population growth**

Kenya's population growth rate currently stands at 3% per annum according to the National Coordinating Agency on Population and Development and this has been noted as one of the many stumbling blocks the country has to deal with to achieve gender equity in primary schools (Adelakun, 2018). The findings showed that if the country wants to achieve middle-class economic status as envisioned in Vision 2030, especially in development sectors like education, the traditionalist culture that views women as mothers and wives will eventually lead to a situation requiring an urgent reduction in the country's population growth. According to an informant, "rapid population growth has also reduced other issues that also hinder the realization of gender equity." In order to achieve food security, universal primary education, primary healthcare for every Kenyan, and a decrease in maternal and infant mortality rates as planned for in Vision 2030, the country must find ways to encourage couples within the country to have smaller families, according to researchers from international aid agencies like the United States Agency for International Development report from 2016. Since the size of a country's population always affects how much of the national budget is available



for the provision of services to its citizens, including fundamental ones like education, the country's population growth rate will therefore have an impact on future development plans if it is not quickly stopped. As a result, gender equity in various sectors, including the development of primary education, will be hampered.

### **5.2.7 Other factors**

Some schools in Central Pokot Sub County lack basic infrastructure such as classrooms, toilets, and water. This makes it difficult for girls to attend school, as they often have to walk long distances to access schools that have the necessary infrastructure.

Central Pokot Sub County is a vast and geographically challenging region, with remote and sparsely populated areas. Lack of infrastructure, including roads and transportation facilities, can make it difficult for girls to access schools. The limited availability of schools in some areas, particularly for girls, exacerbates the gender disparity in education.

The GoK has allocated funds to promote gender parity in primary schools, but these funds are often inadequate. This limits the government's ability to implement programs and policies that promote gender parity.

Community involvement is crucial in promoting gender parity in primary schools. However, some communities in Central Pokot Sub County are not supportive of girls' education, which makes it difficult for the government to achieve its goals.

Shortages of qualified and trained teachers in Central Pokot Sub County can impact the quality of education and contribute to gender disparities. Limited teacher capacity to address the specific needs of girls, including gender-sensitive teaching methodologies, can hinder girls' academic progress and participation in schools.

Lack of parental awareness and involvement in their children's education can contribute to gender disparities. Engaging parents, particularly in remote areas, to understand the importance of girls' education and actively support their daughters' schooling is crucial in curbing gender disparity.

While the Kenyan government has implemented policies and initiatives to address gender disparities in education, effective implementation and monitoring at the local level can be challenging. Ensuring that policies are effectively executed, resources are allocated appropriately, and progress is monitored requires coordination and collaboration between the government, faith-based organizations, and other stakeholders.

### **5.3 Alternative Rites of Passage as a Tool to fight gender disparity**

During this study, most of the respondents suggested that since the Pokot value rites of passage, there is a need to promote alternative rites of passage. Rites of passage are important cultural practices in many African communities, but they can also present challenges, particularly when it comes to issues of gender equality and human rights. Apart from exposing girls to a lack of access to education: Traditionalists may view education as a threat to traditional values and practices, which can limit access to education, particularly for girls, some of the challenges of rites of passage include: the cut can result in physical and emotional trauma and some rites of passage may exclude certain groups of people, such as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or those with disabilities, leading to social exclusion and inequality. In addition, some individuals may feel pressure to conform to traditional gender roles and expectations during rites of passage, which can limit their opportunities for personal growth and self-

expression. At the same time, some rites of passage may have harmful traditional practices.

The alternative rite of passage for the girl-child strategy championed by Jacinta Muteshi Donald (2010) can be adapted by the religious society and FBOs to bridge education and culture in the Pokot community as an example of enculturation. During the adolescence stage, a program that runs for three weeks could be developed to teach the girl-child important cultural values and principles for rightful living by Pokot religious leaders without necessarily going through the entire process of FGM. This will protect the girl child from the harmful FGM and early marriage thus giving her ample time to pursue education (Sharma, 2004). Spiritual leaders can teach bible doctrines and prepare teenagers for the expected body changes and how to deal with the same. After the three weeks seminar a graduation ceremony could be done then the graduates can be showered with a lot of gifts.

The problems related to FGM and early marriage are not unique to the Pokot community, most of the pastoral communities in Kenya practised the same but due to interventions from Faith-Based Organizations, FBOs, NGOs and the government the problems were minimized and, in some places, completely eradicated.

As illustrated by Muteshi (2008) Promoting Gender Equality and Advancement of Kenyan Women, The Family Planning Association of Kenya (FPAK) combated FGM successfully in Nyambane District by adopting the following steps; The implementation of the projects involved various activities that included: information, education, and advocacy activities like counselling, family life education, workshops, the non-mutilating rite of passage and a graduation ceremony (Shahidul, 2015).

Boys and young men were also targeted for the training to enable them to agree not to use circumcision as a criterion for determining the marriageability of girls. The strategy requires a project advisory committee composed of opinion leaders including a council of elders who act as gatekeepers and wield great influence over their communities Ruto-Korir (2006). The project included the recruitment and training of volunteer community Gender Educators to teach the consequences of FGM and girls' early marriage, teenage pregnancy, HIV and AIDS, STIs and the importance of girls' education. The circumciser should be given support for example a dairy cow or any other economic empowerment to abandon FGM. From my research I discovered that those who participate in circumcision get material gain therefore FGM is a sort of business to some women in the Pokot community (Robinson, 2015).

During the three weeks, the Christian counselors should consider studies to uncover the myths, taboos, and practices on sexual maturation; the setting up of teen clubs and raising awareness about sexual maturation with information and knowledge that is enabling girl's education and the biblical teaching on the same (Puna, 2011). Jacinta noted that FGM has stopped in Uasin Gishu, Nandi, Kericho, and has been minimized in Bomet, Keiyo Marakwet, Kisii, Meru, Narok and Samburu counties respectively therefore if the same strategy is applied in Central Pokot division West Pokot County it will help to minimize gender disparity and to boost girl-child education. Faith-Based Organizations can adopt an alternative rite of passage as an intervention to stop FGM, this is the initiation of girls into adulthood without genital cutting which traditionally forms part of the initiation ceremonies of FGM. Girls are brought together for three weeks in a ceremony that is marked with educating girls on various life skills (Psaki, 2016).

The ceremony includes sessions with counselors who educate them on what is expected of them as they grow up, thus fulfilling an important aspect of this traditional ceremony. Sessions also focus on building girls' self-esteem and confidence. This is meant to help them deal with ridicule and stigma in their communities for not being circumcised. Parents, relatives, and other community members including leaders are usually invited to witness the last day of the initiation ceremony where the girls are showered with gifts and presents (Psacharopoulos, 2015). Furthermore, the opinion leaders and all the men in the Pokot community should be made aware of the harmful effects of FGM thus accepting the Pokot women as their wives without making circumcision a mandatory rite of passage. This results in the ability to cope with all the challenges and opportunities of the new culture of Pokot. The Faith Based Organization in essence should integrate into the Pokot culture with its values and challenges to penetrate their worldview.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter concludes that there are challenges facing FBOs and the Kenyan government's effort to mitigate gender disparity. These challenges include Negative Cultural Practices, Discrimination, Access and Control of Resources, Representation of the Female Gender in key decision-making organs, Poverty, Population growth, infrastructure, inadequate funds and lack of community involvement.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Summary

This study explored the role of FBOs and the GoK concerning gender disparity among primary school pupils in Central Pokot Sub County, investigated causes of gender disparity, challenges facing the Kenyan government in addressing gender disparity and established the possible contribution of FBOs and GoK in minimizing gender disparity in retention in primary education. At the end of the data collection period, all the responses were sorted out and analyzed qualitatively.

Chapter one highlighted the overall introduction and background of the research study done in Central Pokot Sub County, statement of the problem, objectives, literature review and research methodology. The study had three research questions with corresponding numbers of objectives. Data was collected and analyzed qualitatively.

Chapter two gave the background of the area of study on the location, geographical characteristics, political organization, demographic characteristics, early schooling, economic activities, health patterns, non-governmental organizations, history of the Pokot and the Pokot religion. It revealed that arid and semi-arid conditions have influenced the economic patterns and food security which the study revealed that they affect schooling as they contribute to gender discrimination in terms of access to education.

Chapter three investigated factors that led to gender disparity of the girl-child in Central Pokot Sub County, it also identified and analyzed the sociocultural institutions of the Pokot that have been created and are responsible for the gender disparity of girl-child in primary education. The study found that the Pokot community has deeply entrenched

sociocultural institutions that are specifically used to ensure the circumcision of the girl-child. It also found out that the socio-cultural, environmental and political organization of the Pokot community provided fertile ground for the continuation and propagation of early marriages. Finally, the study revealed that the socio-cultural institutions and practices of Pokot such as *sapana*, cattle rustling, early marriages, FGM and high bride wealth are among the factors that have sustained gender disparity in the girl-child primary education.

Chapter four analyzed various responses from the government and FBOs to minimize the gender disparity gap in education in the past, present and what they could do more. It was realized that FBOs and NGOs such as WVK have been actively involved in attempts to minimize gender disparity through several programs.

Chapter five explored challenges facing the GoK and the FBOs in implementing the free primary education policy concerning gender disparity, the findings indicated that there are quite several impediments that have continued to restrict progress in the achievement of gender equity in the county such as traditionalism, access and control of resources, representation of the female gender in key decision making organs, poverty, population growth rate and culture as well as politically enhanced restrictions such as corruption, a lack of good representation among many others.

Chapter six dealt with the Summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study. The study was guided by cultural adaptation and feminist education theories to explore the causes of gender disparity, understand the role of the government and the Faith-Based Organizations in addressing gender disparity in Central Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County and explore the challenges when addressing gender disparity.

## 6.2 Conclusions

The main objective of this study was to examine the role of the GoK and FB Organizas in addressing gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County, West Pokot County. Through the cultural adaptation theory and the feminist educational theory, the study concluded that socio-cultural and socio-economic issues such as nomadic pastoralism contribute to gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County; the FBOs and the GoK have attempted to address the issue of gender disparity through several programs and there are challenges facing the FBOs and GoK in their attempt to minimize gender disparity in primary schools such as insufficient funds.

This study also concluded that the GoK and FBOs have a role in addressing gender disparity in Central Pokot Sub County, West Pokot County. Many factors that lead to gender disparity of the girl-child in Central Pokot Sub County such as *sapana*, cattle rustling, early marriages, FGM and high bride wealth are among the factors that have contributed to gender disparity in girl-child primary education. In addition, the Kenyan government and FBOs have done a lot to minimize the gender disparity gap in education primary schools in the West Pokot sub-county. It was realized that FBOs such as World Vision Kenya and different Churches such as the Catholic Church have been actively involved in attempts to minimize gender disparity through some programs. in controlling and implementing regard to gender disparity such as negative cultural practices, access and control of resources, representation of the female gender in key decision-making organs and poverty.



### **6.3 Recommendations**

Given the above conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations.

#### **6.3.1 Recommendations to the Government of Kenya**

The following recommendations were made from the study in Central Pokot Sub County on gender disparity in primary education

- i. There are existing government policies targeted at controlling gender disparity, however, there is a problem in the implementation of the policies. The government should review and cross-examine the existing policies to ensure efficiency in curbing gender disparity of the girl-child. The general policies laid down by the government at times are not practical to all the different communities like Central Pokot Sub County.
- ii. We have programs intended to minimize gender disparity in primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County, more funds should be allocated to Faith-Based Organizations and the Kenyan government. The government is the most important and central single stakeholder in all efforts aimed at ending the gender disparity of the girl child in primary education. As the only legitimate and legal custodian of all public interest and education, the county government of West Pokot needs to mobilize all the powers and authority for the prevention and elimination of circumcision and early marriages of the girl child.
- iii. There are several cultural impediments to gender equity in Pokot County. The government should provide security for the girl-child and charge and imprison the parents who force their children to go through circumcision. Heavy penalties and dire consequences should be faced by the parents who let their children drop from school only to be married early dropping from school.

- iv. The existing laws of the government targeted at reducing gender disparity are clear. The County government of West Pokot should reinforce the central government's effort to mitigate FGM which is a major factor in girls dropping out to ensure retention and completion of primary education, ensure that those who break the law face dire consequences. Heavy penalties should be paid by those who marry below the age of eighteen. The circumciser should also face the law for doing what is contrary to the law of Kenya.
- v. There is a high illiteracy level in the West Pokot sub-county. The County government should consider reinforcement of the adult schools to minimize illiteracy levels in the county. They should make deliberate efforts to reduce adult illiteracy with a specific target on women, adult literacy is an important avenue for passing out information concerning the values and benefits of education to the older members of the community
- vi. Some teachers and local politicians are not well equipped with knowledge on policies on gender equity and disparity. The government should ensure that all the teachers in the county are sensitized on issues dealing with gender disparity, in turn, the teachers should be assisted to start and establish different clubs in schools such as Gender, Peer and Tuseme clubs, the clubs specifically train girls to speak out for themselves and train teachers as facilitators of the clubs. The aim is to get girls to run the clubs and address issues affecting them. Local leaders like politicians; governors, members of parliament, senators, Members of County Assemblies (MCAs) and chiefs can help a great deal in supporting bold moves by the County government of West Pokot to eliminate gender discrimination.

### **6.3.2 Recommendation to the Faith-Based Organizations**

Regarding the contribution of Faith-Based Organizations in minimizing gender disparity in primary school education, the following contributions were made;

- i. The study revealed that FBOs organizations play a significant role in minimizing gender disparity in primary school education. There is a need for strong partnership which is essential for systematic intervention from the Government, FBOs and the local community of Central Pokot Sub County, West Pokot County. If the FBOs organizations and community partner and unite to reinforce laid policies of the government, for sure gender disparity in education will be minimized. All the stakeholders in education need to be well informed at all times about the realities of gender disparity in education.
- ii. The Faith-Based Organizations and FBOs and the elites in the community to team up and form groups whose specific objective is to eradicate social injustice and gender disparity in education. More networks and pressure groups such as the Forum of Pokot Youth for Education should be formed to provide strong lobbying as well as the necessary pressure for promoting quality education for all girls and boys.
- iii. FBOs need to go back to their original role of mentor ship and guidance in society since they are the holders of the moral fibre of humanity. Faith-Based Organizations should consider changing their approach to education promotion by adopting enculturation to bridge culture and education. Enculturation will ensure the peaceful co-existence of important cultural practices and equal participation in education for girls and boys in Central Pokot Sub County.

- iv. Concerning cultural practices like FGM the Faith Based Organizations could actively participate in alternative rites of passage training and provide venues, training materials and co-sponsor graduation ceremonies which are community-based. Faith-Based organizations should target men as advocates of Alternative Rites of Passage and girl child education because Pokot is a patriarchal society. Therefore, Faith-Based Organizations have the machinery and God-given mandate and ability to help the local community to overcome gender disparity in education.
- v. Furthermore, the FBOs in Central Pokot Sub County can help eradicate poverty by providing alternative projects to boost their income for them to stop marrying young girls as a source of income. This will help the parents to shift their focus from the bride's wealth to more resources from the fruit of education of the girl child. Therefore, advocacy and social mobilization should be stirred and built on the ground by the natives of Central Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County to eliminate the gender disparity of girl children in the retention and completion of primary education.
- vi. There should be efforts to teach the people of Pokot alternative income-generating programs. Both Faith Based organizations and the Faith-Based Organizations in the Pokot community can convene meetings that provide equal access to livelihood programmes for both men and women. They should consider approaches that focus on the agenda for all as stated by Kenya's blueprint vision 2030; they should make the Pokot understand that Gender equality in education is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.

The FBOs ought to facilitate dialogue through sensitization and awareness creation aimed at changing the attitude of the Pokot people. This will minimise stereotypes, negative attitudes and encourage the education of girl children. FBO encourages the community to adopt alternative methods of initiating girls without circumcision through family networks with the Faith Based Organizations just like weddings are organized.

- vii. Finally, when addressing women-related issues, FBO changed their strategy by first approaching men because the Pokot are a patriarchal society thus men make decisions on behalf of everybody within the family setup. Religious organizations and FBOs should further help men understand the implication of FGM on women's health and therefore accept marrying girls who have gone through ARP.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

The primary objective of the study was to explore the role of Faith-Based Organizations and government in addressing gender disparity in education with an emphasis on Central Pokot Sub County, West Pokot County. Further research is, therefore, necessary for a study that would cover the entire Pokot County to understand the Central Pokot situation *vis a vis* the other counties. Further study should be carried out to examine the role played by the County Government in addressing gender disparity because of its proximity to the people and specific research on boy children who although not suffering from gender disparity drop out of school because of other cultural factors like cattle rustling.



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## APPENDICES

## Appendix I: Central Pokot Sub County West Pokot County Map at a Glance 2019



Location and livelihood zones of central Pokot Sub county in West Pokot County in Kenya (Source: National Drought Management Authority (NDMA, 2014).

**Appendix II: Introductory Letter**

Dear respondent,

I am a student in Moi University pursuing a masters' degree in religion. I am carrying out a research on Contribution of FBOs and GoK in addressing Gender disparity in education in Central Pokot Sub county of West Pokot County. I am requesting your assistance by filling in the questionnaire provided. Please note that the information gathered is for academic purposes, any information given is strictly for the purpose of the study.

Your assistance will be highly appreciated. I look forward to your prompt response.

Yours faithfully

**EMILY BITOK KUTTO**

### **Appendix III: Interview Schedule**

This interview is for purely academic purposes to collect data. The study seeks to assess the contribution of faith based organizations and the Government of Kenya in addressing gender disparity in primary schools in central Pokot Sub County. All information will be treated with confidentiality.

#### **SECTION A: To investigate the factors that lead to gender disparity in primary schools in the Central Pokot Sub-County**

- a) What is your gender?
- b) Do you think there is gender disparity in primary school education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- c) What factors do you think contribute to gender disparity in primary school education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- d) How do socio-cultural norms affect girls' access to education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- e) Do you think poverty is a major factor that contributes to gender disparity in primary school education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- f) Do you think there is a significant difference in the quality of education between girls and boys in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- g) How important do you think it is to promote gender equality in education in Central Pokot Sub-County?

**SECTION B: To find out the contribution of the Faith Based Organizations and the government of Kenya in minimizing gender disparity in primary school education in the central Pokot sub-county**

- a) Have you heard of any government policies or programs that promote gender equality in education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- b) How effective do you think the government policies and programs are in addressing gender disparity in primary school education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- c) What is the role of Faith Based Organizations in promoting gender equality in education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- d) Do you think the Faith Based Organizations have a significant impact on reducing gender disparity in primary school education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- e) What other organizations do you know of that promote gender equality in education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- f) How important do you think it is for the government and other organizations to collaborate in promoting gender equality in education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- g) What measures do you think the government and other organizations should take to minimize gender disparity in primary school education in Central Pokot Sub-County?

**SECTION C: To explore challenges facing faith based organizations and the government of Kenya in addressing gender disparity in the central Pokot sub county**

- a) What do you think are the major challenges the government faces in addressing gender disparity in primary school education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- b) How can the government ensure that girls in Central Pokot Sub-County have equal access to education?
- c) How important do you think it is for the government to allocate more resources to promote gender equality in education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- d) What role do you think parents and guardians play in promoting gender equality in education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- e) How can the government involve parents and guardians in promoting gender equality in education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- f) Do you think cultural practices play a role in promoting gender disparity in primary school education in Central Pokot Sub-County?
- g) How can the government work with the community to change cultural practices that contribute to gender disparity in primary school education in Central Pokot Sub-County?



**Appendix IV: Research Authorization**

**MOI UNIVERSITY**  
**Office of the Dean School of Arts and Social Sciences**

Tel: (053)43001-8 P.O. Box 3900  
(053)43555 Eldoret  
(053)43555

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**REF: EDU/PGF/1001/14** **DATE: 12 January 2017**

**Dear Sir/Madam,**

**RE: RESEARCH PERMIT IN RESPECT OF MS. EMILY BITOK KUTTO-  
SASS/PGR/04/9**

The above named is a 2nd year Master of SASS student at Moi University Foundations, School of Arts and Social Sciences.

It is a requirement of her M.A. studies that she conducts research and produces a thesis. Her research is entitled: **“Contribution of Faith Based Organizations and the government of Kenya in addressing gender disparity in primary schools in central Pokot sub county, Kenya”**

Any assistance given to enable her conduct research successfully will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

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PROF. SIMATEI

DEAN, SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES