

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO COMMUNITY INFLUENCE ON GIRLS' RETENTION IN
SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF KITHUNGO ZONE IN MAKUENI COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

Education has been cited as one of the most important determinants of economic growth. It is both an indicator, and an instrument, of development in the contemporary world. As the world settles into the 21st Century and beyond, gender disparity and inequality in education is a glaring reminder of the failed objectives and missed targets in regard to equal access to education as expressed by the international conferences, conventions and declarations, which many countries, including Kenya have ratified. Specifically, the Dakar World Education Forum (2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) of 2000 spelt out international commitments to guide the achievement of positive results for gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015 in primary and secondary; as well as in tertiary levels. As we embrace the hope of new beginnings and the promises of commitments to national development issues by governments of the day, it is imperative that we ‘take stock’ of gender issues in the education sector as a key step towards strategic and forward planning for the nation. In Kenya, as in many developing countries, a long history that dates right from the colonial period and possibly even earlier, present trends of gender inequality, not only in education but also in the labour market, political leadership and socio- economic spheres. National governments have embraced the idea of equal education for all as a matter of priority. Even as nations continue to grapple with the need to provide equal education for all, it is important to understand that their struggles are located within a broader historical and cultural context that explains discrepancies in the development of women’s education relative to men’s. The education of girls in the country has been impaired, partly because of the outright discrimination of selected regions, and partly because of the colonial gender ideology and thus the country has yet to record gender parity in all the regions. The research seeks to investigate community influence on girls’ retention in secondary schools of Kithungo Zone; causes of diminishing girls’ enrolment and explore possible solutions to this predicament in secondary schools as key objectives. The Literature review explores concepts and variables that have been developed in the field of study girl-child participation in education. The study adopts a grounded theory; a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection which attempts to investigate girls’ retention in secondary schools. The instruments used in the study are questionnaires and interview schedules. It is hoped that the outcome of the study will help stakeholders in Kithungo zone to realize improved retention and quality education for girls in Secondary Schools.