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## Where are our Girls? Gender Disparity in Secondary Education in Dire Dawa Administration, Ethiopia

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### **Abstract:**

*This study was aimed at identifying major barriers to females' secondary education enrolment in Dire Dawa Administration (DDA). The study employed a qualitative research method of phenomenological type. The respondents were 18 female students, five secondary school principals; four education officials selected using non-probability sampling techniques, and five parent-teacher association (PTA) members. Interview and document analysis were used to collect data. Analysis of the data indicated that parents' negligence and less attention to their daughters' education leads female students to develop less interest to their education and finally drop out from schools mainly after completing their primary education. Most family's low income and unable to cover their daughters educational and other costs forced secondary school age girls to quit their education and participate in different informal lower level life earning activities. Moreover, absence of secondary schools at rural areas and some teachers less motivation and frequent absenteeism from classes contribute to female students' repetition and dropping out from secondary schools.*

**Keywords:** Gender disparity, secondary education

### **1. Introduction**

#### *1.1. Background of the Study*

Creating equal access, for both boys and girls, to education at all levels is the major concern of nations mainly that of developing countries. Promoting gender equality and empowering women was one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016. SDG also states achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls as one of the basic and mandatory goals to be achieved by all nations. Besides achieving SDGs, promoting gender equality mainly in education has an important contribution to the economic development of nations. Research findings indicate a significant positive association between gender equality in education and economic development (Chen, 2004; Klasen, 1999; Klasen & Francesca, 2008; Moheyuddin, 2005). To the contrary, gender disparity in education has a significant negative impact on economic growth and development through lowering the average quality of human capital (Klasen, 1999; Klasen & Francesca, 2008; Moheyuddin, 2005). Hence, promoting gender parity in education plays an important role in facilitating socio-economic development of each and every nation.

However, in spite of all the efforts made by governments, international organizations, NGOs, and civil societies at large, women and girls attainment of the intended goals, particularly in Sub-Saharan countries, remain quite unsatisfactory (UNESCO, 2005). Gender disparity was still evident in access, enrollment and literacy figures.

In Ethiopia, historically, girls have been denied of opportunities for schooling in most of the regions and societies in the country. Their denial for education goes back into the old traditional schooling systems. In traditional Ethiopia, the Orthodox Church and Mosques were major institutions responsible for the discrimination of female education (Seyoum, 1988). The major factors seriously affecting girls'/women's participation in education are harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriage, marriage by abduction, isolation during menstruation, cultural misconception of the community and the family, pressure to conform to cultural norms (Almaz, 1991; Hyde, 1993; Kane, 2004; MOE, 1994; UNESCO, 2003); lack of parental encouragement and distance from school (David, 1993; Kane, 2004; World Bank, 1991); bride price paid by the bridegroom's family to the bride's parents (World Bank, 1998). In response, The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) formulated several laws and policies to promote gender equality. Particularly, Article 35 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia clearly stipulates the rights of women. The government has also been promoting the mainstreaming of gender in all its development policies and strategies to address the problems of gender inequality.

Several policies, strategies, packages, and guidelines that promote girls'/women's education have been formulated. National Policy for Women formulated in 1993, Education and Training Policy of 1994, Alternative Basic Education Program, Capacity Building Strategies and Program designed in 2002, Education Sector Development Program I-IV, Rural Development Policies of 2002,

National Girls' Education Strategy adopted in 2005, Ethiopian Women Empowerment Package of 2005, Adult Literacy Strategies of 2007/2008 and 2008/2009, Technical and Vocational Education and Training Strategy refined in 2007, Special Education and Adult Education Strategies, General Education Quality Assurance Program and Package, and Strategy for promoting Primary and Secondary Education in Pastoralist Areas which has been formulated in 2008 are among these that the government has designed with the intention of promoting female participation in the education sector.

Thus, as a result of these efforts done throughout the country, the flow of female students to school has been increasing at a faster rate than ever before in recent years. However, still there are great differences in educational enrolment between boys and girls at all levels mainly at secondary and higher education. The 2014 data, from Ministry of Education, indicated that gross enrolment rate (GER) to first cycle secondary education (9-10) was 39.9% for boys where as it was 36.9% for girls (a 3% difference). Similarly, in the same year, GER to second cycle secondary education was 10.6% for boys and 8.4% for girls; with a difference of 2.2% (MOE, 2014). In other words, from the total of students admitted to second cycle secondary education in 2012/13, girls account for 44.4% where as boys account for the rest of 55.6% (MOE, 2014). Having all these in mind, this study was aimed at exploring the factors that operate behind the gender gap in secondary education with particular reference to Dire Dawa Administration.

### *1.2. Statement of the Problem*

Dire Dawa was the second largest city, next to Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia with an estimated total population of about 341,800 and more than 70% of its population is urban dweller (BOFED, 2015). In addition, the city has better infrastructure and facilities as compared to other regions except Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. The administration was also compact in its geographical size and relatively easy to handle issues as compared to other regions. Moreover, its secondary education was served by 10 government and 11 non-government secondary schools (DDAEB, 2016).

In spite of all these opportunities, the administration's secondary education was characterized by high gender gap at both general secondary education (grades 9 and 10) and preparatory program (grades 11 and 12). 2016 statistical data from DDAEB indicated that GER to first cycle secondary education (9-10) was 57.2% for boys and 48.3% for girls, with a difference of almost 9%. The same year data indicated that GER to second cycle secondary education was 23.1% for boys and 17.9% for girls; the difference was more than 5% (DDAEB, 2016). In a normal situation in which the secondary school age population for both boys and girls are relatively equal, this difference may be acceptable. However, what is on the ground was somewhat different. According to 2016 data from DDAEB, girls were account for almost 51 % of the total secondary school age population (15-18 years) in the administration (DDAEB, 2016).

Similarly, as compared to primary level education system in the administration, high gender disparity was observed at the secondary level. For example, 2016 data indicated that gender parity index (GPI) for primary level was 0.90 and it was 0.82 for secondary education (DDAEB, 2016). This indicated that there were only 82 girls for every 100 boys at secondary education level.

Moreover, to emphasize the seriousness of the problem, it may be sounding if comparison is made with Addis Ababa City Government secondary education. It was clear that Addis Ababa City Government and Dire Dawa Administration share some similarities, though they were not the same in all aspects. For example, they were similar in terms of population distribution; both have better infrastructures as compared to other regions; they have well experienced and qualified teachers and other educational personnel; both have well organized and well-equipped schools as compared to schools in other regions in the country.

However, when we compare their secondary education system in terms of gender parity what is observed in DDA secondary education, especially in preparatory program, was completely different from that of the AACAA. According to 2015 statistical data, in AACAA, from the total students enrolled to general secondary education girls were account for more than 55% and in that of preparatory program they were account for about 57% (AACAAEB, 2015). In contrast, in DDA, according to 2016 data, in first cycle secondary education the gross enrolment rate for girls was 48.5% and for second cycle secondary education GER for girls was 17.9% (DDAEB, 2016).

In general, the above presented data indicated that the problem of gender disparity in secondary education participation in DDA was too serious and requires some remedial actions. However, as far as the knowledge of the researchers concerned, research works addressing this issue have never been conducted so far by the administration education bureau or by others involved in the administration's education sector. So, this was one of the reasons that initiate the investigator of this study to raise this issue and to come up with some remedial actions to be taken. Therefore, this study was aimed at treating the following research question: What are the major factors hindering girls' secondary education participation in Dire Dawa Administration?

### *1.3. Purpose of the Study*

The major purpose of this study was to identify factors hindering girls' secondary education participation in DDA. More specifically it was aimed at achieving the following objectives.

- i. To analyze the Administration's education system critically and identify the bottleneck at which girls are pushed out from the administration's education system, and
- ii. To identify socio-economic and political factors hindering girls' secondary education participation in the Administration.

### *1.4. Scope of the Study*

This study was delimited to identifying social, economic and political barriers to girls' secondary education participation (enrolment) in Dire Dawa Administration. Hence, other gender issues like disparities in academic performance, retention, dropout, participation in different classroom and co-curricular activities were not addressed by this study.

## 2. Research Design and Methodology

### 2.1. Method

A qualitative research method of phenomenological type was employed to attain the purpose of this study. This research method was selected for the reason that it is more appropriate to explicitly identify factors that contribute to gender disparity (girls' low enrolment). Regarding the importance of using qualitative research method for studying gender issues, UNESCO (2005) explained that qualitative research processes can dig out "hidden" gender issues and bring them out in to attention.

### 2.2. Sample and Sampling Techniques

All the secondary schools (namely Dire Dawa Comprehensive secondary school, Sabian secondary school, and Addisu secondary school) in urban area that fully operate and conduct both secondary and preparatory programs were included in the study as their number was manageable. Three school principals and three PTA members of these sample schools, and purposely selected 12 female students (4 from each school) were the respondents of this study. The selection of female students was based on their active participation in different issues and the roles they have in gender related matters and girls' clubs in their respective schools.

From the rural areas two secondary schools (Kalicha and Wahel) were selected purposely in order to analyze the trends there and identify peculiar factors affecting girls' secondary education participation at rural areas. Hence, two school principals and two PTA members and parents of these schools, six female students, three from each school, were the respondents of this study. The rationale behind the inclusion of PTA members and parents was that they help the investigator in exposing socio-economic factors, if any, related to the culture, tradition and economic aspects of the society that hinders female students from continuing their education.

Moreover, purposely selected two education bureau data collection, analysis, dissemination, and ICT service support process officers, and gender and other cross-cutting issues officer were the respondents of the study. The officers were included since their responsibilities are directly related to the issue under investigation and they have rich information regarding the issue. Besides, two secondary school supervisors (one urban school's supervisor and one rural school's supervisor) were selected and interviewed purposely based on their experiences to draw rich information for the study.

### 2.3. Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured interview schedule and document analysis were employed as major data collection instruments. More specifically, data and information were collected from the sample respondents by using semi-structured interview schedules and secondary data were obtained from MOE and DDAEB education statistics annual abstracts and other related documents like quarter and annual reports of the sample schools.

### 2.4. Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative content analysis method was employed to analyze the qualitative data that were collected from in-depth interviews with sample respondents. Qualitative content analysis, as defined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), is a method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. It is any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2002). It allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner.

Hence, the investigator of this study was used individual themes as units of analysis for the reason that themes that might be expressed in a single word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, or an entire document are the most commonly used unit of analysis in qualitative content analysis (Berg, 2001; and Miles & Huberman, 1994). Themes were used as a coding unit in this study. Primarily look for the expression of an idea was focused on and then a code was assigned to a text chunk of any size as long as that chunk represents a single theme or issue of relevance to the research question.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1. Gender Related EFA, MDG, and SDG Goals

In April 2000, the World Education Forum adopted the Dakar Framework for Action as a follow-up to the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) adopted in 1990 in Jomtien (Thailand) (UNICEF, 2000). The Dakar Goal 5 focused on eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality (UNICEF, 2000).

In September 2000, the more comprehensive UN Millennium Declaration which contains eight different goals (MDGs) was adopted by the world leaders (UNDP, 2003). Among these goals, two are directly about educational development. Goal 2 aims at achieving UPE and its first target is to ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015. Goal 3 aims at promoting gender equality and empower women. Its first target is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015 (UNDP, 2003).

The 2012 UN Conference (Rio+20) was reached on an international agreement to negotiate on a new set of global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide the path of sustainable development in the world after 2015. This conference come out with a document that lists action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, inspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries goals (Osborn, Cutter and Ullah, 2015). As indicated on the document the implementation of the

goals is expected to take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and also respects each and every nation's national policies and priorities (Osborn, Cutter and Ullah, 2015).

Among the 17 goals of SDGs two are directly related and applicable to education sector of all countries in the world. Goal 4 of SDGs states about "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting life-long learning opportunities for all." According to this goal by 2030 all nations are expected to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational trainings for the venerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people, and children in vulnerable situations. Similarly, Goal 5 of SDGs states about "achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls." This is about ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

### 3.2. Current Situation in Ethiopia and Other Sub-Saharan Africa Countries

UNESCO's 2010 data indicated that, in 2008, GERs for primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa is very lowest in Eritrea (52%) and is highest in Sierra Leone (158%) including overage and under age children (UNESCO, 2010). In the region, in ten years (1999 – 2008), GPI for primary education increased from 0.85 to 0.91 (UNESCO, 2010) which shows a promising improvement. Countries in the region like Botswana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Senegal, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe are almost achieving gender parity and others including Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique and Niger have made significant progress towards parity (UNESCO, 2010).

A greatest gender disparity still exists in Chad (with GPI 0.70), the Central African Republic (with GPI 0.71) and Somalia (with GPI 0.55) (UNESCO, 2010). As compared to countries in the region, GPI for primary GER in Ethiopia somewhat reside at the middle. In 2010 the GPI for primary GER in Ethiopia was 0.93 (MOE, 2010).

In relation to secondary education, GERs in the region was significantly lower as compared to other regions and it varied from 8% in Somalia to 110% in Seychelles (UNESCO, 2010). The GPI for secondary GER for the region as a whole decreased from 0.82 to 0.79 in between 1999 and 2008 (UNESCO, 2010). Mauritius is the only country (out of 35 with data) to achieve gender parity in secondary enrolment (UNESCO, 2010). In Ethiopia, in terms of secondary education enrolment, GPI was 0.80 for general secondary education (9-10) and 0.57 for preparatory program (MOE, 2010) which indicates that, particularly at preparatory program, the gap is very large and grouped the country with those with high gender disparities.

### 3.3. Benefits of Females' Education

Besides achieving gender disparities educating female has enormous advantages. A number of research results indicated that the benefits of female education are substantial. Among the benefits social and economical returns are the major ones.

In relation to economic benefits, results of studies conducted in different countries indicated that estimated return to girls' secondary schooling is found to be higher than the return for boys. For example, in Thailand in 1980/81, females' education return was found to be 20.1%, where as it was only 11.3% for boys and in Cote d'Ivoire, in 1985, the returns were 28.7% for girls and 17.0% for boys (Schultz, 1993, cited in Moheyuddin, 2005).

Similarly, the social returns to female education are higher than that of the returns to male education (Herz, Subbarao, Habbib & Raney, 1991 cited in Teshome, 2002). According to the researcher's female education resulted to better family health, it reduces the number of unwanted births and causes women to seek for smaller families. Hence, female education contributes much more to the economic and social wellbeing of the family and the community as a whole.

### 3.4. Factors Affecting Females' Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa

As repeatedly mentioned by different researchers, factors that affect female education are multi-faceted and interrelated. They have been discussed and classified in a number of ways. With particular reference to SSA, Odaga and Heneveld (1995) cited in Teshome (2002), discussed the factors under three categories: socio-economic and socio-cultural factors, factors related to schools, and political and institutional factors. Similarly, the World Bank (2008) classified the barriers to secondary education participation in SSA into: social and cultural factors, economic factors, family factors, political factors, bureaucratic factors, institutional factors, infrastructural factors, contextual factors and health factors. For the purpose of this study I reviewed the barriers under socio-cultural and economic factors, school related factors and political factors.

*Socio-Cultural and Economic Factors:* The direct and opportunity costs of schooling (Gibson, 2004), and the priority given to girls' future roles as mothers and wives (WB, 1996) have a negative effect on girl's educational participation. In support to this idea AED (2006) indicated that:

*Families are more likely to view the education of a girl not as an investment, but as a loss or, at best, an investment in someone else's family.*

The reason for the above statement is that in Africa mainly in SSA, females are expected to marry into and then care for their new families, while males are expected to stay with their own parents and immediate family to care for and support them. Hence, families are not willing to invest on the daughters' education.

Moreover, the opportunity cost for educating girls is higher than that of boys because in most developing countries, girls shouldered more responsibilities than boys (AED, 2006). According to AED girls are expected to look after young siblings, perform household activities, work in agricultural fields, and sell goods at markets. Consequently, their engagements in different activities make parents to be unwilling to send girls to schools. This result to girls' low academic performance and drop out from schools even if they got the chance to education.

*School Related Factors:* Teachers' negative attitudes to female students' academic performance, violence and sexual harassment in schools, biased reflected in textbooks and other learning materials create an uncomfortable situation for girls at schools (WB, 1996). In addition, severe lack of education infrastructure like shortage of schools, desks, books and other facilities more affect females than males. For example, the results of studies conducted by CAMFED and FAWE in Zimbabwe and Uganda showed that menstruation in the absence of appropriate facilities can contribute to girls' significant absenteeism and drop out (Gibson, 2004).

*Political and Institutional Factors:* Different researchers identified various political factors affecting girls' education in SSA. The major ones are financial crises and the inadequate public commitment and support to the education sector (WB, 2008). More specifically, the weakness of research and policy in addressing girls' education, lack of political will in promoting girls' education, unclear strategies, and weak capacity in implementing policies and strategies and the like hinder female schooling (WB, 2008).

### 3.5. Barriers to Girls' Education in Ethiopia

Different barriers to girls' education (mainly at primary level) in Ethiopia have been identified by different researchers. For example, Rose *et al* (1997), Rose & Al-Samarrai (2001), Teshome (2002), Rose (2003), and Hyde *et al.* (2005) are the prominent researchers who identified different barriers to girls' education in Ethiopia. For the purposes of this study, I will categorize and discuss the barriers identified by these researchers under: Cultural, Economic, Political, and School related factors, even though they are interrelated and in some cases mutually affecting each other.

*Cultural Factors:* Under this major category there are different varieties of barriers to girls' education that are practiced by the community at different localities at different levels in the country. Early marriage and abduction is the major barrier that is practiced throughout the country. Though the legal age for marriage in Ethiopia is 18 years (FDRE, 2000), but for various reasons (cultural, religious and economic) early marriages (below age of 18) are still practiced in some parts of the country (Hyde *et al.*, 2005; Save the Children, 2008). Though some improvements are observed, early marriage, abduction and rape are the major reasons for girls not attending schools or for quitting their education after puberty in Ethiopia (Hyde *et al.*, 2005).

*School Related Factors:* One of the school related factors that is common in Ethiopia is lack of school at nearby localities. The long distances between home and schools have a number of effects on children's education particularly on girls' education. Hyde *et al.* (2005) identified many negative effects of the long distance between home and school. Among them (i) parental reluctance to send young children and girls to school, (ii) exposure of girls to abduction and rape, and (iii) shortage of time for study and for household labor contributions are the major ones.

The other barriers that are identified by researchers under this category include shortage of qualified teachers, inappropriate teaching methods, uncomfortable and insufficiently equipped classrooms, corporal punishment, absence of separate toilets for boys and girls as well as its cleanliness and conformability to use for girls, absenteeism of teachers from class and other related factors (Hyde *et al.*, 2005; Rose, 2003; Teshome, 2002).

Moreover, lack of educated female role models at school as well as in the community is another school related factor that negatively affects girls' education (Rose, 2003). Female teachers may be the only example of educated females in rural areas (Hyde *et al.*, 2005).

*Political and Institutional Factors:* The political will and commitment of the government structures at different levels may be explained by the amount of fund they are willing to allocate to the education sector. Insufficient funds have several implications to the teaching-learning process. Among the problems, it directly and indirectly resulted to gender disparities in educational participation (Hyde *et al.*, 2005; Rose, 2003; Teshome, 2002). During financial shortages, boys are given more priority to schooling over girls (Hyde *et al.*, 2005).

*Economic Factors:* The cost of educational materials resulted to students' dropouts and not attending schools. Consequently, it affects girls than boys. For example, Hyde and his colleagues explained that the purchase of a uniform for girls is more expensive than for boys (Hyde *et al.*, 2005) and hence families may not willing to send their daughters to school because of the high cost expected of them in teaching girls.

The other economic related factor that affects girls' education is lack of labor market opportunities after completing a given level of education. According to Hyde and his colleagues lack of labor market opportunities has a twofold effect on girls. First, it discourages parents to send girls to schools. Second, it further limits girls' opportunities for formal employment after schooling (Hyde *et al.*, 2005). Hence, parents are more interested to use their daughters for household activities rather than sending them to schools.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This study employed semi-structured interview schedules to find out the major barriers hindering girls' secondary education participation in DDA. The responses obtained from informants and data obtained from document are summarized and interpreted in Table 1.

2000 E.C(2007/08)				2001 E.C(2008/09)				2002 E.C(2009/10)			
Boys	Girls	Total	GPI	Boys	Girls	Total	GPI	Boys	Girls	Total	GPI
7567	5020	12587	0.66	7541	4859	12400	0.64	6543	4500	11043	0.69
60%	40%	100%		61%	39%	100%		59%	41%	100%	

Table 1: Trend of disparity in secondary education enrolment in DDA  
Source: MoE, Education Statistics Annual Abstract (2002 E.C/ 2009-10)

From the table above it is possible to see that in the indicated three years the improvement in GPI in the administration is not promising. Although a few improvements are observed but it is not uniform, rather ups and downs are observed in the trends of the three years. For example, in 2008/09 the gender gap was raised up in favor of boys while in 2009/10 the gap decreased down. In general, the trend of gender disparity in secondary education participation in the administration is almost similar throughout the indicated three years.

In relation to this gender disparity in secondary education participation that exists in the administration the informants identified different factors that hinder girls' participation. One of the factors identified was drop out from secondary education as a result of marriage and pregnancy. Concerning this problem Asha (all the respondents name mentioned are pseudonym) - a grade 12 student explained her observation as follows: "I remember more than three students who were my classmate and dropped out as a result of marriage. ... Marriage is a common practice in most areas mainly in rural areas in the administration."

The other factor mentioned by most respondents as barrier was parents' negligence and lack of follow up to their daughters' education. In relation to this issue, the gender officer from education bureau mentioned her concern as follows: "Education, mainly girls' education is not given credit by most parents in this locality. Parents give less attention to their daughters' education, no follow up at all from the side of most parents."

Lack of interest and attention to their education by the female students themselves was another factor mentioned by most respondents as a major barrier to girls' education. In support to this Semira - a grade twelve student in one of the urban secondary sample schools explained her observation as follows:

Most of us [female students], except some few, gave no attention to our education, we spent most of our time in wandering here and there in the school compound and/or outside the school. This may be mainly because of lack of follow up from our parents and less control of our schools. As a result, many of us [female students] failed the national exam at grade 10 and some others drop out from school without completing the cycle (grades 9 and 10).

Moreover, lack of female models in rural areas particularly from their localities, negative outlook to girls' education by parents and the community as a whole in rural areas and the like were the other barriers identified by some respondents mainly from rural schools. The above responses, among other things, reflect the low attention given to girls' education by most parents as well as the lack of interest to education by female students themselves. From my experience as a teacher and employee of the DDAEB, I shared the view of the respondents. The attention given to education in general and that of girls' education in particular by most community members and parents was low. Most parents send their children to schools for the sake of sending them. They did not follow up the day to day schooling of their children. As a result, most students mainly girls develop less interest to their education.

The other major barrier to girls' education identified by most informants was parents' low income. The respondents indicated that most of the residents in both urban and rural areas in the administration earn very low income and this affect more girls' education. In relation to this Hyde and his colleagues stated, low economic status affect the education of both boys and girls but it more affect girls' education (Hyde *et al.*, 2005). The responses of the participants also assured the negative effect of economic factors on girls' education. They explained that, though school direct costs have no as such influence on girl's education but parent's low-income forces girls (especially those secondary school age) to seek for other means to overcome the economic problem they faced and are facing in their life. The respondents assured that their parents also motivate them to quit their education and join other life earning activities. As a result, young females were forced to participate in different informal life earning activities like migration to Djibouti and other Arab countries, serving in hotels and bars, employed in coffee processing industries, marrying at early age and the like.

These were among the major economic factors that pull girls from their secondary education in the administration. In general, as a result of most families' low economic status, the availability and easy access to informal or lower level labor market opportunities in the administration and neighboring countries, and the low status given to girls' schooling by some parents, push and encourage female students to quit their education.

The other factors mentioned by the supervisors, plan and information officer, and gender officer as barriers to girl's education include: (i) the concentration of secondary schools at the centre, as a result, lack of access to secondary education by students from rural areas after completing their primary schooling, and (ii) lack of commitment to education in general and that of girls' education in particular from schools management like school principals, PTAs, and other responsible bodies. As a result, most female students in rural areas drop out from their schooling without completing even their primary education.

From the above explanations, it is possible to infer that the problems were directly related to the weakness of education bureau and its lower level structures. Among the weakness, inequitable distribution of secondary schools in urban and rural areas and lack of commitment to play role in retaining students in the system are the major ones.

The other and repeatedly raised issues by informants include: teachers lack of experience in handling students and in properly transferring the necessary knowledge and skills, inappropriate teaching methods, shortage of textbooks, frequent absenteeism from the teachers' side, unreasonable wastage of time at the beginning of each semester. Concerning this, Selam, a tenth-grade student at Sabian Secondary School, expressed her concern as follows:

At the end of this academic year we are expected to sit for national exam. But still now [the first week of December] we have not start some subjects, even basic subjects, like English, Mathematics, Civic and Ethical education. Such situations affect us [girls] more than boys because boys have different alternatives to compensate what they have missed in the classroom like studying in group, attending tutorial classes during evening time.

Similarly, Ribcca, a grade eleven student in Addisu Secondary School, expressed her experience as follows:

It was not my mistake for not scoring the highest score in grade ten national exams. I joined grade eleven by scoring the lowest passing mark. I and also my friends took the national exams without making necessary preparation and without getting basic support

from our teachers. We spent most of our time without attending classes because of teachers' absenteeism, and other school related problems such as shortage of textbooks and other reference materials.

To substantiate the complaints of the students, I interviewed principal of the school and school's supervisors. They confirmed the availability of some few teachers who frequently missed classes for many reasons. They explained lack of interest to the profession from the teachers' side and teacher's addiction to different drugs mainly 'chat' force them to miss classes.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on what is presented above I draw the following conclusions about factors that hinder girls' secondary education participation in Dire Dawa Administration:

1. The trends in gender parity index not show significant improvement throughout the indicated three years (2007/08 – 2009/10) in the administration. This shows still no necessary attention is invested to girls' education.
2. Absence of follow up and lack of attention to girls' education by parents as well as lack of attention to their education by female students themselves resulted to high attrition and dropout from schooling.
3. Economic problem and other pulling forces divert the attention of girls to participate in different life earning activities (early employment in different informal and low-level jobs, early marriage etc) rather than continuing their schooling.
4. Lack of access to secondary education at rural areas hinders rural girls' secondary education participation.
5. Unnecessary wastage of time and frequent absenteeism of teachers from classes were among the major barriers that contribute to female students' low academic success, lack of interest and dropping out from schooling. Figure 1 presents the major barriers and the relationship among them.

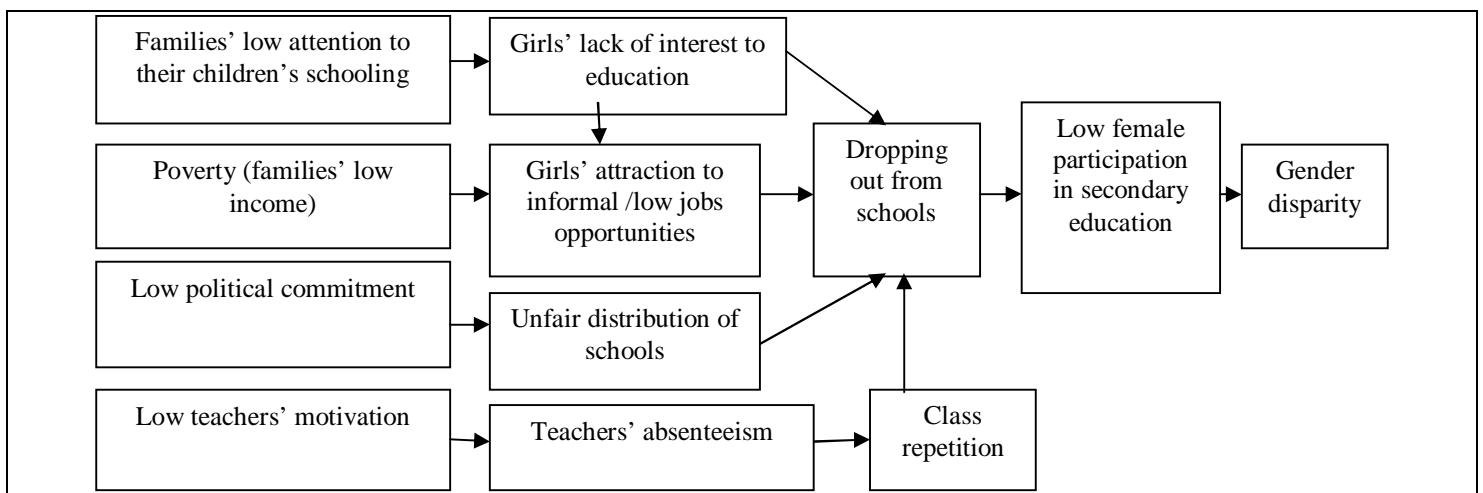


Figure 1: Major barriers and the interrelationships among them

### 5.1. Suggestions

It is clear that in order to solve the problem under study, each and every factor identified by the respondents required further in-depth analysis. However, based on the data and information at hand I suggested the following measures to be taken by the regional education bureau and its lower level structures in collaboration with other stakeholders involved in the education sector of the administrations to improve girls' secondary education participation:

1. The participation of secondary school age females in different informal and low level economic activities is one of the issues to be addressed. Therefore, the education bureau in collaboration with women affairs office have to deal with the problem by using different mechanisms like arranging frequent consultation programs with parents, providing teaching materials and other incentives for those female students at risk.

2. Enhancing academic self-concepts of female students is one of the mechanisms to retain female students at schools and enable them to be competitive in academic and other issues. Hence, the education bureau in collaboration with schools, starting from primary, have to raise girls' self-concept by using mechanisms like providing counseling services, presenting biographies of well known female educators in the country as well as in the administration via mini medias, inviting role model females to share their experiences.

3. Organizing rural primary schools in clusters, if not, based on their proximity and up grading one school from each cluster to general secondary school (grades 9 and 10) may at least create access for some girls at rural areas. Hence, the education bureau in consultation with the schools and the community members at each cluster has to work to address the shortage of secondary schools in rural areas.

4. Providing necessary supports and supervision services to schools and monitoring their day to day activities are key activities at least to minimize unnecessary wastages of academic calendar as a result of teachers' absenteeism and other unorganized school programs. Therefore, the education bureau has to work in supporting the school's day to day activities. Moreover, the education

bureau has to arrange frequent consultation meetings that include student representatives, teachers and school administrators to identify problems and to take corrective actions in time.

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