

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS INFLUENCING GIRLS COMPLETION RATE IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA: A CASE OF KIMILILI SUB COUNTY

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the individual factors that influence girls' completion rate in public primary schools in Kimilili Sub County, Kenya. The paper specifically focused on which pupils (girls) individual factors affected their completion of primary education level. Reports from Sub County Director of Education shows that in recent years, there has been increased disparity in completion rate between girls and boys in public primary schools because completion rate of boys is higher than girls. This state of affairs prompted the researcher to seek information from classroom teachers on specific girls individual factors influenced their completion rate (negatively or positively) in primary level of education. The data was collected from 385 standard eight teachers and 112 head teachers in 112 public primary schools in Kimilili Sub County, Bungoma County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was used. The sample size for the study consisted of 116 teachers and 11 head teachers. Questionnaire and interviews were the instruments used in collecting data. The study found out that individual factors relating to; early pregnancies, lack of sanitary pads, pregnancy, peer influence and distance from home to school influenced girl child completion rate negatively in completing their primary level of education. The study recommends strengthening guidance and counselling services in schools to identify and address early marriage and pregnancy cases.

Key words: individual factors, girl child, completion rate

Introduction

Education is widely regarded as a basic human right, a key to civilization, enlightenment and a source of wealth and power (UNESCO, 2013). It is the cornerstone of the growth and development of any country's social, economic and political instructions. According to UNESCO (2011), the wealth of a nation fundamentally depends on the development of human resources which does not exclude girls or women. According to World Bank (2002), education is vital to lasting positive change in children lives. Education forms the basis upon which economic, social and political development of any nation is founded. Investment in education can help to foster economic growth, enhance productivity, contribute to national and social development and reduce social inequality (World Bank, 2012). Khamati and Wesonga (2013) argue that investment in human resource development enables individuals to contribute more positively and effectively to the development of the country. Studies have shown a strong correlation between girls' primary education and positive externalities like accelerated economic growth, slower population growth, increased agricultural

yields, higher wages, decreased child and maternal mortality, fewer cases of domestic violence and increased female participation in government (UNESCO, 2011). It is therefore commendable to see various efforts being made by scholars, policymakers and the public in general to uplift the education of a girl-child by increasing the completion rate.

In almost all developing countries, school dropout and low completion rates has been a subject of interest to academicians, researchers and policy makers for a long time. School completion plays a crucial role in shaping a child's future economic opportunities and social destiny. Failure to complete the basic cycle of Primary school not only limits future opportunities for the pupils but also represents a significant drain on the limited resources that countries have for the provision of primary education (Achieng, 2013). There has been a decrease in completion rates of girls in primary school in some particular areas in Kenya (EFA, 2010). Consequently growing disparity in education in favour of male has been reported in primary schools. According to World Bank (2008), at primary level the percentage of girls enrolled marginally increased from 48.65% to 49.83% after the introduction of FPE (Awino, Simatwa & Ayodo, 2015). The introduction of FPE in 2003 saw the national Primary Completion Rate (PCR) rise by 5.4% in one year. The PCR for girls however, lagged behind that of boys over the same period which conforms to the national enrolment trends. The completion of rate girls in Kenyan public primary schools and Kimilili Sub County is far short of the target required to achieve universal basic education by 2030. With this situation persisting, researchers have been done to determine how various factors influences completion rate. Nevertheless, this study specifically focuses on how individual factors influences girls completion rate in public primary schools in Kimilili Sub County, Bungoma County in the republic of Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Reports from World Bank and UNICEF indicate that millions of girls do not complete primary education (World Bank, 2018). Atieno and Yambo (2017) showed that the Rongo sub-county had a dropout rate of 43 percent as compared to the neighboring sub counties like Uriri, Awendo, Nyatike, Kuria and Migori which had 25, 9, 27, 23 and 28 percent respectively despite the similar government's strategies availed to all the public secondary schools and the coverage of the same syllabus throughout the country. In the report commissioned in Uganda, World Bank found out that as many as three in ten Ugandan girls have their first child before their 18th birthday; more than a third marry before the age of 18. In turn, both child marriage and early childbearing lead girls to drop out of school prematurely. The same situation can be replicated here in Kimilili although not empirically verified (a focus of this study). In Kimilili Bungoma sub-County, the completion rate of girls in public primary schools is relatively low as compared to that of boys. Data from the Kimilili Bungoma Sub-County Education office indicate that more girls than boys enrol to school but they disappear along the way. This implies fewer girls than boys will pursue their education to higher levels. Hence, it is against this background that a study on individual factors influencing completion rate of girls' in public primary schools in Kimilili Sub-County was necessary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to investigate and understand the individual girls' pupils factors influencing their completion rate in selected public primary schools in Kimilili Sub County, Bungoma County, Kenya.

Significance of the Findings

The findings of this study will be of great significance to secondary schools administrators, policy makers and researchers. The findings of the study will provide an insight to school administrators on factors influencing completion rate of girls in primary schools. They may also utilise the recommendations of the study to come up with strategies to increase completion rate of girls. Through this study, it will be possible first, to add more information on the current database on completion rate of girls in primary schools. It will form a basis upon which further studies may be done to fill the existing gaps in literature.

Theoretical framework

The paper will be guided by Rumberger's theory of individual perspective. The theory was postulated by Rumberger (2009). The theory illustrates individual perspective and the institutional perspective on drop out as shown in figure 1 below:

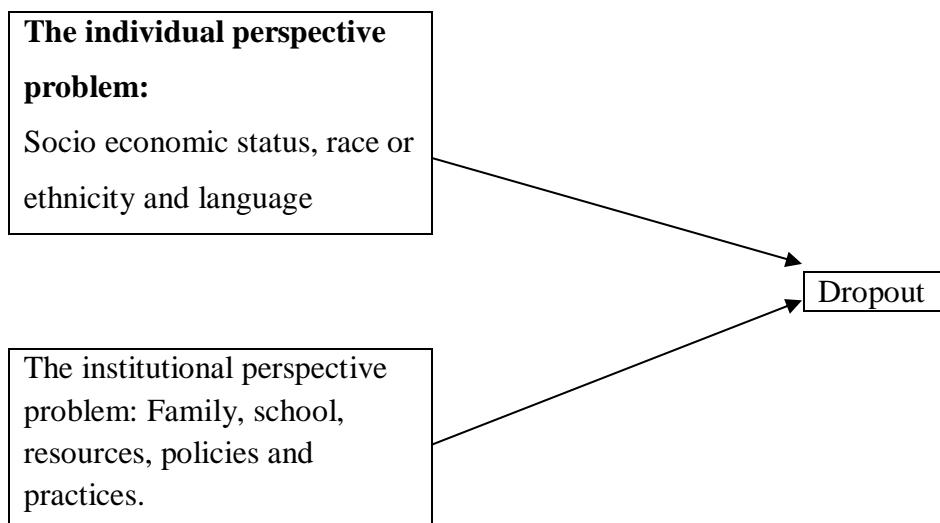


Figure 2.1 Rumberger's theory of individual perspective

Source: Rumberger (2009)

Rumberger (2009) gives two perspectives that determine dropouts. He states them as the individual perspective and the institutional perspective. The individual perspective holds that the problem of dropout is located within the learners themselves like socio-economic status, race or ethnicity and language. The institutional perspective holds that the problem of dropout is within institutions like family, schools, resources, policies and practices. Rumberger's theory put into account individual institutional perspectives that influence dropout. However, the current study only focused on individual pupils factors influencing completion rate of girls.

Literature Review

Improving education is one of the Sustainable Development Goals, and underlies others: increasing education improves health, reduces poverty and helps gender equality (Waage, et al., 2017). Initial primary school enrolment is high in most countries and often similar for boys and girls, but increasing dropout of girls in adolescence is a major and wide-spread problem (Hunt, 2008). Since schooling often starts late and grades are repeated, dropout in adolescence frequently means dropout before the end of primary school, as well as the loss of opportunities for secondary schooling and tertiary education (Glynn et al., 2018). School dropout and early sex, pregnancy and marriage are

influenced by the same underlying factors, including poverty, poor school performance, absenteeism, school characteristics, and peer, family and community pressures and expectations (Lloyd & Mensch, 2008). Glynn et al. (2018) argued that school dropout has been linked to early pregnancy and marriage but less is known about the effect of school performance. Early pregnancy as a social factor made most girls to drop out of school (Atieno & Yambo, 2017).

Empirical Studies

Various research studies have been conducted to determine the influence of individual factors on girls' completion of schooling in different parts of the world. In United States of America, Bischman, Gurevich, Noah and Rivet (2015) explored the influence of peer effects on graduation probability and the individual characteristics that influence the gender gap in graduation outcomes for 9th graders entering high school. They found out that peer effect has a small yet significant effect on a student's probability of graduating.

In Zimbabwe, Magwa and Ngara (2015) carried out a study on factors influencing girl child dropout in Masvingo District. The study employed a case study design. The target population was pupils, teachers and head teachers of public primary schools in Masvingo. The study investigated on teen pregnancy and its influence on dropout rate of girls from school. The study sampled 326 respondents through purposive, simple random and stratified sampling designs and used questionnaires and interviews to collect data. The study established that teen pregnancy among girls was as a result of sexual abuse by family members, teachers and strangers which affected their completion of school. In addition, findings revealed that early marriage was a contributing factor to dropout of girls from secondary schools. In Malawi, Gynn et al. (2018) assessed whether school performance influenced age at sexual debut, pregnancy and marriage, and from what age school drop-out and performance were associated with these later life events. Data from 2007-2016 from a demographic surveillance site in northern Malawi with annual updating of schooling status and grades, and linked sexual behaviour surveys, were analysed to assess the associations of age-specific school performance (measured as age-for grade) and status (in or out of school) on subsequent age at sexual debut, pregnancy and marriage. For girls, being out of school was strongly associated with earlier sexual debut, pregnancy and marriage. For example, using schooling status at age 14, compared to girls in primary, those who had dropped out had adjusted hazard ratios of subsequent sexual debut, pregnancy and marriage. They concluded that School progression at ages as young as 10 can predict teenage pregnancy and marriage, even after adjusting for socio-economic factors.

In Kenya, Lanyasunya (2000) carried out a study on socio-cultural factors leading to drop out of girl child in secondary schools in Samburu District. The study used a descriptive survey design. The study found out that early pregnancy was the chief cause of drop out of girls from secondary schools in Samburu District. The study sampled 126 respondents. Data was collected using questionnaire. As a result, parents fear that their children will get pregnant before completing school hence they marry them off early. Namunwa (2013) carried out a study on socio-cultural factors influencing dropout in primary schools in Katilu Division, Turkana County, Kenya. The study used a descriptive survey design. The study sampled 180 respondents using stratified and simple random sampling designs. Data for the study was collected using questionnaires and interviews. The study found out that early marriage contributed to drop out of students from school. The study observed that early marriage was favoured because it caused wealth to the family through payment of dowry. It is a traditional practice where school going girl-children were married off through a traditional

marriage *akuuta*. Atieno and Yambo (2017) study was to establish the influence of peer pressure on secondary school students' drop out in Rongo Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya. The study involved forms 3 and 4 students as they have been in school long enough to understand the schooling process. The descriptive design which involved qualitative strategies to data collection was employed. 755 students, teachers and head teachers were targeted for the study. The study concluded that in most cases where students are most often sent home there are high chances that some never returned to school and most schools did not support the learners who were coming from poor background.

In Bungoma County, Nasaba (2011) carried out a study on the factors influencing the dropout of girls in public primary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The study used a descriptive survey design. The target population for the study was teachers and students. A sample of 194 respondents were selected through stratified and simple random and were supplied with questionnaires. The findings of the study revealed that teen pregnancy influenced drop out of girls in the study locality.

Materials and methods

The target population were head teachers and teachers from public primary schools in Kimilili Bungoma Sub-County. Head teachers were involved in the study because they are the sole managers hence believed to have information regarding enrollment and completion rate of girls in their schools. Standard eight teachers were selected to provide information on how individual factors within schools girls affected their completion of primary school level of education. According to data from Sub County Director of Education, there are 112 public primary schools. Therefore the unit of analysis involved 112 head teachers and 385 standard eight teachers. In selecting the sample size for the study, 10% of head teachers (11) and 30.0% of teachers (116) were selected. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select both head teachers and teachers from the different categories of schools that they came from (boarding and day public primary schools. the instruments used in the study were questionnaire for teachers and interview guide for head teachers. The research instrument were designed according to the study objectives and consisted of open and close ended questions. The instruments were tested for validity and reliability during pilot testing stage. Data was collected after receiving authority and permission from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), sub county director of education, deputy county commissioner and head teachers of sampled schools. Quantitative data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics; frequencies and percentages and thematic content analysis for qualitative data.

Results and Discussions

The study involved participation of head teachers and teachers from various public primary schools in Kimilili Sub County, Kenya. Table 1 below presents the demographic information of both head teachers and teachers based on their gender profile, work experience and highest level of academic qualifications.

Table 1 Respondent Demographic Profiles

Variable	Teachers		Head teachers	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
Gender				
Female	37	56.9	8	72.7
Male	28	43.1	3	27.3
Total	65	100.0	11	100.0
Educational qualification				
Diploma	50	76.9	4	36.4
Degree	11	16.9	5	45.5
P1	4	6.2	2	18.2
Total	65	100.0	11	100.0
Working experience				
0-5 years	9	13.8	3	27.3
6-10 years	24	36.9	5	45.5
Over 11 years	32	49.2	3	27.3
Total	65	100.0	11	100.0

Source: Field Data (2018)

Results on distribution of gender reveal that among teachers, the number of females is higher (56.9%) compared to males (43.1%). In contrast result on gender from head teachers shows that the proportion is different as only 3 (27.3%) of head teachers in 11 schools are female with the rest being headed by men (72.7%). This shows that the constitutional threshold has not yet been attained in the sub county in leadership position not being occupied by more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the same gender. On education qualifications, the head teachers appear to have higher qualifications at degree level (45.5%) compared to teachers (16.9%). This is in line with the new government policies requiring for one to be promoted heading a school, he/she should attain at least a degree level of education or diploma. With regard to work experiences, majority 32 (49.2%) of teachers had worked for more than 10 years while 5 (45.5%) of school heads had served for a period spanning 6 – 10 years.

Teacher Perceptions on Individual Factors Influencing Girls Completion Rate in Kimilili Sub County

The study requested teachers to indicate their level of agreement on specific pupils related factors that influenced girls' completion rate in Kimilili Sub County public primary schools. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 2 Teacher Perceptions on Individual Factors Influencing Girls Completion Rate in Kimilili Sub County

		SD		D		U		A		SA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Early marriages affects girl child completion rates in this school	5	7.7	4	6.2	16	24.6	32	49.2	8	12.3
2	Pregnancy among girls affects their completion rate in this school	15	23.1	20	30.8	18	27.7	9	13.8	3	4.6
3	Peer pressure negatively affects girls completion rate in this school	10	15.4	8	12.3	11	16.9	20	30.8	16	24.6
4	Lack of sanitary pads and towels affects girls completion rate in this school	8	12.3	3	4.6	15	23.1	19	29.2	20	30.8
5	Sexual abuse of girls in school and outside completion rate in school	9	13.8	25	38.5	14	21.5	15	23.1	2	3.1
6	Absenteeism by girls affects their completion rate in primary school	6	9.2	5	7.7	16	24.6	22	33.8	16	24.6
7	Household chores (domestic labour) negatively affects girls completion rate in this school	4	6.2	9	13.8	20	30.8	25	38.5	7	10.8
8	Low girls performance influences their completion rate compared to boys due to repetition	7	10.8	23	35.4	16	24.6	10	15.4	9	13.8
9	Low entry behaviour by girls influence their completion rate negatively	6	9.2	10	15.4	13	20.0	23	35.4	13	20.0
10	Long distance to school (more than 3kms) affects girl child completion rate	5	7.7	17	26.2	8	12.3	33	50.8	2	3.1

Key: SD-Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, U-Undecided, A-Agree, SA-Strongly Agree, F-Frequency & %- Percentage

Source: Field Data (2018)

Results shows that close to half 32 (49.2%) of teachers agreed that early marriages affects girl child completion rates in their schools. during interview, the head teachers acknowledge to have had cases of some girls (although not many) dropping out of schools due to early marriage incidents. The researcher acknowledged that incidents of early marriages were prevalent in the study area and it made difficult for some girls to complete their primary education. Secondly, 20 (30.8%) of teachers disagreed that pregnancy incidents among girls affected their completion rate in their schools. only 18 (27.7%) of teachers agreed and 9 (13.8%) strongly agreed with the statement. this therefore shows that incidents of pregnancy among girls in some way affects girl child completion rate while at times it does not. This is because; the head teachers said that a lot of effort is made at the school to educate girls on the dangers of early pregnancies which would affect their education progression.

Research findings also revealed that 20 (30.8%) of teachers agreed and 16 (24.6%) strongly agreed that peer pressure negatively affected girls completion rate in their schools. this was particular cited among girls considered to be indiscipline who ended up influencing their friends also to drop out of school. further, the head teachers noted that some girls are influenced by their peers out of school not to focus their energies towards education reducing their chances of completing KCPE examinations. It was evident from 19 (29.2%) of teachers agreed and 20 (30.8%) strongly agreed that lack of sanitary pads and towels for girls during their menstruation period affected their completion rate. due to poverty among majority of households in Kimilili Sub County, majority of parents are unable to purchase these items for their kids making most of them to miss schools regular in a year. This state of affairs was confirmed by both head teachers and teachers as a deterrent to girl child completion rate in public primary schools in the Sub County.

Evidence from the teachers also showed that 25 (38.5%) disagreed with the statement that sexual abuse of girls in schools and outside affected their completion rate. only 15 (23.1%) appeared to agree with the statement. the result suggests that incidents of sexual abuse by girls in schools by boys, teachers and villagers were minimal and therefore did not significantly influence their completion rate in schools. With regard to absenteeism, 22 (33.8%) agreed and 16 (24.6%) strongly agreed that it did affect girls completion rate. the head teachers during interview reported that girls who had chronic absenteeism cases failed to complete school on time and hence most of them ended up dropping out of school. nevertheless, the school heads said that they were making necessary efforts to ensure that parents were aware that their girls were not coming to school despite the government providing free education to all.

When asked as to whether household chores involving domestic labour influenced negatively girls completion rate, 4 (6.2%) of teachers strongly disagreed, 9 (13.8%) disagreed, 20 (30.8%) were unsure, 25 (38.5%) agreed and 7 (10.8%) strongly agreed. This shows that respondents had mixed reactions on the statement. Therefore, at times domestic chores hinder girls' completion of primary education while at times the girls are not given household chores. The most common issue of child labour reported was where parents would withdraw their girls from school and sent them to urban centres (Bungoma, Kitale, Eldoret and Nairobi) to work as domestic managers in people's homes. This was mentioned to be a problem facing a lot of girls in the study area. Nevertheless, the head teachers reported that they were working with authorities to stem out the practices. The study findings also revealed that 23 (35.4%) of respondents disagreed that low girls performance in class influenced their completion rate. this is because the government banned repetition and therefore schools are not allowed to force girls to repeat schools due to low grade performance. nevertheless

in some schools, some girls felt discouraged by their low performance that made them to lose interest in learning.

With regard to low entry behaviour influence on girl child completion rate in schools, 6 (9.2%) of teachers strongly disagreed, 10 (15.4%) disagreed, 13 (20.0%) were undecided, 23 (35.4%) agreed and 13 (20.0%) strongly agreed. This therefore shows that low entry behaviour amongst girls significantly affected their transition rate leading to low completion rate in standard eight. When appropriate interventions are not instituted in schools, girls with low entry behaviours lose interest in learning leading to their eventual dropout in schools. Further, due to high pupil: teacher ratio, some teachers complained that it was not possible for them to actually monitor individual girls' child academic progress. Lastly, more than half 33 (50.8%) of teachers agreed that long distance from home to school (more than 3kms) affected girl child completion rate of primary schooling. This shows that schools located more than three kilometres from girls homes recorded low completion rate than those located near their homesteads. This was explained by one female head teacher who said that due to fear of insecurity along the way during early morning walk, some girls are forced to abandon school by their parents.

Head Teachers Responses on the Influence of individual factors on Girls Completion Rate in Public primary Schools

The head teachers were also asked to indicate whether individual factors among learners (girls) affected their enrolment rate. The research outcome is given in Figure 1.

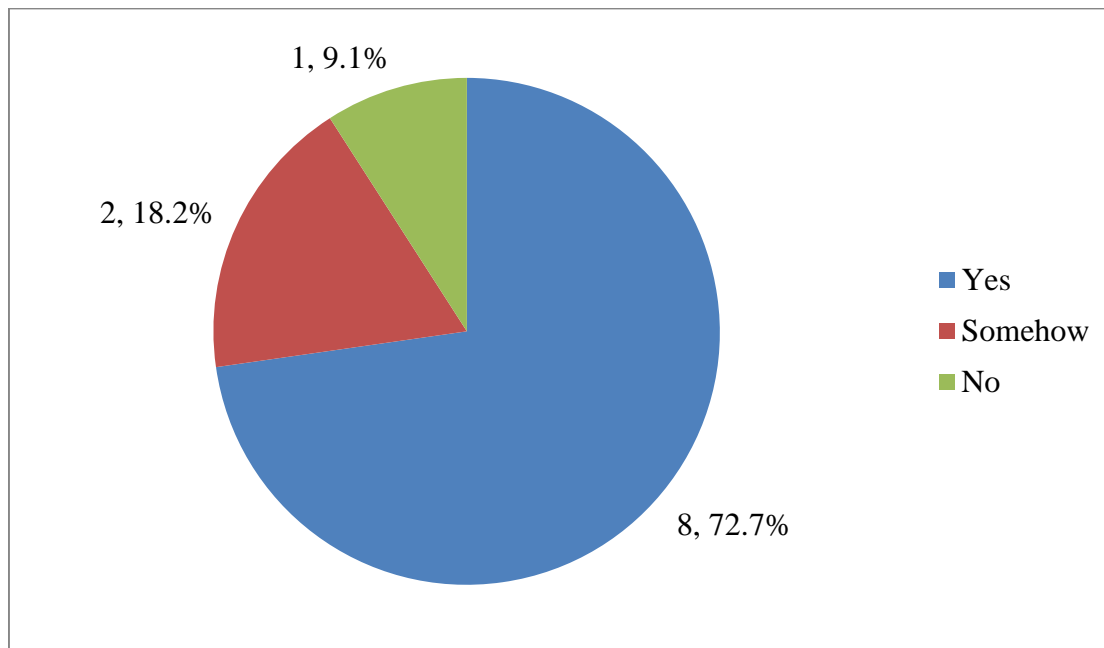


Figure 1: Whether individual pupils' factors influence girls' completion rate in primary school

Figure 1 outcomes shows that majority 8 (72.7%) of head teachers agreed that individual factors influenced girls completion rate in public primary schools in Kimilili Sub County, Bungoma County. Among the factors that they mentioned to be negatively influencing girl child completion rate were; frequent absenteeism (truancy behaviour), lack of sanitary towels, distance from home to school due to insecurity along the way, child labour, poor performance and indiscipline.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study investigated individual factors that influenced girl child completion rate in public primary schools in Kimilili Sub County, Bungoma County, Kenya. Both teachers and head teachers surveyed agreed that pupils related factors (among girls) significantly affected their school completion pattern. Results showed that early marriages was the most significant factor influencing girls completion rate in schools (61.5%), lack of sanitary pads and towels (60.0%), absenteeism and truancy cases (58.4%), peer pressure (55.4%), low entry behaviour by girls (55.4%) and long distance to school of more than three kilometres (53.9%). Other factors as highlighted in Table 2 had minimal influence on girls' completion rate. To increase girls completion rate, the study suggests that re-admission policy need to be fully implemented in schools, mentorship programmes for girls needs to be introduced in guidance and counselling programmes, schools need to work with authorities (chiefs) and parents to punish individuals accused of marrying off girls and young sexual offenders (male) and schools should look for partners to provide girls with sanitary pads to aid their learning and minimise absenteeism rates. . A law should be enacted spelling out clearly stringent measures that will be taken against those who impregnate or marry school going girls. Girls should also be sensitized to understand the dangers of early marriage and premature pregnancy.

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