

This study was conducted in Uganda, among a sample of 40 (21F/19M) primary school Teacher Trainees, 30 (22F/8M) School of Nursing trainees, 98 (40F/58M) Secondary School students, 98 (52F/46M) University undergraduates and 11 parents of some of the informants.

The major concerns of the study were to identify factors responsible for maintenance of gender disparity in higher education and to describe the processes through which such factors operate.

### **Research Methods:**

The following research methods were used: (i) Interview schedules (ii) A structured questionnaire and (iii) A Classroom observation checklist adopted from Flanders (1987) interaction analysis categories.

### **Types of data collected:**

1. Qualitative data consisting of taped (i) intensive interviews of life histories of 11 informants sampled from each category of students (ii) intensive interviews of parents/ guardians of the 11 informants.
2. Quantitative data collected by questionnaire with 87 items to determine current perceptions of factors and processes responsible for keeping some students in the education system and getting others out prematurely.
3. Classroom interaction data collected to ascertain the nature of social processes that take place during the teaching/learning processes and any gender concerns arising.

### **Data Analysis:**

1. Qualitative data and classroom interaction data were transcribed into narrative and analyzed using ETHNOGRAPH, a computer program that facilitated in reducing the data to series of categories.
2. Quantitative data was processed with SPSS/PC+ to give percentages and absolute scores.
3. Data from all three data sources was triangulated and condensed into three types of influences, in line with the conceptual framework, namely: societal factors; school factors and individual factors.

### **Results:**

The following factors were indicated as having an influence in the creation and perpetuation of disparity between females' and males' access to post secondary institutions:

#### **Macro level factors: societal level**

1. **Mother's support:** mothers' financial capacity to meet educational requirements and their being available to offer effective guidance are reflected by results from respondent's life histories as contributing factors towards females continuing with education.
2. **Stereo-typed views of women's role:** the views held by most females and males indicated that the women's place is still generally seen as being in the houses, although some women

thought that this is unfair 89.4 percent of the respondents indicated that females in their homes performed in-door chores like child-minding, cooking and cleaning while males mainly performed out-door chores.

**3. Number of children:** Coming from large families (9 children and above appeared to reduce chances of both males and females for higher education, mainly through parents' failure to afford educational costs for all children.

**4. Position in sibling hierarchy:** being high in the sibling hierarchy was reflected to enhance chances for continuing with education. Having other highly educated siblings enhanced chances of higher education for both females and males.

**5. Household income:** Lack of schools fees was a limiting factor to both females and males, especially those from polygamous homes with many children. Many parents complained that their household income was no longer adequate to support their children's education beyond primary school.

### **Macro level factors: the school environment.**

**1. Classroom dialogue:** evidence from classroom observation indicated that males received more academic attention than females, while both female and male teachers criticized both female and male students more than they offered encouragement.

**1. Subtle sexual harassment of female students:** use of provocative language and body language by some male teachers disadvantaged female students by making them uncomfortable in class. Females' vulnerability to sexual harassment; both within and outside school, was also pointed out by most parents as contributing greatly to their dropping out of school (see Tables 7 for parents' detailed responses).

One female parent analysed the girls' problem as follows:

"for a girl once she gets breast, she has an extra burden always.  
Either she spends a lot of her time in relations with males or she spends time fighting them away - education is an agenda she adds to this one".

**3. Hostility between teachers and students:** subtle hostility between female students and female teachers was reflected through authoritarian behavior and nasty comments, on part of the teachers while the pupils protested through refusal to participate in classroom dialogue and rude conduct. This was evident in classroom observation and casual comments over heard in school premises.

### **Micro level: individual gender factors.**

**1. Moral support and confidence from family members:** content analysis of in-depth interviews revealed that females depended more on family members' moral support to stay in

school than males. Females were likely to stay in school not to disappoint parents and older siblings who had "pushed, loved and encouraged" them.

**2. Perceptions of the purpose of education:** Interview results indicated that males perceived the purpose of higher education as an assurance for their future well being while for many females, higher education was seen as leading mostly to their being recognised as important. Many females also indicated that they were likely to remain in higher education to gain skills for employment and avoid negative experiences resulting from dependency on males.

**3. Role models:** The role models of females who did not continue to post secondary education are other unsuccessful females with qualities such as kindness, conforming behavior and command of respect. Role models of females in post-secondary institutions are professional males with qualities such as hard working, ambition, courage, professionalism, popularity and commitment to work. There is a similar pattern of role models among males who continued to university and those who did not. They all look up to successful, professional men or national and international male leaders.

**4. Self esteem:** Comparing school dropouts and students in post secondary education; all females displayed low self-esteem and depended on others, especially family members for encouragement and confidence. Males of all categories, however, had a positive self image and valued financial rather than emotional support from their family members.