

**DETERMINANTS OF VULNERABILITY TO RISK TAKING BEHAVIOUR
AMONG GIRLS IN PUBLIC DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KIAMBAA,
KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA.**

LUCY NJERI MWANGI

C50/CE/25847/2011


**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIOLOGY, GENDER AND
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**

NOVEMBER, 2023

23 NOV 2023

DECLARATION

This research thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

Sign:  _____

Date: 27th Nov 2023

Lucy Njeri Mwangi

Department of Sociology, Gender and Development Studies

This research thesis has been submitted with our approval as university supervisors


Sign:  _____

Date: 27th November 2023

Dr. Pacificah Okemwa

Department of Sociology, Gender and Development Studies

Kenyatta University

Sign:  _____

Date: 28/11/2023

Dr. Susan Waiyego Mwangi

Department of History

Kenyatta University

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the determinants of vulnerability to risk taking Behaviour (RTB) among girls in Public Day Secondary Schools (PDSS) in Kiambaa Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. This was due to the high levels of RTB among secondary school girls that had been reported. The specific objectives were to identify the types of RTB among girls in PDSS, examine internal and external factors influencing vulnerability to RTB, assess gender-related challenges faced by girls engaged in RTB, and propose gender-responsive strategies to mitigate vulnerability. The study integrated two theories, problem behaviour theory and empowerment theory. It employed a descriptive survey methodology. Using proportional stratified random sampling and purposive sampling procedures 68 teachers, 96 girls, 12 principals from 12 PDSSs, along with 6 sub-county education authorities and 12 parents, totalling 194. Participated in the study. A pilot study involving 1 teacher and 10 students from Kiambu Sub-County was conducted to assess content and construct validity. Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.7$) ensured internal consistency and reliability of variables. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews, analysed using SPSS version 24 for quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative data, and presented via tables and figures. The findings revealed various RTB among girls, including unprotected sex, prostitution, drug use, abortion, theft, and fighting. RTB determinants encompassed factors like parental divorce, absenteeism, peer pressure, financial hardship, and lack of role models, excessive idle time, societal influences, and declining values. Gender-specific challenges emerged, such as early pregnancies, abortions, forced marriages, academic failure, rejection, and health risks from unsafe abortions. Gender-responsive strategies suggested included enhanced counselling programs, life skills development, rehabilitation facilities, job opportunities, loans for mothers, bursary funding clear disciplinary policies, spiritual guidance, and second chances for young mothers to complete their education. In conclusion, this study highlights the existence of RTB among girls in PDSS and underscores the complexity of factors influencing these behaviours. To effectively address RTB, a comprehensive approach that considers both internal and external factors is essential. Recognizing the specific challenges faced by girls is crucial. Gender-sensitive interventions that involve collaboration between schools, parents, and the community are vital in creating a supportive environment that encourages healthier behaviours among girls in PDSS.