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.....
"EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD."
NELSON MANDELA

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Editorial team members

S.No.	Full name	Position	e-mail	Phone number
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Advisory Board Members				
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13.	Dessu Wirtu, PhD	Editorial Advisory Board Member	dessu.wirtu@gmail.com	+251912041575
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18.	Dereje Demissie, PhD	Editorial Advisory Board Member	demissiedereje75@gmail.com	+251911119443
19.	Dawit Legese, PhD	Editorial Advisory Board Member	dawitlegesse@hu.edu.et	+251911922145
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23.	Per Olof Hansson, Professor	Editorial Advisory Board Member		+46(0)13 28 20 20



Research Original Article

Brief review of phenomenological research design in education

Gelan Gagura^{1*}

¹ Educational Planning and Management, College of Education, Hawassa University

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CORRESPONDING EMAIL

* Corresponding author email:
gelang@hu.edu.et

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KEYWORDS:

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Abstract

This paper discusses on phenomenological research in education, which seeks to understand and describe the subjective experiences of individuals in educational contexts to promote empathy and understanding among different stakeholders. To achieve the objective of this paper, conventional qualitative content analysis methods adhering to the naturalistic paradigm was employed to describe a phenomenon. Phenomenological research design in education is a qualitative research approach that focuses on the subjective experiences of individuals in a particular situation or phenomenon. It aims to understand the meaning and essence of these experiences through in-depth interviews, observations, and analysis of personal reflections. It recognizes the importance of language and interpretation in capturing complex human experiences. Confidentiality and sharing of research findings with participants is important to uphold ethical standards. It is valuable in education as it provides rich and detailed descriptions of individuals' experiences and can inform tailored interventions and policies. Nevertheless, the subjectivity of the results limits generalizability and the methodology can be time and resource-intensive. In general, this approach is particularly useful in exploring complex educational issues and can provide valuable insights into the perspectives of students, teachers, and other stakeholders. Phenomenological research design can offer a unique and valuable perspective on educational phenomena that cannot be captured through other research methods. The phenomenological approach in education creates the motivation and desire to learn about self, others, and things. Overall, phenomenology contributes to the development of new knowledge in education by offering insights into the lived experiences of educators and learners, and by providing a framework for understanding and improving educational practices.

1 Introduction

Any culture that values education must prioritize educational research in order to advance scientific understanding. Education-related research is a methodical inquiry that employs scientific methods to gather and analyse data to address issues in education. It is essential to the creation of pedagogy, educational initiatives, and policymaking. The goal of educational research is to advance our knowledge while enhancing the ways in which we teach and learn. To provide trustworthy and valid outcomes, meticulous planning, execution, and analysis are required. The quality of education for future generations can be improved by giving educational research higher priority (Marguerite et al., 2010).

Educational research is classified differently based on certain variables. Based on purpose, fundamental or basic, applied, and action research (Best and Kahn, 2006), educational research is again classified into quantitative, qualitative, and mixed based on method or approach (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). In order to explain existing situations, look into relationships, and explore cause-and-effect occurrences, quantitative research methodologies are used. Some categories of quantitative research include experimental, descriptive, survey, correlation, causal-comparative, and survey research. In order to gain a thorough grasp of the way things are, why they are the way they are, and how the participants in the environment perceive them, qualitative research aims to delve thoroughly into the research setting. Qualitative research methodologies include case studies, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethno methodology, and historical research. In order to better comprehend a research problem, researchers use mixed methods research, which involves gathering, analyzing, and "mixing" quantitative and qualitative methodologies in one study or a series of studies. Research using mixed methods includes concurrent, explanatory, exploratory, parallel, embedding, and multi-phase techniques (Creswell, 2012, 2007; Marguerite et al., 2010).

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach that offers a unique perspective on understanding the human experience. Phenomenological research in education has gained considerable popularity in recent years, particularly in response to the limitations of traditional quantitative research methods. This literature review will explore the core and peculiar features of phenomenological research in education. It will provide an overview of key concepts and principles of phenomenology, methodologies and techniques used in phenomenological research, data collection and analysis methods, findings, and interpretation. Additionally, this paper will discuss the challenges and criticisms of phenomenological research in education and explore future trends and applications of this approach. By the end of the paper, readers will have a solid understanding of the significance of phenomenological research and its potential for advancing education research.

2 Objective of review

This review seeks to explore and elucidate phenomenological research in the field of education. By doing these researchers will be able to formulate conclusions, synthesize knowledge, and promote reflection, rather than providing prescriptive recommendations. The objective is to assist educators in understanding the fundamental principles of this research methodology and its practical application in educational environments.

3 Review methodology

The goal of this paper was to describe a phenomenon using traditional qualitative content analysis techniques that adhered to the naturalistic paradigm. According to the traditional method of content analysis, the study's discussion section addresses pertinent theories or other research findings on phenomena (Qutoshi, 2018; Kondracki et al., 2002 and Krippendorff, 2004). The reviewer drew heavily on substantial empirical studies connected to phenomenological research in education for this analysis. To place the arguments, conclusions, and suggestions within a larger body of philosophical and critical thinking knowledge, these were critically reviewed.

Peer debriefing, prolonged participation, persistent observation, triangulation, negative case analysis, referential sufficiency, and member checks were employed to establish credibility (Zengotita, 2019). Reading all of the data repeatedly to achieve absorption and a sense of the whole is the first step in data analysis, just like when reading a book

(Taşkıran, 2017a). The reviewer then reads the material while making notes on their initial observations, ideas, and analyses. Labels for codes that represent multiple main ideas start to appear as this process progresses. These usually serve as the first coding scheme and are taken directly from the text. The codes are then divided into groups according to how closely related they are to one another.

The review's conclusions were written up in a narrative format. Because they interpret people's experiences, narrative approaches to the study and presentation of data are invaluable. Elliott (2005) makes an additional case that a narrative offers a largely accurate account of experiences over time. The story also provides insight into the narrator's interpretation of the events being told. The comments contain a description of how the review's results advance knowledge in the relevant field as well as recommendations for future practice, instruction, and research.

3.1 Limitations of the review

Theoretically, this review was limited to educational organizations only, and methodologically, it used a directive qualitative approach. That is, it focuses on secondary data rather than primary data. The limitation of this review is that it is also only focused on literature written in English. In addition, some sources were out dated due to theories.

4 Major Theme: Phenomenological research design in education

4.1 Concepts of phenomenology and a phenomenological research

The goal of phenomenology is to capture the core of experiences and reveal the interpretations that people assign to them. The main concept of the phenomenological approach is to identify common themes among the shared experiences of people's lives to identify and describe a phenomenon. The researcher conducts in-depth interviews with many individuals to find the common theme of the individuals. Phenomenology is a practice that seeks to understand, describe and interpret human behavior and the meaning individuals make of their experiences; it focuses on what was experienced and how it was experienced (Neubauer et al., 2019).

The term phenomenology was originally used by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938); it is derived from the Greek word *phainein*, which means "to appear." Kantian phenomenology's philosophical underpinning is constructivism, which holds that phenomena are produced by a cognitive subject, a human being. The constructionist approach holds that the subject creates what it knows, while the phenomenological view holds that the subject knows what it creates, which are not appearances but do manifest in consciousness (Rockmore, 2011). Therefore, phenomenology is a philosophy of experience and logic of phenomena and seeks to understand how people experience the life world and how their experiences are shaped by it.

Phenomenological research is a type of qualitative research that explores and describes the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings they attach to these experiences. The goal of phenomenological research in education is to better understand people's perceptions, experiences, and feelings as well as how they interpret their social and educational environments (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; taskuran2017). The objectives of phenomenological research are to determine and define the phenomenon while capturing the essence of the persons' lived experience of the phenomenon (Cilesiz, 2010). This type

of research focuses on the unique perceptions of individuals in a given situation, rather than objective reality.

The goal of qualitative phenomenological research is to better understand human experiences and to foster a deeper understanding of the nature of being human. Techniques used in this type of research include participant observation, conversations, and interviews. The emphasis is on obtaining deep data and perspectives, and portraying them from the perspective of the study participant(s). Phenomenological research is founded on an epistemological paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, which makes it effective for shedding light on subjective experience and gaining insights into peoples' motivations and actions. The method suspends the researchers' prior notions about the phenomenon and instead examines how people experience life on a daily basis (Lester, 1999; Greening, 2019).

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to researching human experience that has gained popularity in education research. It offers a thoughtful, reflective, and highly individualized method of exploring human experiences. Phenomenological research in education is designed to help us understand the perceptions, experiences, and feelings that people have and how they make sense of their social and educational worlds.

4.2 Historical background of phenomenological research

Phenomenology has its origins in the philosophical tradition that Edmund Husserl established in the early 20th century, which was further developed by his adherents in German universities and eventually spread throughout the rest of the world (Zahavi, 2003). As a human being philosophy, phenomenology has its roots in the time of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle (Fochtman, 2008). The German philosopher Edmond Husserl later succeeded in his attempt to create phenomenology as a method to examine human lived experiences at the conscious level of understanding during the first decade of the twentieth century (Fochtman, 2008; Wojnar and Swanson, 2007).

Additionally, Heidegger, one of Husserl's disciples, arrived with his development of interpretive-hermeneutic phenomenology. The goal of phenomenological research is to understand the phenomena under study via consciousness, in addition to its descriptive nature, to give a wider meaning to the lived experiences under study (Creswell, 2007). The limits of conventional positivist research techniques led to the development of phenomenological research in education in the middle of the 20th century. With a focus on the meanings people give to their experiences, it is a qualitative research methodology that aims to comprehend the subjective and lived experiences of individuals and groups in educational settings.

Max van Manen, a Dutch-Canadian researcher who created a technique termed "phenomenological reflection," was one of the pioneers of phenomenological research in education. Paulo Freire, who used phenomenology to investigate the experiences of socially oppressed groups, and Martin Heidegger are two other notable phenomenological researchers in education (Qutoshi, 2018). Both of these thinkers created philosophical frameworks for comprehending the nature of human existence and the ways in which people experience the world around them.

Phenomenological research is still widely used in education today, especially in disciplines like curriculum development, teacher preparation, and educational psychology. Philosophy has a long history with phenomena that dates back to the early 20th century. However, phenomenology did not become widely used in educational research until the 1960s. Education academics have been encouraged to examine the lived experiences

of students and educators by the writings of philosophers like Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Edmund Husserl (Greening, 2019; Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015). The experiences of students with disabilities, the effects of technology on learning, and the manner in which instructors shape their professional identities are just a few of the themes that have been explored using this method in the field of education (Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015). As it offers a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of educational settings and the experiences of individuals who inhabit them, it has also been utilized to shape educational policy and practice.

Overall, phenomenological research in education provides an original and insightful viewpoint on the subjective experiences of people and groups in educational contexts. For educators, academics, and policy makers aiming to enhance educational results for all learners, its emphasis on comprehending meaning and lived experience can offer valuable insights.

4.3 The theoretical and philosophical background of phenomenological research

The constructivist/interpretive paradigm, which combine philology and methodology, include phenomenology. The Vancouver school of thought, which is fundamentally rooted in Husserl's descriptive phenomenology, interpretive/hermeneutic phenomenology, constructivism (Schwandt, 1994), and Heideggerian interpretive phenomenology, had a significant impact on phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1969) from both a philosophical and methodological standpoint. The Vancouver School's seven step cyclic procedures of silence, reflection, identification, selection, interpretation, construction, and verification are used to seek meaning from various aspects of an event to its totality (Halldorsdottir, 2000).

Theoretical perspectives that support the study of direct experience taken at face value and those that maintain that conduct is determined by the phenomena of experience have received a lot of attention in phenomenological research. There is a great deal of agreement among phenomenologists about their fundamental philosophical presuppositions, such as the notion that consciousness is fundamental and that understanding subjective consciousness is important (Qutoshi, 2018), even though they may appear to have different opinions on particular subjects. This theory holds that awareness has some distinctive structures that act as entrances to information gleaned via reflections. These philosophical perspectives, according to Cohen et al. (2007), may aid researchers in better understanding phenomena at the conscious level of their appearance, that is, how they appear to us directly as opposed to through the filters of cultural and symbolic systems.

The depiction of events as they happen as a technique of knowing in phenomenology is essential since it is a question of describing rather than of explaining or analyzing (Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015). We reach this conclusion from both the philosophical and methodological stances by studying a phenomenon as it is experienced by people at a deeper level of understanding in a specific situation with a thorough description and interpretation of lived experiences through bracketing (Gearing, 2004). Husserl thought that in order for the research to get insights into genuine experiences, it could be necessary to apply the bracketing approach. According to Speziale and Carpenter (2007), bracketing is a helpful technique for verifying the validity of data collection and analysis in phenomenological research.

However, the concept of bracketing (Gearing, 2004) is similar to two counterproductive methods Husserl (1939/1954) discusses: (a) the epoche of the natural sciences, which is the return (from theories) to the things themselves (avoidance of explanations); and (b) the epoche of the natural attitude, which is the phenomenological reduction, which

involves becoming unaware of the assumptions and presuppositions that researchers keep in mind and focusing. Since lived experience is presented rather than explained or examined, these strategies most likely allow researchers to concentrate on it.

Similar to this, Husserl (1913-1962) developed two fundamental positive methods he called intentional analysis and eidetic analysis, sometimes known as "intuition of essences." The intentional analysis investigates what is experienced and how experiencing processes function. This aids researchers in comprehending the lived experiences, including the function of intuition and essences in giving those events additional significance.

Researchers must be aware that their work is largely descriptive and use intentional analysis, eidetic analysis, and epoche of the natural sciences on the one hand, and epoche of the natural attitude on the other, to gain a deeper grasp of the phenomenon being investigated. Spiegelberg (1969) asserts that the idea of "emancipation and preconception as a method of phenomenology is a great contribution to philosophy... to use in understanding the phenomena under study with its fullest breadth and depth" in contrast to this. To gain a meaningful understanding of the events being studied, interpretive elements, however, lend the descriptive aspect of phenomenology additional significance (Qutoshi, 2018).

A phenomenology is an approach to research that involves capturing the lived experience of participants and analyzing text to arrive at symbolic meanings. Spielberg's six types of phenomenology include descriptive, essence, constitutive, reductive, appearances, and hermeneutical phenomenology. Descriptive phenomenology involves exploring and describing a phenomenon as intuitively as possible. The phenomenology of essences involves searching for common themes or essences in the data. Constitutive phenomenology studies phenomena as they become constituted in people's consciousness. Reductive phenomenology detaches the phenomenon from everyday experience to preserve objectivity. The phenomenology of appearances pays attention to the ways that phenomena appear in different perspectives or modes of clarity (Streubert and Carpenter, 1999; Kafle, 2011, Maggs-Rapport, 2000).

4.4 Research paradigmatic stance in phenomenological research in education

Apart from the foundational tenets of modern phenomenology, the research paradigm consists of six major components: constituted of ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology, rhetoric and etiology in educational research.

4.4.1 *Ontological stance of phenomenological research*

Ontology is concerned with reality which is considered as an individual construct that is dependent on different situations. Phenomenological research is based on the idea that each individual has their own reality and subjective experiences that cannot be reduced to objective facts or data. Phenomenological research in education takes an ontological stance that emphasizes the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals. It recognizes that reality is not objective and fixed, but rather shaped by individual experiences and interpretations. This approach seeks to understand the meaning and essence of human experiences in educational contexts, rather than simply quantifying or measuring them. The focus is on understanding how individuals perceive and interpret their experiences rather than measuring or defining them through the lens of accepted reality. Four aspects of the human experience are of interest to phenomenological researchers: lived space, lived body, lived human relationships, and lived time. The goal

of phenomenological research is to create a detailed description of participants' experiences and encourage them to examine the subjective meanings of their experiences (taskiran2017phenomenological; Marguerite et al., 2010).

4.4.2 Epistemological stance of phenomenological research

Epistemology refers to knowledge and the notion that the research work is supposed to contribute to knowledge itself (Qutoshi, 2018). The epistemological stance of phenomenological research in education is based on the idea that knowledge is constructed through lived experiences. This approach emphasizes the importance of personal experiences, perceptions, and interpretations in the construction of knowledge. Phenomenological research in education seeks to understand and describe the subjective experiences of individuals in educational contexts, rather than attempting to explain or predict behavior based on preconceived theories or hypotheses. This approach recognizes that knowledge is not solely derived from empirical observation, but also from personal experiences and interpretations (Zengotita, 2019).

4.4.3 Axiological stance of phenomenological research

The axiological stance of phenomenological research in education is based on the values of respect, empathy, and understanding. This approach recognizes that individuals have unique experiences and perspectives that shape their understanding of the world, and thus values the importance of respecting and valuing these differences. Phenomenological research in education seeks to understand and describe the subjective experiences of individuals in educational contexts, with the goal of promoting empathy and understanding among different stakeholders. This approach recognizes that research is not value-free, and thus seeks to make explicit the values and assumptions that underlie the research process. The task of the researcher is to describe the structures of experience, in particular consciousness, the imagination, relations with other persons, and the situated human subject in society and history (Greening, 2019; Hopkins, 2005). To uphold high ethical standard, phenomenology attaches importance to confidentiality and sharing of research findings with the participants. It encourages assigning aliases to the participants to protect their privacy, clarifying the purpose and procedure of the research participants.

4.4.4 Rhetorical stance of phenomenological research

Phenomenological rhetoric is a method of communication that emphasizes understanding how daily experiences shape people's perspectives. Language and interpretation are central to this approach, and it recognizes the importance of descriptive and evocative language to capture complex human experiences.

Within education, phenomenological research seeks to describe and interpret subjective experiences, using storytelling and language to communicate those experiences to others. This approach rejects the idea that language can be reduced to its structural components and instead recognizes the role of speech events in introducing new meanings and changing perspectives. Ultimately, the meaning of language and interpretation are constantly subject to change in this approach (Ricoeur, 1971). The researcher creates a statement from the combined textural and structural descriptions that captures the essence of the phenomena under study as the final phase in the phenomenological process. These essences, according to Moustakas (1994), are never truly exhausted; rather, they only reflect one researcher's viewpoint at a specific time and location.

4.4.5 *The methodology stance of phenomenological research*

The methodology stance of phenomenological research in education is based on the idea that research should be grounded in the personal experiences and perspectives of individuals. This approach recognizes that individuals have unique experiences that shape their understanding of the world, and thus values the importance of studying these experiences in-depth. Phenomenological research in education employs a variety of qualitative research methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, to understand and describe the subjective experiences of individuals in educational contexts. This approach values the importance of reflexivity and transparency in the research process, and thus seeks to make explicit the researcher's assumptions and values throughout the research process. The goal of phenomenological research in education is to provide a rich and detailed description of the lived experiences of individuals, with the aim of promoting empathy, understanding, and social change (Kafle, 2011; Gorden, 1969; Measor, 1985, Oakley, 1981, Plummer, 1983 and Spradley, 1979).

Phenomenological research methods include Heidegger's heuristic phenomenology, Merleau Ponty's existential phenomenology, and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. These methods all focus on four core ideas: description, reduction, imaginative diversity, and essences. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is the foundation for all other approaches and involves studying a person's interpretation of reality through their daily experiences. Husserl believed that the scientific, empirical method should be avoided, and instead, intentional experience and essences were crucial to understanding transcendental phenomenology. Husserl's method of reduction involved bracketing preconceived notions to have a clear understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam and Tisdell, 2014; Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

4.5 Quality Assurance in Phenomenology

Basically, credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability are the main criteria for determining if qualitative research is trustworthy. However, Kafle (2011) accepted orientation, strength, richness, and depth as the primary quality concerns when taking phenomenology as a pedagogic research methodology. According to Kafle (2011), orientation is the researcher's immersion in the lives and experiences of the research subjects. Strength is defined as the text's persuasive ability to convey the central purpose of comprehending the underlying meanings as articulated by the research participants through their stories. Richness is meant to enhance the text's aesthetic value by narrating the meanings as experienced by the participants. Depth is the study text's capacity to delve deep and convey the participants' noblest objectives. The analytical rigor, pervasive account, participant input, and a typical rhetoric are additional quality assurance criteria.

4.6 The etiological stance of phenomenological research

In phenomenological research, the etiological stance refers to the emphasis on understanding the underlying causes and meanings of human experiences, particularly in educational contexts. The etiological stance of this research in education emphasizes the importance of understanding the underlying causes and meanings of human experiences in educational contexts. This approach recognizes that individuals' experiences are shaped by a range of factors, including social, cultural, historical, and political contexts. Phenomenological research in education seeks to explore and describe the underlying meanings and causes of these experiences, with the goal of identifying ways to improve educational practices and policies. This approach values the importance of context and

complexity in understanding human experiences, and thus seeks to explore the situatedness of individuals' experiences within broader social and historical contexts. The aim of phenomenological research in education is to uncover the deeper meanings and causes of human experiences, with the goal of promoting social justice and equity in educational settings (Riepe and Bandman, 1969; Neppe, 2011).

4.7 Peculiar features and principles of the phenomenological research

4.7.1 *Peculiar features of phenomenological research*

There are several peculiar features of phenomenological research (Qutoshi, 2018; Afandi and Umanailo, 2018; Giorgi and Giorgi, 2003; Moustakas, 1994; Laverty, 2003; Norlyk and Harder, 2010). The major peculiar features are:

Description: The extensive, in-depth descriptions of the subject under investigation that phenomenological research uses are a significant aspect. Instead of describing the occurrence as the researcher may have preconceived notions of it, the description should show how the participants actually experienced it.

Bracketing: This is accomplished in conventional phenomenological research through the phenomenological process of epoche, also known as bracketing, in which the researcher deliberately disregards any prior assumptions or commonplace beliefs that they believe might be used to explain the phenomena under investigation. This enables the researcher to pay attention and capture the participant's honest and innocent account of their experience.

Reduction: Reduction is a procedure in which preconceptions and biases are postponed in order to prevent biases from tainting the description of the observations and guarantee that the description takes the shape of the actual objects. This is made easier for the researcher by the phenomenological reduction process, which enables the researcher to have an open mind and listen to the participants' accounts of the phenomena process under study.

Essence: The essence is the fundamental significance of every person's unique experience of a phenomenon as it is. It entails exploring the phenomenon using the free imagination, intuition, and reflection to ascertain whether a specific quality is an important essence. Search essence, the essential themes or relationships are essential in the phenomenon. A phenomenologist might examine if any changes and advancements are fundamental elements of the learning process, for instance, in the case of the essence of learning.

Intentionality: To express intentionality, phenomenology uses the ideas of noesis and noema. Intentionality is the relationship between noema and noesis that provides a clear understanding of the event. Noesis is a person's subjective interpretation of the objective statement, whereas noema is an objective statement of conduct or experience as a fact. As a result, we have no concept of reality (objective claims), since reality is what it is. Consciousness-to-consciousness interactions make up the reality he named intentionality.

Imaginative variation: It is the methodological step in the phenomenological research process that comes after bracketing and reduction. The phenomenological reduction procedure resulted in textural descriptions, which the researcher can use the creative variation approach to identify the structural motifs derived from. For the researcher to fully grasp the substance of the participants' experiences, imaginative variation necessitates viewing the phenomenon from a range of angles.

Composite textural and structural description: The researcher then creates a statement from the composite textural and structural descriptions in the final step of the phenomenological method that captures the essence of the phenomena under study. These essences, according to [Sandi-Urena \(2018\)](#) are never truly exhausted; rather, they only reflect one researcher's viewpoint at a specific time and location.

4.7.2 Key Principles in Phenomenological Research

Different authors have identified principles in phenomenological research ([Zengotita, 2019](#); [Qutoshi, 2018](#)). The major key principles in phenomenological research are:

Intentional and Consciousness: Phenomenology is the study of how our consciousness is always directed towards something. This is called intentionality, and it means that we experience things in the world and our consciousness is focused on that experience. Understanding how intentionality affects human experience is an important part of studying phenomenology ([Zengotita, 2019](#); [Moustakas, 1994](#); [Greening, 2019](#))

The Life-world: The world as it is perceived by people is known as the life-world. Our physical surroundings, as well as our social and cultural background, are all included. Understanding how people experience the life-world and how it shapes their experiences is the goal of phenomenology ([Eddles-Hirsch, 2015](#); [Cilesiz, 2010](#)).

Phenomenological Reduction: Phenomenological reduction entails putting aside assumptions and expectations in order to concentrate on the particular experience under study. It involves excluding our common ways of viewing the world and putting the emphasis on the experiences themselves. This makes it possible for researchers to examine the core of the experience and determine the significance that individuals place on it ([Greening, 2019](#)).

Focus on a single phenomenon to explore: A certain idea or phenomenon is chosen by the researcher for examination. This idea might be related to loneliness, creating a professional identity, or leading with charisma. It is a single idea that serves as the focus of the phenomenological investigation ([Cilesiz, 2010](#)).

Collect data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon: Gather information from those who have first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon. This is a crucial concept in phenomenology. The subjects must have been familiar with the phenomenon. The group could contain anywhere from 3 to 15 people. However, the types of information gathered in a phenomenological study might range from the conventional format ([Zengotita, 2019](#); [Cilesiz, 2010](#)).

4.8 Methods and Procedure in Conducting Phenomenological Research in Education

After providing overview of the theoretical underpinning's of phenomenological research, this section of the paper is delved into the specific methods and procedures that were developed in order to conduct a successful phenomenological study in education. These include a involves selecting participants who have experienced the phenomenon of interest, collecting data through interviews or observations, analysing the data to identify themes and patterns, and interpreting the findings to gain a deeper understanding of the essence of the experience. This procedure can provide valuable insights into the experiences of educators and students in educational settings, as well as inform future research and practice ([Sandi-Urena, 2018](#)). Some critical procedures in conducting phenomenological research in education include:

4.8.1 *Selecting Participants*

Selecting participants is crucial for the accuracy of findings in phenomenological research in education because it ensures that the experiences and perspectives shared by the participants are relevant and representative of the phenomenon being studied. Careful selection of participants is essential in phenomenological research in education to ensure accurate and relevant findings. By choosing participants with direct experience and diverse perspectives, researchers can gather detailed data that enhances credibility and transferability. Maintaining homogeneity among participants helps focus on the specific phenomenon being studied and improves understanding of shared experiences. Researchers achieve homogeneity through clear selection criteria, screening processes, sampling strategies, consistent data collection, and systematic analysis (Zengotita, 2019; taskiran2017phenomenological).

Participants should have knowledge of the phenomenon being studied and be able to provide detailed and rich descriptions of their experiences. Purposeful sampling, criterion-based selection, and snowball sampling are commonly used sampling methods to ensure a relatively homogenous group of participants. Pre-interviews can be conducted to assess the willingness and openness of potential participants. Ethical considerations and obtaining informed consent from potential participants is also important. The process of selecting participants requires careful consideration of the research question, the phenomenon being studied, and ethical considerations (Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Creswell, 2007).

4.8.2 *Data collection methods for phenomenological studies*

In phenomenological research in education, in-depth interviews are a valuable method for exploring the lived experiences and perspectives of participants related to a specific phenomenon. These interviews aim to uncover the essence of the participants' experiences and provide rich, detailed data that can deepen understanding and generate meaningful insights (Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015). Key considerations for conducting these interviews include establishing rapport, using open-ended questions, probing for deeper understanding, allowing for silence and reflection, maintaining reflexivity, and analyzing data systematically to uncover common themes and meanings (Sandi-Urena, 2018).

In phenomenological research in education, conducting interviews involves carefully planning, asking open-ended questions, and analyzing data to uncover the essence of participants' experiences. Emphasizing lived experiences and suspending assumptions are important nuances to consider. Challenges include establishing rapport, navigating interview dynamics, and accurately interpreting and analyzing data. Therefore, in phenomenological research data can be collected from different sources for triangulation (Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015).

4.8.3 *Transcribing data*

When approaching transcription in phenomenological research in education, it is essential to maintain accuracy, attention to detail, and sensitivity to the nuances of participants' experiences. Strategies for effective transcription include using verbatim transcription, maintaining confidentiality, focusing on the meaning of responses, using transcription software, establishing a consistent style guide, engaging in member checking, seeking assistance if needed, and reflecting on the transcription process to enhance data interpretation. It involves carefully listening to and accurately recording the verbal and nonverbal expressions of participants in the study. Through this process, researchers can identify

common themes and patterns that emerge from the data, which can then be used to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015; Moustakas, 1994).

In phenomenological research in education, it is important to start with clear organization by labeling interviews and creating a system for storing data. Consider using transcription software like Otter.ai or Rev.com to speed up the process. Develop a transcription guide for consistency and break down the task into manageable chunks to avoid fatigue. It is also essential to proofread and edit transcripts for accuracy and clarity (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Transcription can be time-consuming due to lengthy interviews and technical challenges like poor audio quality. Researchers must also be aware of their own biases to ensure accuracy in representing participants' experiences. Accurate transcription is crucial for analyzing participants' experiences and deriving meaningful insights in phenomenological research in education. Errors in transcription can lead to data misinterpretation and impact study validity. Transcripts are keys for identifying themes, patterns, and meanings in the research, allowing researchers to extract rich details and nuances from participants' narratives. Engaging with the data through transcription prompts researchers to reflect on their assumptions, biases, and preconceptions, deepening their understanding and enhancing the interpretive process (taskuran2017).

4.8.4 *Phenomenological analysis*

Data analysis in phenomenological qualitative research is an important step in accurately interpreting the findings. Data analysis techniques in phenomenological qualitative research include thematic analysis, content analysis, and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Thematic analysis involves identifying themes and patterns in the data, content analysis involves analyzing the content of the data, and IPA involves interpreting the lived experiences of the participants to understand the meaning they attach to their experiences (Greening, 2019).

The researcher needs to analyse the data in order to identify patterns, themes, and insights into the participants' lived experiences. The data analysis process begins with the researcher reading and re-reading the collected data. The researcher then looks for patterns, themes, and concepts that emerge from the data. Once these patterns, themes, and concepts are identified, the researcher can then begin to draw conclusions and interpretations from the data (Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015).

According to Moustakas (1994), identifying the phenomenon under examination is the first step in the research process. Following the phenomenological data analysis process outlined by Moustakas, the data were examined after being gathered through phenomenological interviews with co-researchers who had encountered the event. This section explains the steps involved in gathering and interpreting the data. Preparing data for analysis, phenomenological reducing the data, applying creative variation, and determining the essence of the experience are among the general techniques.

The phenomenological analysis begins by excluding the subjectivity of the researcher, which refers to elucidate preconceptions throughout the inquiry. Epoché, the term for this procedure, refers to putting aside the researcher's preconceptions and biases about the phenomenon. The researchers start this approach by fully describing the phenomenon in paper. Researchers should read their subjectivity statement, which includes a description of their own experience with the phenomenon, before beginning the data analysis (Zengotita, 2019; Greening, 2019; Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

4.8.5 Interpretation

To interpret themes and patterns in qualitative data effectively in phenomenological research in education, one must fully immerse themselves in the gathered information. By analyzing transcripts and interview data, a deep understanding of participants' experiences can be gained. It is important to identify recurring ideas, emotions, and perspectives that form the basis of themes and patterns. Using an inductive analysis approach allows themes to naturally emerge from the data, capturing commonalities, differences, and nuances (Qutoshi, 2018). Collaborating with peers can enhance the interpretation process, bringing diverse perspectives to validate and strengthen the identified themes and patterns. To maintain reflexivity in phenomenological research within education, researchers should consider their own backgrounds and beliefs, keep a reflexive journal to monitor biases, and engage in peer debriefing for feedback on how personal views may be impacting the research process. This helps ensure objectivity, transparency, and credibility in their findings (Greening, 2019). In phenomenological research in education, it is important to acknowledge biases that may influence the research process, challenge assumptions, and use multiple data sources to reduce bias and enhance validity (Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015).

4.8.6 Writing up Findings

In phenomenological research, it is important for the researcher to accurately represent the experiences and perspectives of participants in their findings. Reporting of findings should focus on detailed descriptions before interpretations and should include a summary, discussion, and recommendations. Findings should be reported without bias and direct quotations of participants should be used (Qutoshi, 2018).

In phenomenological research, it is important to follow a specific structure when reporting findings. The common structure includes an Introduction that outlines the research topic, Methodology that describes the design and data collection methods, Findings that present themes and meanings from participant experiences, Discussion that interprets the findings, and Conclusion that summarizes key findings and offers recommendations (Greening, 2019). Following this structured approach helps researchers effectively communicate their study to the academic community and stakeholders.

4.8.7 Dissemination

Dissemination of research findings in phenomenological research in education involves sharing the results with various audiences to promote evidence-based practices in education. Different means of dissemination include academic publications, conference presentations, and workshops or training sessions for educators and policymakers. To effectively disseminate phenomenological research in education, engaging with the local community, utilizing multiple communication channels, translating findings into actionable recommendations, fostering partnerships with key stakeholders, and leveraging digital platforms are crucial strategies to ensure relevance, accessibility, and impact within the Ethiopian educational context. Researchers also use social media platforms to engage with a broader audience. Dissemination should be done in a clear and accessible manner while being tailored to the needs and interests of the audience. Ethical considerations must be taken into account, such as obtaining informed consent and protecting confidentiality. Overall, dissemination plays a critical role in informing policy and practice (Greening, 2019; Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015).

When sharing finding from phenomenological research through various channels, researchers may encounter several challenges and considerations (Greening, 2019). One challenge is the complexity of translating subjective experiences into concise and easily understandable formats for different audiences. Phenomenological research often involves rich, detailed narratives that may be difficult to summarize without losing important nuances. Another consideration is the need to maintain the integrity and authenticity of participants' experiences when disseminating findings. Researchers must be mindful of ethical considerations and ensure that participants' voices are accurately represented and respected in all communication channels (Qutoshi, 2018). Additionally, researchers may face challenges in reaching diverse audiences and ensuring that findings are accessible to individuals with varying levels of familiarity with the research topic. Adapting communication strategies to cater to different audiences while maintaining the integrity of the research finding can be delicate balances (Yüksel and Yıldırım, 2015). Overall, researchers conducting phenomenological research should carefully consider the challenges of sharing findings through various channels and strive to communicate their research in a way that is both informative and respectful of participants' experiences.

4.9 Strengths and limitations of phenomenological research

4.9.1 *Strengths of Phenomenological Research*

There are several strengths of phenomenological research in general and in education. For one thing, it provides a very rich and detailed description of the human experience, perceptions, and perspectives. It also emphasizes the importance of context and the unique aspects of each individual's experiences, which can provide valuable insights into complex phenomena. Additionally, phenomenological research can be used to inform interventions and policies that are tailored to the needs and experiences of specific groups or individuals (Zengotita, 2019; Greening, 2019; Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Cilesiz, 2010).

Phenomenological research has several strengths in the field of education. First, it allows researchers to explore the lived experiences of students, teachers, and other stakeholders in the educational process, which can lead to a deeper understanding of how to improve educational outcomes. Second, it emphasizes the importance of context and the unique perspective of each participant, which can help identify the factors that contribute to success or failure in the classroom. Third, it can provide insights into the ways in which educational policies and practices impact the experiences of students and teachers. Finally, phenomenological research can be particularly useful in promoting social justice in education by giving voice to marginalized groups and highlighting the ways in which educational institutions can better serve their needs (Freeman, 2021; Qutoshi, 2018).

One example of the strengths of phenomenological research in education is its ability to provide rich and detailed insights into the lived experiences of students and educators. By focusing on the subjective perspectives and interpretations of individuals, phenomenological research can help uncover the underlying meaning and significance of educational phenomena. For instance, a phenomenological study on the experience of students with learning disabilities in Ethiopian schools could shed light on the unique challenges they face and the strategies they employ to navigate the educational system. This in-depth understanding can inform the development of more effective teaching methods and support services tailored to the specific needs of these students.

4.9.2 *Limitations of phenomenological research*

The subjectivity of the information gathered from people limits the generalizability of conclusions in phenomenological research. Comparing findings across studies is challenging because the results depend on the researcher's interpretation and may be skewed. This research methodology can be time- and resource-intensive, and it might be less effective in situations where objectivity is required. The representativeness of the data may also be constrained by the small sample sizes and absence of experimental controls, which might make it difficult to establish a causal link between variables (Berghofer, 2020; Greening, 2019; Qutoshi, 2018; Taşkıran, 2017b).

Limitations in phenomenological interviews can arise when researchers lack experience in conducting interviews, potentially impacting their focus and intentionality (Downey, 2015). Issues may also arise in the relationship between the researcher and the interviewee, such as power struggles that could hinder trust and the authenticity of participant reflections (Boucher, 2017). Time constraints may further complicate the interview process, potentially disrupting participants' ability to reflect deeply (Downey, 2015). To truly grasp the essence of a phenomenon, researchers must suspend judgment during interviews with participants (Ashworth, 2017). It is crucial for researchers to immerse themselves in the participants' perspectives and experiences to gain a comprehensive understanding of the study (Kelley, 2016).

One alternative view regarding the limitations of phenomenological research is that these limitations can actually be seen as opportunities for deeper exploration and understanding. Some researchers argue that constraints such as language barriers or cultural differences can lead to more nuanced interpretations of lived experiences (Taşkıran, 2017b). By acknowledging and working through these limitations, researchers can uncover unique insights and perspectives that may not have been apparent otherwise. Additionally, some scholars believe that the very nature of phenomenological research, which emphasizes subjective experiences and interpretations, allows for flexibility in addressing and overcoming limitations (Greening, 2019).

5 Conclusions

Phenomenological research in education offers a valuable approach for exploring the lived experiences, perspectives, and meanings of individuals within educational settings. By focusing on the subjective experiences of participants, phenomenological research provides a deep and rich understanding of the phenomena under study, shedding light on the complexities and nuances of human experiences in education. The practicality of phenomenological research in education lies in its ability to uncover the essence of phenomena, generate new knowledge, and inform educational practices and policies. By delving into the lived experiences of students, teachers, and other stakeholders, phenomenological research can offer insights that are often overlooked in traditional quantitative studies. These insights can help educators, policymakers, and researchers better understand the diverse needs, challenges, and aspirations of individuals within educational contexts.

Furthermore, phenomenological research in education can contribute to the development of empathetic and student-centred approaches to teaching and learning. By highlighting the subjective perspectives of participants, this research can inform pedagogical practices that are sensitive to the unique experiences and identities of students, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Phenomenological research in education holds significant practical value in deepening our understanding of the human experiences within educational settings. By embracing the subjective, personal narratives

of individuals, this approach can lead to more holistic and meaningful insights that have the potential to positively impact educational practices, policies, and outcomes. As such, phenomenological research remains a valuable and relevant methodology for exploring the complexities of education and promoting student-centred approaches to teaching and learning.

In conclusion, Phenomenological research in education provides a valuable tool for understanding individual experiences within educational settings. Despite challenges and criticisms, the potential benefits for policy, practice, and theory development must be considered. This research has the potential to deepen our understanding of educational phenomena and contribute to effective educational practices. It offers a unique approach to exploring complex educational issues and gaining insights from students, teachers, and other stakeholders. By applying the fundamental principles of phenomenology, researchers can gather rich and deep information to enhance their studies. In conclusion, phenomenological research design offers a valuable perspective on educational phenomena that cannot be captured through other research methods, making it a crucial tool for advancing education research.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

Declaration of interests' statement

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Original Article

Identification and intervention of children with emotional and behavioral disorders: practices and challenges in primary schools

Tesfaye Basha ^{1*}, Temesgen Tawele ² and Muluken Tesfaye ³

^{1,2,3} Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education, Arba Minch University and Hawassa University

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CORRESPONDING EMAIL

* Corresponding author email:
tesfayeask@yahoo.com

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Abstract

Identification and support of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) in integrated schools is a complex and challenging process. The purpose of this study was to investigate identification and intervention practices and challenges for children with EBD in primary schools of Boloso Bombe Woreda was the main focus of this study. An explanatory design (QUAN, qual) of a mixed research approach was employed. Purposive, available, and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 21 students with EBD, 21 parents, 50 teachers, 7 special needs education experts, and 7 principals. Data obtained through questionnaires, interviews, FGD, and observation were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The result of the study revealed that the identification and intervention practices were leveled as poor and very traditional. This low level of implementation manifested by lack of awareness on the identification and intervention techniques, knowledge gap on the types, causes, symptoms of EBD, problem in implementation identification and intervention techniques, lack of on-job training on how to identify and intervene students, absence of IEP teams, poor adaptation and modification of the instruction, negative attitude towards children with EBD, lack of effective monitoring and support by administrative, large number of students in a class, insufficient counselors and special needs education experts, and poor stockholders involvement. These results indicate identification and intervention practices for children with EBD lacks great attention. To ameliorate the problem contextualizing standard identification tools, organizing IEP teams, hiring well trained special needs experts and principals, creating attractive instructional environment, adaptation and modification of the curriculum, and monitoring and evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness are crucial.

1 Introduction

Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD) is a condition exhibiting one or more of the characteristics such as an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances, a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, and a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

According to [Smith \(2011\)](#), EBD has two categories known as externalizing and internalizing disorders. Attention deficit hyperactive disorder, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, hyperactive, aggressive, etc...are categorized under externalizing disorders whereas, immaturity, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, difficulty in learning, children and easily frustrated are categorized under internalizing disorders ([Abraham, 2009](#)). This type of children's behavior problems can pose tremendous challenges to families, schools, and society. Once established problem behavior tends to persist ([Kara, 2017](#)). Left untreated children's behaviors problems typically multiply, intensify, and diversify over time, thus putting the child at increased risk for academic failure, social isolation, and peer rejection. These, in turn, accelerate the likelihood of school avoidance, alcoholism and drug abuse, and lifespan antisocial behavior. Given the pernicious effects of children's behavior disorders, early intervention to prevent the development of such disorders is a judicious alternative to intervening after the behavior is well entrenched ([Feleke, 2010](#)).

Regarding prevalence, the [U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics \(2015\)](#) showed that from the percentage of students identified for special education supports and services under the classification of emotional disturbance has remained constant at approximately 1% of the school age population. In relation to this, a local study conducted by [Tirussew \(2005\)](#) revealed that from the profile of the specific disabilities in Ethiopia 2.4% are persons with behavioral problems. It has been estimated that 43% to 56% of students with EBD drop out of school, a rate almost twice that for all students with disabilities. Despite a significant number of students experiencing emotional and behavioral problems in the school, the majority of these students remain unidentified and consequently untreated. By most accounts, early detection/intervention is the most powerful course of action in ameliorating lifelong problems associated with children at risk for emotional/behavioral disorders.

Indeed, a growing body of empirical research supports the positive impact of early intervention ([Kara, 2017](#)). Most experts agree that prevention of children's with emotional and behavioral disorders requires intervention in multiple environments, by multiple agents over time, with continued intervention, support, and transition services as children move from setting to setting ([Hamblin-Wilson and Thurman, 1990](#); [Hester and Kaiser, 1998](#); [Rule et al., 1990](#); [Rous et al., 1994](#), cited in [Feleke, 2010](#)).

Moreover, scientifically supported intervention practices for EBD includes using teacher praise for positive reinforcement; providing opportunities for students to respond during instruction and using positive behavior support such as functional behavior assessments, social skills instruction, teaching for desired replacement behaviors and self-management and school-wide systems of positive behavior support. In addition, decreasing disruptive classroom behavior in the classroom the interventions include group contingency, self-management, differential reinforcement, and token economies. Therefore, critically investigating the identification and intervention of children with EBD is important to understand the recent practices and predict for future alteration. The researchers assumed that this study may show favorable conditions and paves the way for students with EBD best placement opportunities and equal access to education.

2 Research Problem

Identification and assessment of students with disabilities or suspected disabilities are evaluated by schools to determine whether they are eligible for special education services and, if eligible, to determine what services will be provided. In contrast, the majority of students with disabilities are initially referred for evaluation by their classroom teacher or parents because of severe and chronic achievement or behavioral problems. Children

with EBD in regular schools, especially on the aspect of identification and intervention, remain a major challenge not only in Ethiopia, but also around the world. They are considered as the most under-identified and underserved of all the disability groups (Forness and Kavale, 2001; Gresham, 2005, 2007; Merrell and Walker, 2004), cited in Kara (2017).

Simple logic suggests that failing to identify students early and circumscribing the population to include only those with the most extreme and protracted problems do not portend success (Kauffman, 1999 & Walker, 2004). Early identification is crucial for students with EBD to get supports that match their individual needs in order for them to be successful. To get the required supports they need identification of the problem and assessments need to be done promptly and if this is not done it delays the interventions and individual education plan for that student and it can cause the student to fall behind academically and to have behavioral issues consistently in the classroom (Kauffman, 1999). Without proper identification and treatment, such students pose substantial challenges to their teachers, administrators, and peers, including classroom disruptions and school safety issues. Moreover, longitudinal studies indicate that, compared to their non-disabled peers, youth with emotional and behavioral disabilities experience higher rates of delinquency, juvenile incarcerations, school dropout, teen pregnancy, suicide, and substance abuse (Wagner and Cameto, 2004; Wagner et al., 2005). Surprisingly, the researcher's vast observation and ample experiences in the study area also align with the majority of indicated problems that come in the identification and intervention of children with EBD in primary schools. To show the problems and possible solutions in detail the researchers were engaged in conducting this study. Therefore, this study intended to identify how primary schools practiced identification and intervention for children with EBD to obtain equal access to educational opportunities as other children and to identify the challenges which interfere on the practices of identification and intervention for children with EBD guided by the following basic research questions: How the identification and intervention practices being does implement?

1. What are the challenges that interfere with the identification and intervention services?
2. What are the possible solutions to be taken for the encountered challenges?

The general objective of this study is to investigate the identification and intervention practices and challenges of children with EBD in selected primary schools of Boloso Bombe woreda, Wolaita Zone of South Ethiopia. More specifically the study intended

1. To assess the existing practices of identification and intervention being implemented for students with EBD in the in primary schools.
2. To identify the existing challenges that interferes with the identification and intervention of students with EBD.
3. To suggest possible solutions to address the encountered challenges of identification and intervention for students with EBD.

Regarding the significance, this study helps to create better awareness for the school principals, teachers, and individualized education program teams on how they can carefully identify and manage the behaviors of students with EBD. It also helps to know the prevalence and to enable the placement of this group student. The study provides feedback for educational leaders, teachers, students, and other stakeholders on the current practices and challenges in the identification and intervention of students with EBD in primary schools. Moreover, it paves a way for researchers who want to study the related problems of students with emotional and behavioral disorders and it may serve as a reference for researchers and policymakers.

3 Theoretical framework

Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory about the ecology of human development reflects the influence of several ecological systems. The ecological system theory describes the difference in behavior of the child in different environments and how the environment influences their development and grows up the child into an adult (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

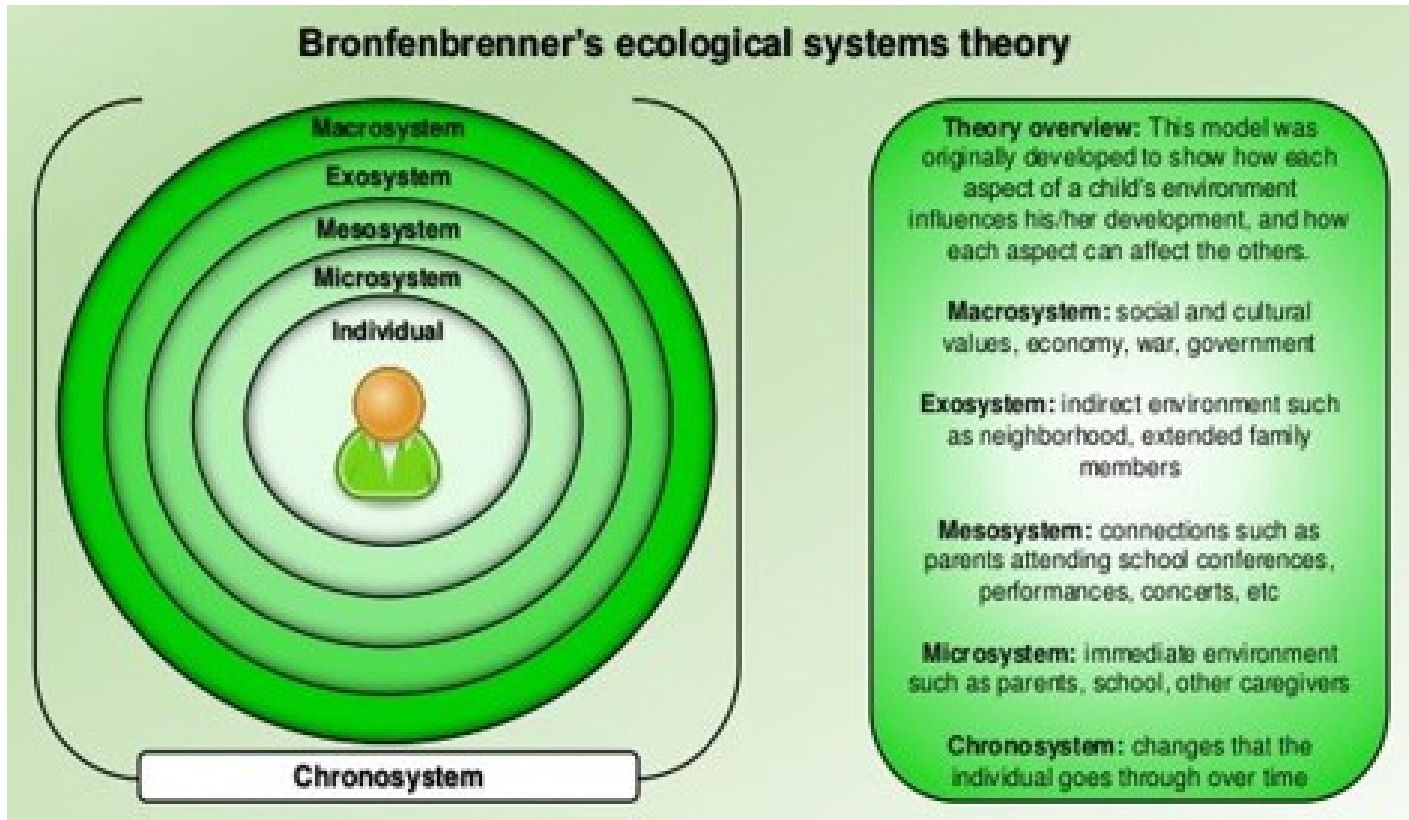


Figure 1: Source: Ecological System Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Bronfenbrenner divides the environment into 5 different levels and the point of an ecological model in each level interacts with others. The child at the center of the model interacts directly with the people in the microsystem and the effects of the interaction go both ways. As people affect the child, so the child influences them. As a result, the child, the system, and the environment are an ever-changing milestone and life events occur as time passes, the child grows, and the context change. The school setting, classroom environment, and interaction with teachers and peers is placed in the first closest system to the child called microsystem. The people and institutions of the child interact within that environment make up the microsystem, give norms and rules. Hence the whole school environment is one of the closest environment systems individuals interacts with and that influence and affects the development. Additionally, it is the macro system that includes official regulation and cultural traditions, and that indirectly affect ever Microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, the ecological system theory is a conceptual framework used to interpret school dynamics and its direct implication for practices of identification, assessment, support provision, placement, and teaching with long term relationships between children and parents, students and students, students and teachers, and teams. In this study, it was helped to investigate the practices and challenges in the identification and intervention of children with EBD in primary schools of Boloso Bombe Woreda.

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Research design

The design for this study was selected on the bases of the theory that it helps to gather adequate information from participants in line with basic research questions. To this end, an explanatory design (QUAN-qual) of a mixed research approach was employed by giving priority on quantitative data collection/analysis and using the qualitative data to explain the results of the quantitative one. In supporting this approach [Louis et al. \(2011\)](#) stated this research method helps to gather data at a particular point in time to describe the nature of the existing condition, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships exists between specific events.

The target population of the study incorporated all students with EBD, teachers, principals, school special needs education experts, and parents of students with EBD in seven primary schools which were found in Boloso Bombe woreda namely: Bombe Limat, Bombe Idiget, Adila, Farawocha, Gido Ambe, Kuto Ambe and Bombe Tekli Dingayi. Indicated schools were selected through purposive sampling based on having a large number of students with EBD. As can see in [Table 1](#) the sample consisted of 7 primary schools (19.4%) out of 36 public primary schools, 21 students with EBD (13.3%) out of 158 students, 50 teachers (30.5%) out of 164 teachers, 7 principals of the school, 7 special needs education experts from schools and 21 parents of sampled students' with EBD (13.3%). Sampled students with EBD and their respective parents were selected purposively by considering the severity level of the behavior problem and being parents/caregivers of students who have EBD respectively:

Table 1: Summary of study population and sample

R.	Participants	Total Population	Sample	Sampling Technique
1	Students with EBD	158	21 (13.3%)	Purposive
2	Principals	7	7 (100%)	Available
3	Teachers	164	50 (30.5%)	Simple Random
4	Parents	158	21 (13.3%)	Purposive
5	Special Needs Education Expert	7	7 (100%)	Available
	Total	494	106 (21.5%)	

To collect the required data on the current practices and challenges of identification and intervention of students with EBD; questionnaire, interview, focus group discussion, and observation instruments were employed. The questionnaire was prepared in English language, tested, and administered to sample teacher participants. Semi-structured interview guide questions were designed in Amharic language and conducted with school principals; school special needs education experts to secure information. Focus group discussion was the other data gathering tool utilized in this research. It was carried out between parents of sampled students with EBD in three groups. The information obtained through qualitative data collection tools were analyzed and triangulated with information gathered through the questionnaire. Analysis of collected data was done using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative data via a close-ended questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics; frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The mean score of the questionnaire rated Likert scale result of quantitative analysis determined as < 2.5 = low, $2.5 - 3.5$ = medium and > 3.5 = high ([Berahane, 2014](#)). The data obtained from the FGD, observation, and interview was analyzed qualitatively by narrating under categories with reference to the research questions.

5 Results and discussion

5.1 Identification of practices Implemented for students with EBD

Many educators recognize the need to identify young children who may require inter-
vention. To this purpose, the results of this study revealed by teachers implied that the
current practices of identification of children with EBD were poor in primary schools of
Boloso Bombe worda.

Table 2: Teachers Response on identification practices for students with EBD

N	Items	Low	Moderate	High	M	SD	
2	Functionality of Individualized Education Program	40	10	20	-	1.80	
3	Awareness on the identification techniques/strategies	31	6	19	38	-	2.24
4	Implementation of different identification techniques	36	7	10	20	4	8 1.94
5	Knowledge on the causes, types, and symptoms of EBD	30	6	15	30	5	1 2.10
6	Receiving on-job training on how to identify these students	33	6	13	26	4	8 2.02
7	School administrative support for effective identification	37	7	13	26	-	1.92

f= frequency; M= Mean; and SD= Standard Deviation

In Table 2 the low level of implementation practices of identification manifested by teacher response for the question related to awareness on the identification techniques/strategies with (M = 2.24, SD = .74) knowledge on the causes, types, and symptoms of EBD with (M = 2.10, SD = 1.05) implementation of different identification techniques with (M = 1.94, SD = .98), receiving on-job training on how to identify these students with (M = 2.02, SD = 1.00) organization of individualized education program teams with (M = 1.84, SD = .79), the functionality of individualized education program with (M = 1.80, SD = .75), and school administrative support for effective identification with (M = 1.92, SD = .78). In supporting the importance of improving awareness Tirussew (2005) suggested that awareness-raising programs should involve parents, family, community members who need to be enforced and convinced to develop their contribution in promoting special needs. Interviewed school principals also said most of the school communities in general, have no enough awareness and involvement in the identification of children with EBD. Parents' in FGD added that "we have no knowledge on types, cause and symptoms of behavioral problems, lack of awareness on how the school identify and leveled children as a behavioral disorder, and the school did not invite us to participate in the identification process. Most of the time the principal call and told us, your child has very challenging behavior and follow him/her seriously." Thus, early and proper identification is crucial for students with EBD to get and provide supports that match their individual needs in order for them to be successful in their school career. If this is not done it delays the interventions and individual education plan for that student and it can cause the student to fall behind academically and to have behavioral issues consistently in the classroom (Kauffman, 1999).

5.2 Intervention practices implemented for students with EBD

The effectiveness of intervention strategies applied in managing emotional or behavioral problems depends upon the proper identification process (Alberto and Troutman, 2010). According to the results in the previous section of this study addressed the big gap in the identification of students with behavior problems in the study area. In the table below the intervention practices are treated accordingly:

Table 3: Teachers response on intervention practices for students with EBD

N	Items	Low	Moderate	High	M	SD
1	Understanding on the intervention strategies/techniques	36	13	-	2.18	.75
2	Motivation and commitment to use different intervention techniques	31	12	9	2.22	.84
3	Getting on-job training on how to handle students with behavior problem	8	6	7	4	2.38 .88
4	Making the classroom attractive and least restrictive environment	35	7	10	4	1.98 .96
5	Direct involvement of teachers in providing intervention/supporting students	41	8	7	4	2.14 .71
6	Stakeholders' involvement during intervention process	31	7	8	4	2.20 .90
7	Monitoring and follow up student's behavioral problems	28	6	7	9	2.38 1.05

f= frequency; M= Mean; and SD= Standard Deviation

As can see in Table 3, the intervention practices being implemented for students with EBD according to the respondent teachers response was measured as low level with (M = 2.18, SD = .75) for the question related to their understanding on the intervention strategies, (M = 2.22, SD = .84) for their motivation and commitment to using different intervention techniques, (M = 2.38, SD = .88) for getting on-job training on how to handle students with a behavior problem, (M = 1.98, SD = .96) for making the classroom more attractive and least restrictive, (M = 2.14, SD = .71) for their direct involvement of teachers in providing intervention/supporting students with EBD, (M = 2.20, SD = .90) for stakeholders involvement during the intervention, and (M = 2.38, SD = 1.05) for monitoring and follow up students behavior. Similarly, interview result of special needs education experts' shows except very few committed teachers' majority of teachers follow punishment as an intervention mechanism. They don't know the importance to note that learners with EBD are managed by designing an individual curriculum program to suit their educational needs. But, Polloway et al. (2008) stated that teachers can minimize disruptive behavior during transition times by giving learners specific directions on how to move from one activity to another and by rewarding students for making an orderly and smooth transition. Scheuermann and Hall (2008) positive behavioral support include providing effective academic content and instructions to learners with EBDs. They also reflected on the lack of knowledge on providing appropriate intervention and poor parents' participation in the intervention of children with EBD in the majority of schools.

5.3 Encountered challenges identification and intervention of students with EBD

In this study a number of challenges of identification and intervention practices were pointed out by respondent teachers of students with EBD, school principals, and special needs education experts at Woreda level:

Table 4: Teachers Response on challenges encountered in identification and intervention practices for students with EBD

N	Items	Low	Moderate	High	M	SD
1	Absence of individualized education program teams	7	10	13	16	3.92 1.24
2	Poor instructional strategies to intervening the problem	4	8	19	18	3.84 1.22
3	Inadequate knowledge on the identification tools and intervention	2	4	8	16	4.12 .96
4	Problem in creating welcoming environment for all students with EBD	8	16	15	7	3.72 1.11
5	Poor parents and stakeholders' participation and contribution	-	-	19	18	4.02 .89
6	Negative attitude towards children with EBD	-	-	12	14	3.68 .79
7	Poor on-job training on how to identify and intervene students in behavior	5	10	10	15	3.98 1.06
8	Insufficient counselors and special needs education experts	10	14	8	15	4.06 .98
9	Poor adaptation and modification of the instruction/curriculum					3.66 .89
10	Lack of monitoring and support by school administrative	14	18	15	10	4.04 .90

f= frequency; M= Mean; and SD= Standard Deviation

In a brief discussion of Table 4, the quantitative result obtained by questionnaire identified the challenges as ; the absence of individualized education program teams (M = 3.92, SD = 1.24) poor instructional strategies to interview the problem (M = 3.84, SD = 1.22) inadequate knowledge on identification tools and intervention strategies (M = 4.12, SD = .96) problem in creating welcoming environment for all students with EBD (M = 3.72, SD = 1.11) poor parents and stakeholders' participation (M = 4.02, SD = .89) negative attitude towards children with EBD (M = 4.16, SD = .79) poor on-job training on how to identify and intervene students in behavior problem (M = 3.98, SD = 1.06) insufficient counselors and special needs education experts (M = 4.06, SD = .98) lack of motivation, interest and commitment to support (M = 3.86, SD = 1.03) poor adaptation and modification of the instruction (M = 3.66, SD = .89) and lack of monitoring and support by school administrative (M = 4.04, SD = .90) were identified as a major challenges.

Moreover, the interviewees' school principal and special needs education expert said that stakeholder's poor awareness about types of behavior problems and identification process, having a large number of students in one class which is difficult to manage their behavior, insufficient special needs education expert and counselors, and less commitment to the schools' community especially, special needs and regular teachers to identify students with EBD were the major challenges. Moreover, in FDG majority of respondents said lack of training also hinders improving the abilities of teachers to identify and support students with EBD. Some of this finding agrees with McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001); Willeh (2002) as mentioned that poor identification due to poor communication and information dissemination mechanisms, lack of clear guidelines on placement issues, inadequate and, in some cases inappropriate special support services, low level of awareness and negative attitudes were widely observed challenges in a school with students with EBD.

6 Conclusions

Proper identification of children with EBD leads to get eligible children for intervention services. In contrast to this in this study, it was observed a poor identification practice

of children with EBD in primary Schools. In addressing the need of students with EBD the study also revealed low-level intervention practices with ineffective and inefficient treatment. The poor level of identification and intervention practices manifested by lack of awareness on the identification and intervention techniques/tools, knowledge gap on the types, causes, symptoms of EBD, a problem in the implementation of different identification and intervention tools, lack of on-job training on how to identify and intervene students, absence of individualized education program teams, problem in creating welcoming classroom environment, poor adaptation and modification of the instruction, negative attitude towards children with EBD, motivation and commitment gap to use different techniques, lack of effective monitoring and support by school administrative, large number of students in a class, insufficient counselors and special needs education experts, and poor stockholders involvement were the major challenges addressed by this study. This indicates identification and intervention practices for children with EBD in primary schools of Boloso Bombe woreda lacks great attention.

7 Recommendations

Depending on the findings drawn from conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded to improve the practices of identification and intervention of students with EBD in primary schools:

The schools should facilitate short-term capacity building training for teachers and parents on identification techniques and intervention practices for students with EBD. The schools need to organize individualized education program teams and need to follow its functionality closely. The school should create a conducive least restrictive school environment and attractive instructional strategies by modification and adaptation of curriculum. The schools should give due attention to stakeholder's participation in identification and intervention approaches. The Woreda Education office must train or hire sufficient special needs education experts and counselors.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

Declaration of interests' statement

The author declare no competing interests.

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Research Original Article

Gender representation in selected literary texts: Grade five to eight EFL textbooks in focus

Yalemwork Mossu ^{1*} and Mengistu Anagaw ²

^{1,2} Debre Markos University

Abstract

The study is a purely qualitative content analysis intending to examine gender representation in literary texts unearthing how gender dis/parity unfolds in grades five to eight English language textbooks. The design enables researchers to identify the frequency of literary texts and examine the nature of tasks driven from literary texts thereby showing gender representation and gender parity and disparity. The ways gender parity and disparity unfold in literary texts need both thematic analysis. Hence, data generated from literary texts are coded and organized into themes. The findings reveal that literary texts' portrayal of gender in terms of visibility is frequent. On the contrary, the theme-level representation of gender in the literary texts raises questions about previous approaches to studying gender representation. For instance, in terms of themes of literary texts, gender representation is controversial. The level of visibility and sexist language use doesn't guarantee parity of gender representation in themes of literary texts. For instance, in the poem my mother the feminine gender is visible. Likewise, in taming a husband the feminine pronoun is visible. Besides the roles given, the gender disparity occurs in these literary texts at the theme level. Accordingly, it is suggested that literary selections for classroom use should be considered in terms of gender representation at the level of its theme to help teachers, material designers, and evaluators ensure gender representation in literary texts.

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CORRESPONDING EMAIL

* Corresponding author email:
yalemworkmossu@gmail.com

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KEYWORDS:

Gender representation;
gender parity;
visibility;
theme level representation

1 Introduction

Gender as a part of our identity is not stable but under continual construction, with the influence of the factors, we are exposed to. Socialization agents and other social processes shape people's internalized views on gender (Law and Chan, 2004). For instance, contemporary media including television, films, music, and the internet may play a role in shaping the outlook toward gender. For school children, however, textbooks "represent every day for children" (Kereszty, 2009, p.3) as textbooks provide content that is delivered at the earliest levels of their learning (Kobia, 2009). Textbooks impact children's attitudes, values, and behavior as they spend a great deal of time reading them at school. Textbooks serve as an important socialization agent that shapes pupils' view including their views on gender (Kereszty, 2009). Not only do textbooks disseminate knowledge to learners, but they also reflect, construct and reproduce certain worldviews as well as the writers' beliefs. Textbooks and educational materials have lasting influences on learners' beliefs about gender roles, as the phrases and stories heard and learned regarding women and men condition their minds in different ways.

Either visually or textually, gender dis/parity in textbooks manifests in different forms. Visibility is the extent to which either gender is quantitatively represented often female textual and/or visual omission or under representation signaling that women are less important (Gupta and Lee, 1990; Lee, 2019; Lee and Chin, 2019). Gender stereotyping, the second manifestation of biased gender representation involves females' portrayal as more fragile and passive and engaging mainly in household activities, and males as more active and engaging in physically demanding work and a wider range of social roles (Lee, 2014; Lee and Chin, 2019). Linguistic sexism, the third way gender dis/parity manifests, refers to the use of words, phrases, or expressions in such a way that they present an unbalanced portrayal of women and men, which encompasses trivializing, diminishing, or excluding either gender, usually females through language. Gender disparity in the form of underrepresentation and omission, stereotyping, and sexist language use (Kizlaslan, 2010) in textbooks inevitably impacts the values, behaviors, world-views, and mindsets of learners and teachers negatively. Undue and inequitable gender representation in textbooks in general and literary texts, in particular, may contribute to a sense of insignificance among girls. As to Sunderland (1992), gender-stereotyped EFL materials aggravate disempowerment; alienate and de-motivate (and thus hamper performance), and the patterns of the language contained in them can become classroom routines. On top of these, such gender representations socialize students in the direction of gender differentiation beyond repair. The motivation of students, especially girls, to learn and emulate good characters would be lessened.

Literary texts, as indelible and widely used materials, play significant roles in providing characters and events from which children can identify actions, beliefs, and emotions (Mendoza and Reese, 2001; Bruegilles and Cromer, 2009). Conversely, gender bias as portrayed in literature is still prevalent that Taso (2008) concluded literature is one of the homes of gender stereotypes. On top of that, care must be taken when selecting such texts for the language classroom. Taso (2008) suggests:

Ideally, all children's books used in classrooms should have well-rounded male and female characters. Characters achievements should not be evaluated based on gender and females should not always be portrayed as weaker as and more delicate than males. Besides, teachers may choose books that have counter-sexist attitudes embedded in them. Nonetheless, how gender representation unfolds in such texts and how gender parity and disparity unfold in literary texts remains untouched.

Discriminatory gender representations incorporated in literary texts influence female and male students to absolutely different ways of acting and reacting ascertaining and glorifying unjust beliefs. As a developing country with a predominantly patriarchal society, Ethiopia is struggling to progress on gender parity in education and economic opportunities currently ranking 140th and 125th of 153 countries. Local studies on gender representation reveal the prominence of both gender-stereotypical and emerging gender-equitable discourse (Zegeye, 2019; Gebregeorgis, 2016). However, in literary texts, representation of gender cannot be studied merely by counting sexist language use. On top of that, none of the studies examine the representation of gender in literary texts unearthing how gender dis/parity unfolds in textbooks. For instance, Ruterana (2017) investigates how the educational use of fairy tales can challenge traditional gender roles in Rwandan education. The study reports that the students expressed positive attitudes toward a change of traditional gender roles as the latter obstructs full realization of females' rights. Hosseinpour and Afghari (2016) uncovered the under-representation and stereotyping of females in terms of the number of characters and roles in fifty Persian folklores. Thus, the current study examines gender representation in selected literary texts unearthing how gender dis/parity unfolds. In so doing, this study has both theoretical and practical significance.

1.1 Objectives

The general objective of the current study is to examine gender representation in literary texts unearthing how gender dis/parity unfolds in grades five to eight English language textbooks. Specifically the study:

1. Examines how literary texts portray gender in terms of visibility in the textbooks.
2. Describes how literary texts portray gender in terms of sexist language use.
3. Discerns how literary texts portray gender in terms of themes of a literary text.

2 Research methods

The study is a purely qualitative content analysis intending to examine gender representation in literary text unearthing how gender dis/parity unfolds in grades five to eight English language textbooks. As to Krippendorff (2004), content analysis is the intellectual process of categorizing qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities or conceptual categories to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables or themes. Content analysis is the most appropriate technique for this study as it enables researchers to study human behavior (gender representation) indirectly (Fraenkel et al., 2012) going through some valuable steps. After determining objectives for carrying out the study, which in the case of this study is, exploring gender representation in literary texts, this content analysis specified the unit of analysis. The literary texts are analyzed at word; sentence and text levels for gender can be represented in words, including pronouns and themes of literary texts. To that end, the literary materials are purposefully (on the grounds of relevance for the purpose) selected for the study. In doing content analysis on literary texts, both the manifest and the latent contents (Fraenkel et al., 2012) on gender representation and gender dis/parity are considered. Thus, this design enables to identify the frequency of literary texts and examine the nature of tasks driven from literary texts thereby showing gender representation and gender parity and disparity. Utmost efforts are made to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of findings. To reduce problems of observer bias due to the person performing the content analysis knowing the hypotheses of the study (Fraenkel et al., 2012) a “blind” observer, five expert teachers who do not know the purpose of the study did the ratings. To that end, the researcher selected literary texts from different editions of the grade eight English language textbooks that were read by five teachers to determine gender representation and gender dis/parity at themes level. Discussion of findings is made accordingly in a way that ensures maximum dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 2019). Both thematic content analyses have been carried out. The different ways of gender representation and gender dis/parity in literary texts look for frequency counts, the description of how the representation parity and disparity unfolds in each of the literary texts and activities driven from those literary texts needs qualitative analysis. Hence, the data is generated from literary texts and it is necessary to code and organize themes accordingly.

3 Results and discussion

The current study examines how gender representation unfolds in selected literary texts. A content analysis on a total of five literary texts has been carried out. In so doing, this study has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the findings show teachers, material designers, and evaluators the ways to ensure gender representation in literary texts. Practically, the findings help different stakeholders in their efforts to induce gender parity by redressing sources of the disparity.

Table 1: Gender representation markers in selected literary texts

Literary text	Gender representation markers	Visibility	Roles/jobs	Firstness	G
The living whisper	Male	1 (1.29%)	3		
	Female	27 (36.3%)	11		
My mother	Male	0			
	Female	15 (100%)	1		
Taming a husband	Male	9 (21.4%)	1		
	Female	23 (54.7%)	1		

and physical strength has also been modified by some adjectives (Söğüt, 2018). Firstness which refers to placing male terms before female terms when both come together occurs three times out of four possible instances. In the literary text, when both female and male referring terms appear together, the male term precedes the female term in three instances while the opposite occurs in one instance. Regarding the character’s parents, her father and mother, her two sisters and three brothers, her uncles and brothers as well as men and women are the instances where choices on Firstness are made. In three of the instances, the masculine gender is put first.

Of the occupations represented in the literary text, the female character, Kibrie, performs the unusual role of being a military leader. Strikingly, in the literary text, the female character is attributed to a role of military leadership, one of the most demanding jobs. The character has succeeded in instilling a burning desire that made everybody sing we must defend our motherland and our revolution.

In the poem my mother the pronoun she is used in fifteen instances while the masculine he is not used at all. The literary piece is written from a daughter’s point of view about a mother who is carrying, supportive and loving. In the poem, the female pronoun is apparent as compared to the male counterpart. The pronoun she occurs 15 times in contrast with the male pronoun he which did not appear at all. This contrasts with Zegeye (2019) who reports (52.97%) occurrence of male pronouns in the 2003 edition of the grade eight English language textbook published by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

In the poem my mother, gender is not represented in terms of names. The name of the mother or the daughter is not mentioned throughout the poem. Likewise, no male name is mentioned. This, along with the frequent use of the feminine pronouns gives primacy to the feminine gender in the poem. This may be in direct contrast with Taso (2008) who concluded ‘literature is one of the homes of gender stereotypes.

The occupation represented in the poem is indoor which is about caring for children. The daughter adores the way her mother performs the usual role of caring for one’s daughter. All the roles described in the poem including carrying, playing, feeding one’s daughter are usual to the biased feminine gender. The poem states the affection and love of the mother as a result of which the physical strength of the mother has not been presented in the poem.

In taming a husband, a story of a young woman who attempted to tame her husband, the female pronoun is apparent as compared to the male counterpart. The pronoun she occurs 23 times in contrast with the male pronoun he which appeared nine times. Likewise, the gender-neutral pronouns they, you, them and we occur ten times. This contrast with Zegeye (2019) who reports (52.97%) occurrence of male pronouns in the 2003 edition of the grade eight English language textbook published by the MoE, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

The adjectives in the literary text describe the old man and the young woman. The adjectives young, wise, old, near, fierce and brave are used in the literary text. The adjectives are mainly used to describe the courage of the young woman to tame her husband and the wisdom of the old man. The woman courageously tamed a lion but asked for a magic charm to tame her husband. Among the occupations represented in the literary text, the young woman performs the usual role of being a housewife. In contrast, the literary text reserves the role of being wise to an old man. Her husband used to beat and shout at her. This implies that the man takes a primary role in managing the household.

Unity is strength is a story of a father his young children and a wise teacher who attempted to wisely solve a problem of disagreement among the boys. The male pronoun is apparent as compared to the female counterpart. The pronoun he occurs 17 times in contrast with the female pronoun she which never appears in the story. Likewise, the gender-neutral pronouns they, you, them and we occur sixty times. This contrast with [Zegeye \(2019\)](#) who reports (52.97%) occurrence of male pronoun in the 2003 edition of the grade eight English language textbook published by MoE, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

In the story Unity is strength; gender is represented in terms of names. The gendered name of the father and the wise teacher is mentioned in the story. However, feminine gender names and occupations are not mentioned. Of the occupations represented in the literary text, the male characters act as a wise teacher and a successful farmer. The role of being a wise farmer and teacher is reserved to the masculine character. Of the adjectives included in the story, the majority emphasized the physical strength of the boys. The adjectives big, strong, young and great describe the physical strength of the boys while the good and wise describe the wit of their father and the new teacher. However, adjectives referring to the feminine gender are not used in the story.

In whose work is easier, a story of a husband and wife who quarreled on sharing tasks, a lesson on gender parity is underlined. The pronoun she occurs twice in contrast with the male pronoun he which appeared nineteen times. Likewise, the gender-neutral pronouns they, you, them and we occur ten times. This contrast with [Zegeye \(2019\)](#) who reports (52.97%) occurrence of male pronoun in the 2003 edition of the grade eight English language textbook published by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Of the adjectives included to describe the woman and her husband, the majority emphasized physical strength and difficulty. The adjectives in the literary piece angry, easier, easy and slow are used to describe the confrontations of the husband and wife. The man considered a woman's job as easy and questioned why the woman was slow. But, he learned his expectations were wrong. Of the two occupations represented in the literary text, the female character performs the usual role of being a housewife. In a moment of the contest to determine whose work is easier, the woman went out for farming while the husband failed to stand up to the indoor tasks. In contrast, the literary text presents the role of farming to men.

Altogether The living whisper is a story of a young woman named Kibre and her struggle for justice. My mother is a poem on the love and kindness of a mother. Unity is strength is a short story of the quarreling sons of Ato Tesemma and their wise teacher. Taming a husband is a story of a young woman who wanted a magic charm to tame her husband. However, she learned to be patient to succeed. The short story whose work is easier? Presents a farmer who claimed a woman's job was easier. Gender disparity occurs in the number and meaning of adjectives, the number of pronouns, names and roles of characters in the literary texts. In instances of paired occurrences, masculine firstness is evident in three cases while feminine firstness occurs only once.

Gender representation in literary texts has to be considered in the themes of the literary texts as opposed to the number of adjectives, pronouns, names, roles and instances of

Firstness of either gender. For instance, in the living whisper, the feminine gender is represented by twenty-seven feminine gender referring pronouns and only one masculine referring pronoun. Of the adjectives used, sixteen are used to modify the woman militia leader positively. The theme presents the role and worth of both genders in defending a motherland. In whose work is easier the number of pronouns referring to the masculine gender exceeds that of the feminine while the roles are in parity. Nonetheless, the theme of the story underlines gender parity.

My mother and Taming a husband are literary texts where the feminine gender is predominantly represented. A close look into the themes of these literary texts, however, reveals that the feminine gender is undermined in these literary texts thereby posing questions on the parity of gender. My mother, in appreciating the candidness and love of a mother, confines women to indoor tasks. Likewise, taming a husband, the woman is pictured as physically weak and unwise to defend herself and her stances. The woman went for the support of a wise old man. The woman proved her courage, yet a magic charm was not found.

4 Conclusions

The study is a purely qualitative content analysis intending to examine gender representation in literary texts unearthing how gender dis/parity unfolds in grades five to eight English language textbooks. The design enables researchers to identify the frequency of literary texts and examine the nature of tasks driven from literary texts thereby showing gender representation and gender parity and disparity. The ways gender parity and disparity unfold in the literary texts need both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Hence, data generated from literary texts are coded and organized into themes. The findings reveal that literary texts' portrayal of gender in terms of visibility is frequent. This is followed by sexist language use. On the contrary, the representation of gender in the theme of the literary texts raises questions on previous approaches to studying gender representation.

Gender parity is not maintained in the selected literary texts in terms of visibility. In three out of the five literary texts, the feminine gender occurs more than the masculine gender in terms of frequency of pronouns.

The literary texts portray gender disparity in terms of sexist language use. First of the masculine gender occurs in three instances as compared to feminine first that occurs once. In terms of themes of literary texts, gender representation is controversial. The level of visibility and sexist language use doesn't guarantee parity of gender representation in themes of literary texts. For instance, in the poem My mother the feminine gender is visible. Likewise, in taming a husband the feminine pronoun is visible. Besides the roles given, the gender disparity occurs in these literary texts at the theme level.

5 Recommendations

Accordingly, it is suggested that literary selections for classroom use should be considered in terms of gender representation at the level of its theme. The visibility of gender parity and the use of sexist language use interplays with the theme of a literary text. This should help teachers, material designers and evaluators the ways to ensure gender representation in literary texts. Practically, the findings help different stakeholders in their efforts to induce gender parity.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

Declaration of interests' statement

The author declare no competing interests.

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Research Original Article

A single case study on Tabor secondary school teachers' engagement in action research activities in Hawassa City Administration

Akiliu Yihun ^{1*}, Mesay Kebede ² and Demekash Asregid ³

^{1,2,3} School of Teacher Education, College of Education, Hawassa University

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CORRESPONDING EMAIL

* akiliuyihun@gmail.com

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Abstract

The main objective of this research was to investigate the status of secondary school teachers' engagement in action research. To achieve this objective, a single case study with an embedded design was employed. Hawassa Tabor secondary school was selected as the case study site due to its extensive history in secondary education and the considerable teaching experience of its staff. Data were collected through document analysis; focus group discussion, and semi-structured interviews. The data was analyzed using qualitative methods and revealed that teachers' engagement in action research is at a rudimentary level. While teachers held positive perception of action research, they were not conducting it in accordance with the accepted steps of the process. Several factors were identified as barriers to teachers' engagement in action research, including a lack of recognition for research efforts, insufficient financial and technical support, limited time, and inadequate cooperation and coordination among colleagues. Based on these findings, implications were provided for Education Office, schools and teachers to address these challenges and enhance teachers' participation in action research.

1 Introduction

Action research is a systematic investigation conducted by educators to understand and improve their practices, instructional methods, and student outcomes (Mills, 2000). It involves practitioners examining their own practices to refine and enhance them, blending "action" and "research" in a unique and purposeful way. Unlike other forms of inquiry, action research integrates both elements in an iterative process, where action and research mutually inform each other.

Characterized as a process aimed at improving practice, action research is typically designed and implemented by practitioners using data analysis to enhance their work. Richard (2000) describes it as a systematic investigation carried out by and for those directly engaged in the activity. The primary goal is to enable practitioners to refine their methods and improve their actions, directly impacting their instructional effectiveness.

Benefits for educators are central to the value of action research. A study by Avalos (2011) suggests that action research fosters collaborative learning among educators, providing

opportunities for teachers to share insights, collaborate on solving problems, and learn from each other's experiences. This collaborative aspect is particularly valuable in fostering a sense of community and collective responsibility for improving student learning outcomes. Similarly, a study by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) reinforces the idea that action research provides a platform for teachers to engage with theory and practice simultaneously, deepening their understanding of both pedagogical content and the contexts in which they teach.

The process of action research follows a cyclical and non-linear pattern, with practitioners alternating between reflection, data collection, and action. Kempis (1994) describes this process as a "self-reflective spiral," where educators observe their actions, experiment with different practices, and interpret the outcomes to inform future improvements. This iterative approach encourages continuous development and enhances teaching effectiveness. It allows teachers to make small, manageable changes that can be tested over time, contrasting with traditional professional development models, which often offer one-time workshops or strategies that may not allow for ongoing refinement. As teachers engage in multiple cycles of action and reflection, they build confidence in making informed decisions about their teaching, which leads to greater teaching effectiveness (McNiff, 2013). Recent studies further support this approach, showing that it not only improves teaching practices but also positively impacts student learning. For example, Hargreaves (2004) found that teachers involved in action research were more likely to incorporate innovative strategies and create student-centered learning environments. The continual process of testing and adjusting ensures that teaching remains responsive, relevant, and effective.

Teacher empowerment is one of the most significant benefits of action research. By engaging in this process, teachers take control of their professional growth. Rather than merely following external directives, teachers identify specific challenges in their classrooms and seek practical solutions. This proactive approach not only improves teaching practices but also fosters a sense of ownership in the improvement process. Teachers engage in continuous self-assessment, experiment with new strategies, and make adjustments based on the unique needs of their students (Berg, 2016; Mertler, 2017).

Through action research, teachers gain greater autonomy in decision-making. Analyzing their practices, gathering data, reflecting on results, and implementing strategies for improvement allows them to become effective problem-solvers. This approach leads to more personalized, impactful professional development (Berg, 2016).

Teachers who participate in action research often report increased job satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. Taking ownership of their learning and seeing tangible results strengthens their connection to their work, motivating them to create positive changes in their classrooms. This empowerment boosts morale and encourages long-term professional growth (Mertler, 2017).

A central component of action research is reflective practice, which encourages teachers to critically evaluate their teaching methods and student outcomes. This ongoing process of self-assessment helps teachers identify areas for improvement and experiment with new approaches. By collecting data and reflecting on classroom dynamics, teachers refine their instructional strategies and enhance their effectiveness (Schön, 1983; Mertler, 2017).

Critical reflection is key to professional growth. As teachers examine their practices, they gain insights into what works and what requires adjustment. This cycle of reflection, action, and evaluation fosters lifelong learning, motivating educators to continuously improve their skills. Reflection also prompts teachers to question assumptions, consider new perspectives, and make informed decisions that benefit student learning (Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Berg, 2016).

Reflective practice in action research bridges theory and practice. By applying theoretical knowledge to real classroom situations, teachers can assess the effectiveness of different approaches in meeting students' needs. This evidence-based decision-making process leads to improvements in teaching quality and student outcomes (Kember, 2000). Teachers are better equipped to adapt to diverse learning contexts, fostering a student-centered approach.

Participating in action research also helps teachers deepen their understanding of educational theories and their practical applications. Teachers engage with contemporary research and apply theoretical frameworks to solve classroom challenges, which keep them informed about the latest trends and best practices in education.

Action research not only promotes continuous improvement but also fosters collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Teachers collaborate with peers to conduct research, exchange ideas, and support each other's professional development. This creates a professional learning community where educators stay engaged with current trends and best practices, sustaining motivation and growth (Berg, 2016).

Collaboration within schools is another major benefit of action research. Traditional professional development often isolates teachers, limiting opportunities for teamwork. Action research, however, facilitates collaboration among teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders, creating a space for shared problem-solving and reflection (Berg, 2016). This collaboration strengthens the school community and encourages a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Involving various stakeholders in the research process ensures that the outcomes of action research align with school goals and policies. This collaborative approach fosters trust and mutual respect among teachers, administrators, and other staff, leading to more effective change within the school environment (Mertler, 2017).

Action research also cultivates a sense of community within schools. As teachers share experiences and strategies, they build a supportive network that promotes collective learning and offers encouragement. This community fosters a positive school culture, boosting teacher morale and maintaining motivation, even during challenging times (Berg, 2016).

Moreover, action research promotes shared responsibility for school improvement. Teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders are invested in the research outcomes, strengthening their collective commitment to addressing school challenges. By collaborating to identify issues, implement solutions, and evaluate results, everyone contributes to creating a better educational environment for students, promoting shared accountability and improving the overall school climate (Berg, 2016; Mertler, 2017).

In Ethiopia, the Ministry of Education (MoE) introduced the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) in 2007, which encompasses the teachers development program (TDP) and school improvement program (SIP). These initiatives aim to encourage teachers to engage in action research as part of their professional development. However, despite these efforts, studies reveal limited teacher participation in action research. Research by Mathews (2011), Abie et al. (2022), and Temtme and Desta (2014) indicates that action research in Ethiopian education is still in its early stages, with only a small percentage of research topics addressing this area.

Studies have identified significant barriers preventing teachers in Ethiopia from engaging in action research. Key challenges include budget constraints, lack of interest and motivation, insufficient collaboration among teachers, knowledge and skill gaps, and unclear criteria for conducting action research in schools (Abie et al., 2022; Temtme and Desta, 2014). Additional factors such as a lack of financial support, inadequate encouragement

and morale, insufficient practical training, limited theoretical knowledge, and low confidence further hinder participation. The absence of continuous, updated, and adequate training, as well as follow-up mechanisms and deficiencies in essential resources like stationary materials, exacerbate the problem. Similarly, [Firdissa \(2010\)](#) points out that action research is often perceived as the domain of professional researchers, deterring teachers from involvement. Other challenges include inadequate policies linking teaching and research, low staff empowerment, and a lack of recognition and motivation. Together, these multifaceted obstacles significantly limit the engagement of Ethiopian teachers in action research.

Despite the Ethiopian Ministry of Education's emphasis on action research, its classroom implementation remains minimal due to systemic, organizational, and personal challenges. Overcoming these barriers is essential to improving professional development and educational outcomes in Ethiopia.

2 Research Problem

The need for this research arose from the challenges encountered by the researchers while supervising Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) students' action research projects in both regular and summer programs. These challenges provided insight into the current state of secondary school teachers' engagement in action research.

As instructors of the "action research" course in the PGDT program, the researchers guided students through the theoretical aspects of the course in the classroom and supervised the practical component during their practicum in secondary schools. Regular and summer PGDT students relied on senior secondary school teachers for mentorship and scaffolding in conducting their action research projects. However, several issues became evident: Lack of Support: Student teachers reported that secondary school teachers did not provide adequate guidance on how to implement action research in their classrooms; reluctance to share: Despite claiming to have conducted action research on various topics, school teachers were unwilling to share their reports with student teachers.

These observations raised questions about the actual engagement of secondary school teachers in action research. While action research is recognized as a practical tool for addressing classroom challenges and improving teaching practices, its implementation appears limited.

The literature highlights several persistent challenges in Ethiopian classrooms. For instance, [Frost and Little \(2014\)](#) documented a mismatch between the intended student-centered pedagogy and the teacher-centered methods predominantly employed. In their study, student-centered activities accounted for only 10.7% of class time, contrary to the 30% recommended in the curriculum framework. Teacher-centered approaches occupied 70% of class time, with 14.7% of time wasted due to off-task behavior during mathematics lessons. Similarly, [Barnes et al. \(2018\)](#) reported the pervasive use of teacher-centered methods in language instruction in primary schools.

The Science and Mathematics Education of Ethiopia (SMASEE, 2011) study also revealed deficiencies among mathematics and science teachers, including inadequate facilitation skills for group discussions, lack of demonstration techniques, poor lesson planning, and insufficient content mastery ([Belay et al., 2016](#)).

Despite these well-documented issues, there is little evidence of secondary school teachers in the technology villages of Hawassa University actively engaging in action research

to address practical challenges in their classrooms. Specifically, no studies have investigated the extent of secondary school teachers' involvement in action research within the technology villages of Hawassa University.

Given these gaps, this study seeks to assess the current status of secondary school teachers' engagement in action research, focusing on the technology villages of Hawassa University.

2.1 Research questions

Based on the gaps identified, this research sought to answer the following key questions:

1. How do secondary school teachers perceive the importance of action research in solving practical classroom problems?
2. To what extent are secondary school teachers engaged in action research practices?
3. What factors hinder secondary school teachers' engagement in action research?

2.2 Objectives

The primary objective of this research was to assess the status of secondary school teachers' engagement in action research. This research specifically helps to:

1. Assess secondary school teachers' perceptions of action research.
2. Investigate the processes they follow when conducting action research.
3. Identify the types of action research secondary school teachers are engaged in.
4. Identify the factors hindering teachers' engagement in action research.

2.3 Significance

To equip teachers with the skills necessary for action research and reflective practice, these concepts are integrated into their initial training. Furthermore, institutions such as Hawassa University have implemented a series of training programs to promote the adoption of action research among teachers. In this context, it becomes essential to evaluate the extent of teachers' engagement in action research and its impact on their professional practices. The findings of this study are expected to be significant for various stakeholders. For Teacher Education Institutes, the insights will highlight the measures needed to encourage and support teachers' participation in action research. In addition, the regional education Bureau, Zone Education Office, and Woreda Education Office can use the findings to identify areas requiring intervention and support to enhance action research practices among teachers.

2.4 Delimitation

This research was conducted in a single secondary school within the technology villages of Hawassa University. The study focused exclusively on the engagement of secondary school teachers in action research.

3 Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative research method was employed for its ability to provide an in-depth exploration of the research problem. According to [McMillan](#) and [Schumacher \(1993\)](#), qualitative research is “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships among categories).” [Casewell \(1998\)](#) further defines qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem.” This methodology builds complex, holistic pictures, analyzes words, and offers a detailed view of the phenomenon in its natural setting.

Given the study’s objectives, a single-case research design was selected. This approach allowed the researchers to examine a representative secondary school to understand broader trends in other similar schools. A case study is a qualitative descriptive research method that examines a particular event, program, or activity within its natural context and is grounded in rich, varied sources of information ([Yin, 2003](#); [Hancock and Algozzine, 2006](#)).

The research was conducted at Tabor Secondary School, chosen for its representativeness of other secondary schools in the technology village. Tabor Secondary School is the oldest and most populous school in the Hawassa City Administration. It has the most experienced teachers compared to other schools in the region, making it a valuable case for understanding the engagement of teachers in action research. Despite their rich teaching experience, teachers at Tabor Secondary School were reportedly unable to scaffold student teachers during their action research projects, making the school a typical case for investigation.

3.2 Sources of data

Data were collected from teachers, school principals, and documents related to action research.

3.3 Population of the Study

The Hawassa Technology Village comprises six woredas and one city administration, with a total of 34 secondary schools. Teachers and school leaders from these schools constituted the population of the study.

3.4 Sample and sampling techniques

This study employed a single-case study design. One secondary school, deemed representative of other secondary schools, was purposefully selected to achieve the research objectives.

3.5 Instruments of data collection

3.5.1 *Semi-structured interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and school principals to gather qualitative data. This method allowed the researcher to gain detailed insights into participants' perceptions and views. The interview guide included questions aligned with the study's basic research questions, encouraging interviewees to elaborate on their responses. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the reasons underlying observed practices and challenges.

3.5.2 *Focus group discussion (FGD)*

Focus group discussions were held with teachers, lasting approximately two hours and conducted in Amharic to ensure participants felt comfortable expressing their views. FGDs provided rich, diverse, and collaborative insights, allowing participants to discuss issues collectively and articulate areas of consensus or variation. This method was chosen for its ability to elicit well-rounded and nuanced data from a group setting.

3.5.3 *Document analysis*

Documents related to action research, such as proposals, reports, portfolios, and minutes, were analyzed. This process corroborated claims made by teachers and principals, ensuring reliability and validity in the findings.

3.6 Methods of data analysis

The data collected through interviews, FGDs, and document analysis were synthesized and analyzed qualitatively. Data from each source were triangulated to ensure comprehensive and consistent findings.

4 Results

4.1 Research site and participants

The research was conducted at Hawassa Tabor Secondary School, located in Hawassa town. The study involved ten secondary school teachers (seven male and three female) who participated in a focus group discussion (FGD). These teachers represented various subjects, including Biology, Chemistry, Amharic, English, Geography, Civics, Physics, Sidamu Affoo, and Mathematics. The participants were selected based on their willingness to contribute to the research.

Additionally, two school principals the academic vice principal and the administrative vice principal were interviewed regarding teachers' engagement in action research and the support provided to them by the school.

4.2 Views of secondary school teachers towards action research

The perspectives of secondary school teachers regarding the nature and importance of action research significantly affect their engagement in the process. Teachers who believe that they can independently conduct action research and see its potential to improve their practice are more likely to overcome challenges and remain committed to the process. Based on this premise, participants were asked during a focus group discussion (FGD) about their views on action research.

The participants agreed that action research is crucial for improving their practice. During the discussion, T5 remarked:

“Action research helps teachers solve the problems they face during teaching. Engaging in action research makes teachers alert to all the issues they encounter in their classrooms, prompting them to identify the causes and find solutions.”

Most participants shared T5’s sentiment, emphasizing that teachers who engage in action research read diverse materials on their research topics, engage in discussions with colleagues and experts, and enrich their competencies. Supporting this view, T3 stated:

“Action research develops teachers’ capacity to manage problems. It transforms challenges into learning opportunities.”

Similarly, T8 added:

“Action research enables teachers to relate classroom problems with their potential causes and equips them to address these causes. It fosters problem-solvers rather than complainers.”

The unanimous consensus among participants highlights that secondary school teachers hold a positive view of action research.

Action research involves systematic steps, including:

Reflection: Reviewing one’s own practice to identify areas of improvement. Problem identification: Diagnosing an issue to be addressed. Action planning: Developing alternative courses of action. Action Taking: Implementing the plan. Observation: Collecting and analyzing data to assess the effectiveness of actions. Reflection: Evaluating outcomes and refining future actions. Implementing new practices: Integrating successful outcomes into regular pedagogy.

4.2.1 *Reflection on practice*

Reflection is critical to identifying problems for action research. Teachers’ reflection can be categorized into three types:

Reflection-for-action: Anticipating potential classroom scenarios and planning accordingly. Reflection-in-action: Assessing teaching practices during the lesson. Reflection-on-action: Evaluating the effectiveness of completed lessons.

During the FGD, most teachers admitted to neglecting “reflection for action.” For instance, T10 stated:

“With my extensive teaching experience, I rarely plan in detail. The weekly plans prepared for office use are insufficient and don’t influence my teaching.”

Similarly, T5 confessed:

"Sometimes, I'm unsure where I left off in my lesson. I rely on students to remind me and continue from the textbook."

Regarding "reflection in action," participants unanimously agreed they lacked the practice, attributing this to insufficient pre-lesson planning. T10 explained:

"I focus on covering textbook content due to time constraints, leaving no room for evaluating lessons during class."

"Reflection on action," while acknowledged, was informal and inconsistent. T2 remarked:

"I occasionally think about past lessons while preparing new ones but don't formally evaluate them."

From these discussions, it is evident that teachers are not effectively utilizing reflection to identify problems for action research.

4.2.2 Problem identification

Teachers acknowledged that while they discussed classroom issues with colleagues, these discussions rarely aimed to frame problems as researchable questions. Instead, conversations focused on identifying weaknesses in students or administrative practices. T3 noted:

"I discuss classroom problems with colleagues to compare experiences, but I don't transform these discussions into research problems."

4.2.3 Action planning and implementation

Most FGD participants admitted to not preparing structured action plans for their research. T7 and T3, however, claimed to have done so, incorporating time frames and materials into their plans. Nevertheless, the majority of teachers lacked robust planning, hindering their ability to implement interventions systematically.

4.2.4 Observation and data collection

Participants reported limited use of systematic observation and data collection to evaluate the effects of their actions. Even those who prepared plans, such as T3 and T7, admitted that their reflections were subjective and lacked empirical evidence.

4.2.5 Training on action research

Teachers highlighted inadequacies in training programs, which were often theoretical rather than practical. T4 recounted:

"Training sessions included action research as one topic among many, with little practical application."

Additionally, training was limited to specific subjects like Mathematics, Science, and Language, neglecting other disciplines such as Geography and Civics.

4.3 Factors hindering teachers' engagement in action research

Key barriers included:

Budget constraints: Limited financial support for action research. Time constraints: Teachers prioritized private tutoring for additional income over research. Insufficient training: A lack of practical, need-based training on action research methods. Lack of institutional support: Minimal resources and absence of incentives like promotions or awards.

School principals acknowledged these challenges, noting that while they encouraged action research, insufficient follow-up and financial support hampered its success. They also emphasized that teachers often conducted research to meet administrative requirements rather than improve their practices.

4.4 Document analysis

Some documents were found in the school, and the research was conducted by groups of teachers. The teachers reported that they undertook the research because they were instructed to do so. Topics for the research were assigned, and the groups of teachers were organized by the school. Each group member contributed to the proposal based on their individual capacity. However, the selected problems did not represent the school's overarching issues. Additionally, the groups consisted of teachers from different subject areas, which meant that the identified problems were not specific to any particular subject area. This indicates a challenge in properly identifying relevant research problems.

The data for the research was collected from both teachers and students, which violates the standard procedures for conducting action research. While the research included an action plan, an implementation phase, and an evaluation phase, the results were not implemented to address or improve the identified problems effectively.

The findings of this study align with the broader literature on action research, emphasizing its potential for professional development and its underutilization among Ethiopian teachers. Action research, as described by Mills (2000), is a systematic and iterative process that empowers educators to reflect on and refine their practices. Despite its benefits such as fostering reflective practice, promoting collaboration, and improving teaching effectiveness (Avalos, 2011; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009) its implementation among secondary school teachers in Ethiopia remains limited.

A critical challenge identified in this study is the inadequacy of reflective practices. While Schön (1983) and Mertler (2017) underscore the importance of reflection in action research, Ethiopian teachers predominantly engage in informal and inconsistent reflective activities. Teachers admitted to neglecting "reflection for action" and "reflection in action," which are essential components of the iterative cycle of observation, action, and refinement (Kempis, 1994). This limitation hinders their ability to systematically identify and address classroom challenges, undermining the core principles of action research.

Empirical evidence also highlights systemic and institutional barriers that inhibit teachers' engagement in action research. Abie et al. (2022) and Temtme and Desta (2014) identify key obstacles such as budget constraints, insufficient collaboration among teachers, unclear criteria for conducting action research, and gaps in knowledge and skills. These

barriers are consistent with the findings of this study, which revealed a lack of financial support, limited training opportunities, and minimal institutional encouragement. Participants noted that existing training programs were predominantly theoretical and lacked practical relevance, a concern echoed in both this study and the works of [Abie et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Temtme and Desta \(2014\)](#).

The superficial implementation of action research in Ethiopian schools further diminishes its potential. Document analysis revealed that topics were often assigned by administrators rather than emerging from teachers' classroom experiences, leading to research that lacked contextual relevance. Additionally, the practice of grouping teachers from unrelated subject areas undermined the focus and effectiveness of these initiatives. This top-down approach contradicts the essence of action research, which should be teacher-driven and context-specific ([Richard, 2000](#)).

Another significant finding is the perception of action research as an administrative obligation rather than a professional development tool. Teachers often conducted research to fulfill requirements rather than to address genuine classroom challenges. This lack of intrinsic motivation, coupled with inadequate recognition and incentives, aligns with the observations of [Zeichner and Liston \(1996\)](#) and [Temtme and Desta \(2014\)](#), who highlight the importance of morale and motivation in sustaining engagement.

Disparities in training opportunities across disciplines further exacerbate the issue. While action research training programs in Ethiopia prioritize Mathematics, Science, and Language educators, teachers from subjects such as Geography and Civics are often excluded. This inequity limits the reach of action research and marginalizes educators in less prioritized disciplines, reflecting the systemic challenges outlined by [Hargreaves \(2004\)](#) and corroborated by [Abie et al. \(2022\)](#).

Despite these challenges, the study found that teachers recognize the value of action research in addressing classroom problems and improving their practices. Participants acknowledged that engaging in action research enhances problem-solving skills and fosters professional growth. This positive perspective mirrors findings by [Berg \(2016\)](#) and [Mertler \(2017\)](#), which emphasize action research as a tool for empowerment, autonomy, and job satisfaction. However, as both this study and the works of [Abie et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Temtme and Desta \(2014\)](#) highlight, systemic, organizational, and personal barriers significantly impede its broader adoption.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges identified in this study is crucial for fostering meaningful engagement in action research among Ethiopian teachers. Policies should prioritize teacher-driven initiatives, equitable training opportunities, and recognition mechanisms to motivate and sustain participation. Addressing budgetary, training, and institutional challenges such as those outlined by [Abie et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Temtme and Desta \(2014\)](#) is critical to unlocking the full potential of action research. By fostering a culture of reflective practice, collaboration, and teacher autonomy, Ethiopian educators can leverage action research to enhance professional growth and improve student outcomes.

5 Conclusions

This study highlights the significant potential of action research as a tool for professional development and educational improvement among Ethiopian secondary school teachers. Despite its recognized benefits such as fostering reflective practice, promoting collaboration, and enhancing teaching effectiveness its implementation remains limited due to systemic, institutional, and personal barriers. These challenges include inadequate training, budgetary constraints, limited collaboration, and the perception of action research as an administrative obligation rather than a meaningful professional activity.

The findings underscore the critical need for targeted interventions to address these barriers. Professional development programs must move beyond theoretical frameworks to provide practical, needed-based training that equips teachers with the skills to conduct research effectively. Equitable training opportunities across disciplines, coupled with institutional support and recognition mechanisms, can motivate and sustain teacher engagement in action research. Furthermore, fostering a culture of reflection and collaboration is essential to ensure that action research becomes a teacher-driven and context-specific practice.

The works of [Abie et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Temtme and Desta \(2014\)](#) reinforce the need for systemic reforms, particularly in addressing resource limitations and creating a supportive environment for educators. By prioritizing teacher autonomy and professional empowerment, policymakers can unlock the latent potential of action research to transform educational practices and improve student outcomes in Ethiopia.

Ultimately, creating a sustainable framework for action research requires a collaborative effort among teachers, administrators, and policymakers. By addressing the challenges identified in this study, Ethiopian schools can harness the power of action research to foster continuous professional growth, enhance teaching effectiveness, and meet the evolving needs of their students.

6 Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for improving secondary school teachers' engagement in action research. These implications suggest that a combination of internal teacher efforts and external support from school leadership, education offices, and higher institutions is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness and participation in action research.

6.1 Implications for schools

Schools must allocate financial resources to support action research activities. This will encourage teachers to prioritize action research and be more motivated to engage in it. Additionally, technical support should be provided, which can be achieved through expert consultations, workshops, and professional development sessions. This support will help teachers better understand the procedures and benefits of action research.

Schools need to establish mechanisms to recognize and reward teachers who actively participate in action research. Recognition can come in the form of awards, public acknowledgment, or career advancement opportunities, which will further motivate teachers to engage in such practices.

Schools should foster a culture of collaboration by creating opportunities for teachers to engage in discussions and share their action research experiences. Collaboration with colleagues, administrators, and experts will help teachers develop more meaningful research questions and solutions to classroom challenges.

6.2 Implications for Teachers

Teachers must develop the habit of reflecting on their teaching practices. Reflection should become an integral part of their daily routine before, during, and after lessons.

This reflection can lead to better problem identification and more effective action research topics. Teachers must also take the initiative to gather information, interact with colleagues, and expand their knowledge on research topics to enhance their action research endeavors.

Teachers should view action research as an opportunity for professional growth rather than as a task for financial gain or recognition. By focusing on continuous improvement and problem-solving, teachers can create more meaningful and impact action research.

6.3 Implications for education offices

Education offices should allocate additional funds to support action research initiatives at the school level. This includes providing financial resources for teachers to carry out their research and creating opportunities for professional development and capacity-building programs.

Education offices must develop policies that facilitate the implementation of action research in schools. This includes providing training, creating incentives, and ensuring teachers have access to necessary resources. Partnerships with nearby universities and colleges can also be established to offer technical assistance and expert guidance on action research.

Education offices should work with schools to institutionalize recognition mechanisms for teachers who engage in action research. These could include professional development opportunities, promotions, or even certificates of achievement that acknowledge teachers' commitment to improving their practice through research.

By addressing these implications, schools, teachers, and education offices can create an environment that encourages and supports action research, ultimately leading to more effective teaching practices and better student outcomes.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

Declaration of interests' statement

The author declare no competing interests.

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Original Article

Investigating the causes of school absenteeism and dropout rates of females in selected primary schools in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region

Solomon Wolde ^{1*}, Bachu Taye Welteji ² and Tigist Kebede ³

^{1,2,3} College of Education and College of Agriculture, Hawassa University

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CORRESPONDING EMAIL

* solwoldie@gmail.com

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KEYWORDS:

absenteeism;
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dropout;
education;
female students

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of school absenteeism and dropout among female students in selected primary schools in districts of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region. To achieve this purpose, a survey design was employed with a quantitative data analysis method. Primary data sources were obtained from sample areas of different zones in the region by using multi-stage sampling techniques. The data gathering tool was a questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and inferential statistics like means and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of respondents believed that girls have to study before finishing household jobs, whereas a few of respondents believed that girls should finish household jobs before going to school. Of the observed woredas, 48.1% of respondents do not encourage females to learn school. In Anlemo woreda, Wolaita-Sodo town, Sodo woreda and Wolkite woreda almost all of the respondents encourage females to marry rather than pursue education. Among the main reasons for school absenteeism of girls it was found that household workload and shortage of food at home were the most significant. As a result, a large number of girls were absent from school in Wolaita-Sodo town, Anlemo woreda and Wolkite town every two weeks. Furthermore, the study revealed that among the major causes of female school dropout were economic problems, marriage and distance to school. To reduce girls' school absenteeism and dropout, it is recommended that the regional government should advocate female education and create awareness on the drawback of early marriage through social media and school education.

1 Introduction

Education is critical for human development and a central tool for enhancing the capacity of human beings by focusing on competencies (knowledge, attitudes and skills) in a formal setting. It is also a means to reduce poverty, enhance life expectancy, increase productivity and improve problem-solving skills. Thus, education can improve the productivity of individuals in particular and the development of a country in general. Moreover, the participation of girls' at all educational levels (from pre-primary to

higher education) is a prerequisite to the sustainable socio-economic development of developing countries and thereby enables a narrowing of the gender gap in educational participation. All children, particularly girls, must have access to and complete quality education by the year 2015 to achieve the third United Nations' eight Millennium Development Goals, namely to promote gender equality and empower women (UNESCO, 2000). This goal recommends that every citizen has a right to get equal access to a basic education irrespective of one's race, gender, ethnic group or other factors. However, it has been observed that in developing countries different causes aggravate students' absenteeism and dropout (Chimombo, 2005).

It has been established that students who attend school frequently were more successful in their knowledge acquisition and skills development and thereby improve the habit of working with classmate students to accomplish educational goals (Kearney and Graczyk, 2014). Therefore, students frequent school attendance helps them be successful in their academic performance, language improvement and social development. Research showed that students who attend school regularly have high academic success, more frequently complete the grade level they are enrolled in, pass the regional and national exam, and develop collaborative work habits, Balfanz and Byrnes (2012); Ferrell et al. (2013); Kearney and Graczyk (2014)).

In contrast to students who routinely attend school, students who are absent from school frequently achieve lower levels of academic performance. Moreover, they encounter limited future job opportunities and will experience social and emotional problems in adulthood (Buscha and Conte, 2014; Nolan et al., 2013; Şahin et al., 2016). Missing classes regularly not only affects the academic performance of the student but also influences the in-class planning of teachers and the motivations of the other students in the class (Şahin et al., 2016).

Regular absenteeism has a significant effect on developing bad behaviour using addicted substances like chat, smoking, drinking alcohol, starting sexual intercourse at an early age as a result getting pregnant and finally, they will terminate their education (Ferrell et al., 2013; Gage et al., 2013; Kearney and Graczyk, 2014; Nolan et al., 2013; Thornton et al., 2013).

In Ethiopia, enrollment of females in education is low compared to their male counterparts. In this regard, Shibeshi (2000) confirms that the attitude of the society which gives more value to men than women and various traditional sayings that suggest the women's place is in the home and that women are dependent on men were some of the major factors that hindered women from mainstream education. However, education has a great contribution to women to the wider social network, identification with the modern world encouraging innovation. It helps in improving mothers' wellbeing and that of their families (Kwesiga, 2002). Similarly, Baker (2003) summarizes that women and minorities had limited chance to reach school due to country and school characteristics (instruction type, teachers' expectations, curriculum materials, access to education, policy and program guidelines), parental attitudes and economic conditions of family and cultural factors (norms and values). Most countries in the world including Ethiopia have realized the importance of education for national development (FDRE, 1994). Students were considered as absent when they drop out and fail to complete the grade level they were enrolled (Dekkers and Claassen, 2001). Therefore, this research was intended to investigate the causes of girls' school absenteeism and dropout rate in Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region of Ethiopia (SNNPR).

2 Research Problem

Educating females contributes to them in leading their successful life and the community at large in bringing multi socio-economic benefits. Thus, development can be realized through skilled citizens. The world in general and Ethiopia, in particular, has given due attention to a knowledge-based economy. Girls Participation in education is a guaranteed strategy for poverty alleviation, sustainable development and growth of the economy of any country. As to [Lartigue \(2005\)](#) investing in girls' education has an impact on increasing females' productivity at home, improving poverty reduction, ascending family health, increasing child survival rate and enhancing economic growth. However, for the last several years females were left behind in school. Still, several challenges can hinder the accomplishment of the policy to achieve the intended girls' education. More practically, the education of females enhances economic productivity, reduces fertility rates, lower infant and maternal mortality and improves the health and nutritional status of the family ([Gachukia, 2000](#)).

The position of females in society provides an exact measure of the development of the society, but females in third world countries like Ethiopia are subject to gender discrimination in every walk of their life ([Shibeshi, 2000](#)). The above idea shows that girls are not treated equally as boys. However, when Ethiopia is striving to be one of the middle-income countries and to achieve MDGs by (2010), one may ask about the status of women educational participation and successes as key priority areas in the development of Ethiopia. [Olmos \(2011\)](#) stated that educating girls is not only educating them but, it is also educating the nation that they contribute to development.

Hence, educating females improve not only women's productivity, but, also enhances the human capital accumulation of future generations. As a result, the participation of girls in education is greatly important in poverty reduction and socio-economic development. However, imparting knowledge in the schools alone is not enough for female students to become efficient and effective to improve their academic performances where the ground is not fertile at home to grow them up. To bring change and advancement to the nations needs the proper participation and empowerment of girls in all aspects. The researcher experience travels to different primary and secondary schools in SNNPRS; helped him to explore a variety of challenges facing female students. Therefore, based on the information mentioned researcher was initiated to conduct the study.

2.1 Objectives

The study has the following objectives:

1. Examine the extent of girls' school absenteeism;
2. Scrutinize the main causes of female students' school absenteeism;
3. Analyse parents' perception for and against their daughters' education; and
4. Identify school and home-based factors that aggravate female students' dropout.

2.2 Research questions

To achieve the stated objectives the following research questions were raised to be answered in the courses of the study. These are:

1. To what extent does the school absenteeism of girls' problematic?

2. To what extent do school and home-based factors worsen female students' dropout rate?
3. What are the perceptions of families towards their daughters' education?
4. To what extent do school and home-based factors exacerbate female students' school absenteeism?

3 Research Methods

3.1 Research design

The study employed survey research method with the assumption of getting the general picture of the causes of school absenteeism and dropout among female students in public primary school in SNNPR. This method was selected because it is helpful to show situations as they currently exist (Anderson and Shannon, 1988). Moreover, survey method is cost effective and allowed quick data collection (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, the researcher believes that this method is appropriate to describe on-going processes.

3.2 Sources of data

The main data sources for this study were generated from primary source and secondary sources. The bulk of the data for the study were generated through household survey questionnaires by using open and closed-ended survey questions. The household survey data were collected from women respondents and school principals in urban and semiurban areas.

3.3 Sample and sampling techniques

The primary data sources were obtained from sample areas of different zones in the region by using multi-stage sampling techniques. Accordingly, the SNNPRS was selected by using purposive sampling technique in that the researcher's Home University is found in this particular region. Then, the zones were selected by using available sampling technique due to their accessibility. Consequently, There are more than 110 woredas in the region. Thirty-six of them are selected for this study. Hawassa town is administrated under city administration. The region consists of 56 multi-ethnic groups living together, who have their tradition, language and culture. The region has implemented various packages that aimed to benefit women in education. Thus, this study intended to investigate girls' regular school participation at the woreda level.

The woredas were further selected by using stratified random sampling techniques. Finally, principals were selected by using purposive sampling technique because of their responsibility. School teachers were selected by using simple random sampling technique from all departments of female teachers. Students selected by using stratified sampling technique. A girl student was sampled from all the forms and in every classroom in the sampled schools. Random sampling was used at the classroom level to select the respondents (the first students to raise their hands). Students' parents were selected simple random sampling techniques. 302 households were selected from each woredas. Totally 29 woredas and 7 city administration, therefore, a total of 12,080 respondents were selected in the region by using Cochran (1977) formula of sample size determination.

4 Results

The SNNPRS region is located in the southern part of the country. The region consists of 13 zones, one city administration and five special woredas. These include Bench maji, Dawro, Gedeo, Guraghe, Gamgofa, Hadiya, Kefa sheka, Kambata-Tembaro, Sidama, Silti, South-Omon and Wolaita zone. Special woredas are Basketo, Halaba, Konta, and Yem Segen people.

In this section, the causes of absenteeism and school dropouts were discussed and interpreted based on the analysis of the collected data in themes as follows:

4.1 The Perception of parents on female students' education

Study skills are crucial for the academic success of students in each grade. The study is necessary for obtaining good academic results and for promotion. Through developing study skills students can comprehend what they learned in the classroom. Therefore, developing study skill help students to improve their academic performance in school. The study may require time at home in addition to school hours. Concerning female students studying at home, families have a different perception. The majority of the participants 77.43% (n = 4917) believe that they have to study before finishing a household job. However, 22.57% (n = 1433) respondents believe that they have to finish the household job before they study.

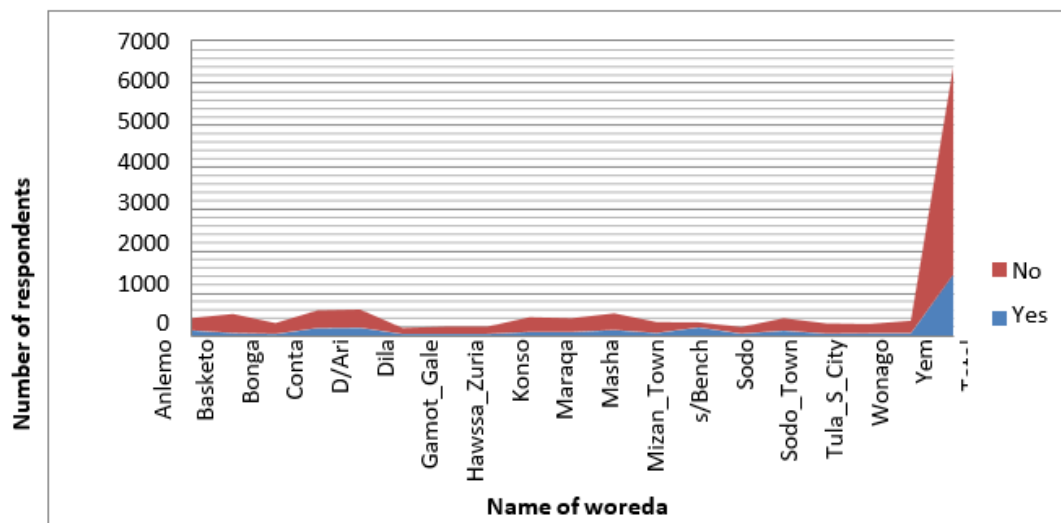


Figure 1: Respondents perception on female students study

As portrayed in Fig. 1. Regarding female students studying before finishing a household job, respondents perception differences were observed within woredas. In South Bench (S/Bench) 2.90% 2.69% (n=171) and Masha 2% (n=127) of the respondents believed that females have to finishing household job before studying. Whereas in Basketo 7.10% (n=451), D/Ari 6.74% (n=428) and Conta 6.47% (n=411) of respondents strongly believed that females have to study without any restriction like their male counter partner. Lack of having study time at home could affect students doing homework. McKelvie et al. (2004) stated that to learn and understand the subject taught in the classroom students should take time to read the material during their spare time and should possess effective study

skills. This enables them to store, retain and retrieve information when needed. Thus, one can understand that investing time in the study will enhance the academic performance of female students.

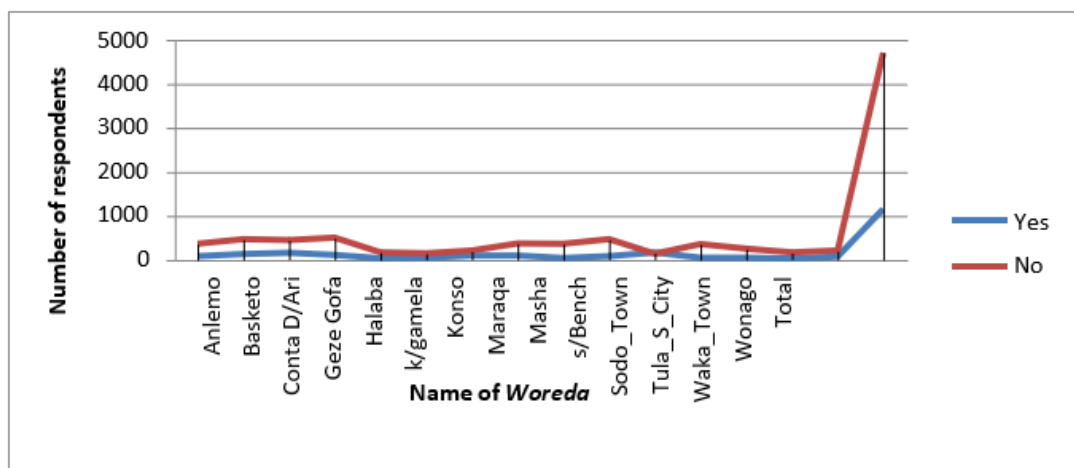


Figure 2: Respondents' perceptions on female school time

As indicated in Figure 2 most respondents 80.45% (n=4711) insist female students go to school before they finish a household job. However, 19.55% (n=1145) respondents believe that female students have to finish their household job before going to school. This shows that even though they are few in numbers some families do not encourage girls' education. In S/Bench woreda 2.70% (n=158), Conta 2.58% (n=151), Basketo 2.17% (n=127) of respondents claimed that girls have to work at home before they go to school. From the observation of the study sites, it is evident that girls in most woredas either stay out of the school system because of household responsibilities or are forced to combine school with a household job. Njie et al. (2015) confirmed that household work is considered a barrier to the overall schooling experiences of schoolgirls.

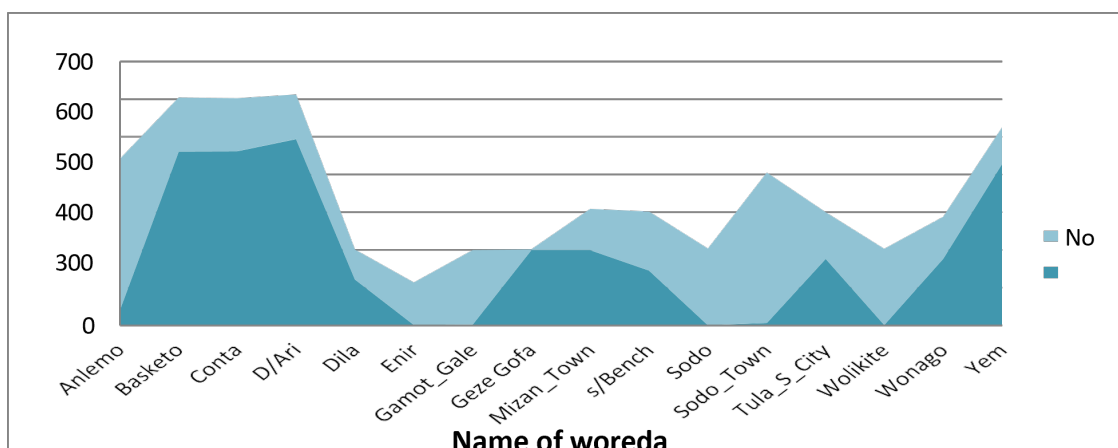


Figure 3: Community encouragement to female students to learn

As depicted in Figure 3, 52.9% (n=2906) of respondents encourage females to pursue their education. On the other hand, 48.1% (n=2589) of them do not encourage females to learn. Nevertheless, differences are observed within woredas in supporting females to education. In some woredas majority of the respondents encourage females to learn

such as D/Ari 493, Conta 461 and Basketo 460 but in some other woredas, a large number of respondents does not encourage them to learn such as Anlemo woreda out of 440 respondents only 401. In Wolaita-Sodo-town out of 404 respondents, 398 do not encourage females to learn. In Sodo woreda, all of the respondents (203) do not encourage females to learn but rather encourage them either to marry or get a job.

Figure ?? shows that the majority of the respondents 54.16% (n=3733) encourage females to marry first than males. Whereas 32.45% (n=2239) of respondents encourage none of them to marry before completing their education. On the other hand, 13.39% (n=923) of the respondents encourage males to marry first than females. Of which large numbers of respondents are from Anlemo and Wolaita-Sodo town which accounts 6.09% (n=420) and 5.74% (n=396) encourage females to marry first respectively.

In Abra Minch (A/minch) woreda one of the respondents is encouraged males to marry first but 180 of them are in a fever of females to marry at an early age than boys. According to Umemoto (2001), early marriage inevitably inhibits girls to continue the education that they need for their personal development, their preparation for adulthood, and their effective contribution to the future wellbeing of their family and society. Moreover, research conducted by Jones et al. (2016) in Ethiopia shows that women marry at an early age than men; they are most likely to be married by the age of 18 than men are by the age of 25. Married girls receive little or no schooling 80% of them have received any education, and 81% cannot read at all. This shows that marriage is one of the main factors that inhibit girls' education. The common factors cited by the study area respondents that lead girls to marriage were that marriage could alleviate poverty or the burdens of a large family living with many daughters.

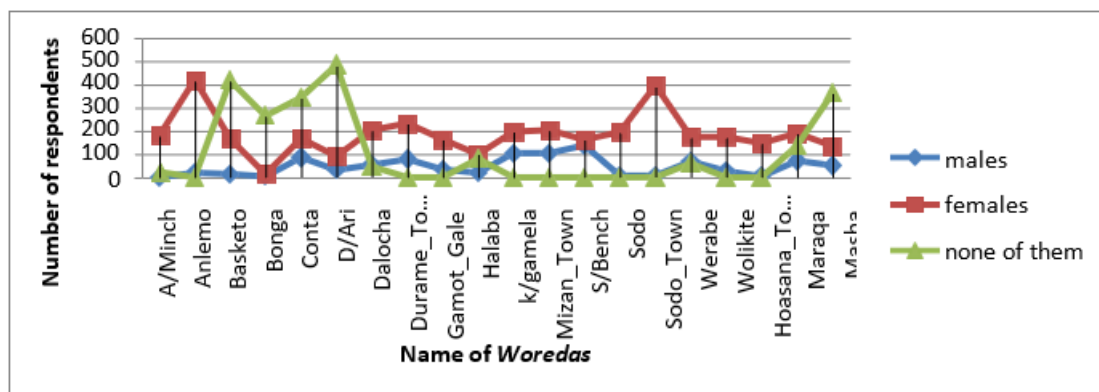


Figure 4: Number of female students' school absenteeism in two weeks' time

As shown in Fig. 4, the absenteeism of students varies from woreda to woreda. Relatively high absenteeism was observed in Wolaita-Sodo Town 17.24% (n=379), next to that the second-highest number was recorded in Anlemo 16.33% (n=376), and the third-highest number of Wolkite woreda 12% (n=164). On the other hand, low students' absenteeism were observed in two weeks' time in A/Minch 0% (n=0), Kemba 0.09% (n=02) and Borchha 0.22% (n=05) woredas. This shows that some factors cause girls to be absent from school. However, this needs further empirical examination to identify the underpinning factors.

Absenteeism is one of the contributing factors for students' poor academic performance and subsequently leads to dropout. Coelho et al. (2015) identified that attendance is one of the highest predictors of student academic achievement. Lamb (2011) stated that absenteeism is one of the factors that can predict students' dropout. Students who are regularly absent from school are most likely to be at risk of dropout. Thus, identifying

the most significant factors behind it is an important precursor to effectively addressing the problem.

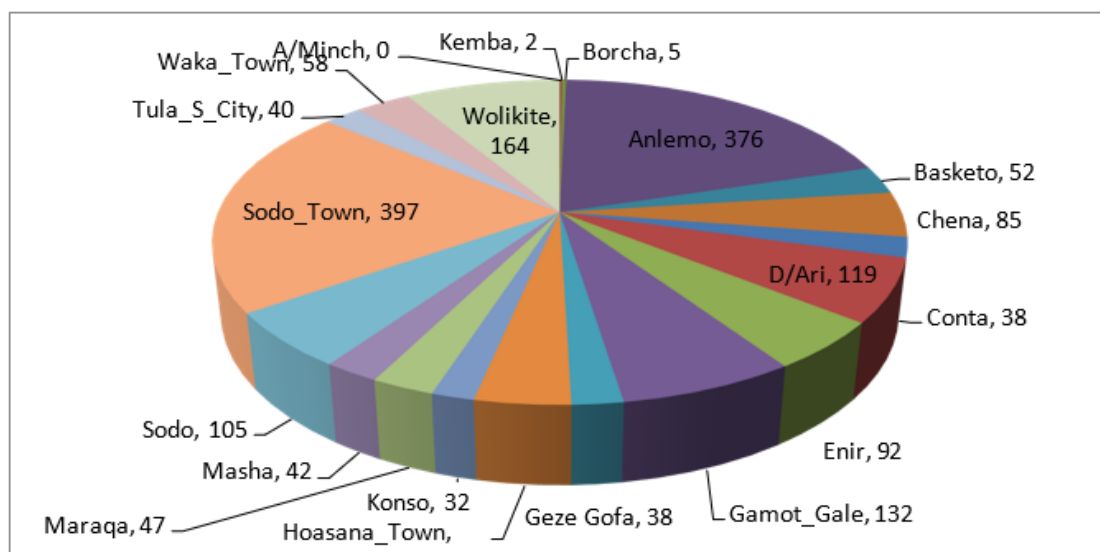


Figure 5: Causes of girls school absenteeism

The result in Fig. 5 shows household work is the highest reason for girls absenteeism in most woredas. A large number of female students were absent from school because of household workload especially in the Sodo town 360, Anlemo 224, Wolkite 157 and Sodo 142 woredas. Comparatively, only a few female students were absent from school as a result of sickness these are from Dehub Ari 89, Chena 20 and Dilla 13 woredas. The result of the study confirms that quite a large number of girls in SNNPR (1449) did not attend school because of household workload. Moreover, shortage of food contributed significantly to girls' absenteeism from school especially in Anlemo woredas 168, Durame town 167 and Mizantown 139. As a study result, [Tefera et al. \(2011\)](#) has affirmed that food insecurity in adolescents is one of the causes for school absenteeism in Jimma zone, Ethiopia.

However, as shown in figure 5, none of the girls was absent due to a shortage of food in Arba Minch, Dalocha, Dilla and Wearable. This indicates that in some woredas poverty affects school attendance of girls. According to [Jennings \(2011\)](#), it was confirmed that, in SNNPR, the use of a child for household work is the major cause of school absenteeism and dropout. He identified that "child labour is extensively practised throughout SNNPR. Highland girls fetch wood and water; do marketing and carry out household chores". This directly coincides with the identified result in this study. This shows that the responsibility to cover care duties at home is laid down on girls than boys.

4.2 Causes of female students' dropout from schools

One of the intentions of this study was to investigate major causes of school dropout in various woredas of the SNNPR. Therefore, in the survey, an attempt was made to identify potential causes for girls' dropout from school in the woredas. Accordingly, the major causes of dropout identified based on the household survey respondents are economic, social and health-related problems (see figure 7). Thus, each of the causes for school dropout is discussed as follows.

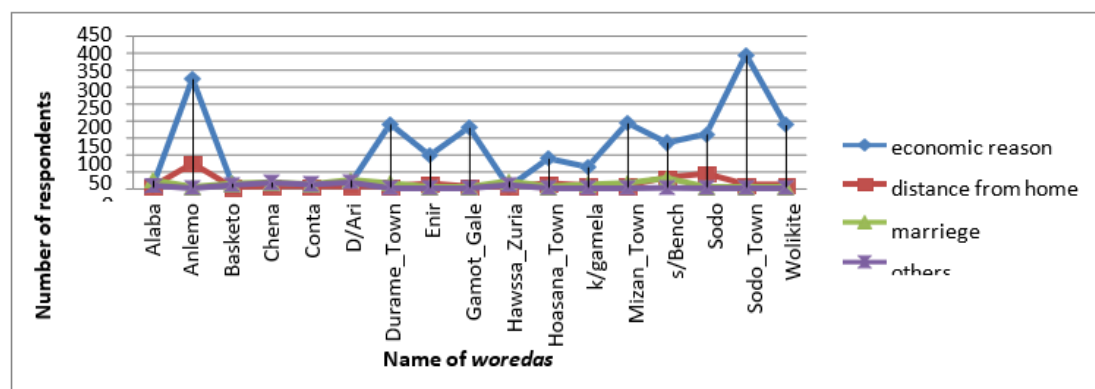


Figure 6: Causes of female students' dropout from schools

Figure 6 shows that in most woreda economic reason is the highest for girls dropping out. Quite a large number of students have terminated their education because of economic reasons particularly in Sodo town 393, Anlemo 322 woreda, and Mizan town 191. The above result shows that a large number of girls in SNNPR (1965 girls) did not attend school because of economic problems. In most developing countries, the economic problem is the leading obstacle for children's education in general and girls in particular. Some studies show that low family income may reduce the chance of schooling for girls (Mitiku, 2014). Moreover, according to the study participants' response, a distance of school contributed significantly to girls' school dropout especially in Anlemo 71, Sodo 40 and S/Bench 29 woredas. The above data in figure 7 shows that the distance of the school from home is not a reason for students' dropout in some woredas. For example, in Arba Minh, Dalocha, Geze Gofa, Kemba and Wolkite woredas, school distance is not the cause for girls dropping out. This shows that either schools' are built close to students' residences or people are densely populated. Yokozeki (1996) states that school distance to home has a significant impact on both the initial decision to attend school and the decision to drop out. Thus, in the surveyed woredas in SNNPR, most of them were not as such affected by school distance for termination of school. However, school distance affected the school attendance of girls in some woredas. The above result indicates that there is enormous progress in the region in school construction closer to students' residence. On the other hand, 209 girls were dropout because of marriage from different woredas. The highest number of girls' drop out because of marriage is found in S/Bench 27, Debub Ari 22 and Alaba 21. This indicates that in some woredas poverty affects school attendance of girls. Shahidul and Zehadul Karim (2015) confirmed that marriage is one of the causes for girls' dropout in rural areas. Jennings (2011) has explicitly identified one of the major factors that contribute to late arrival at school, absenteeism and dropout from school at all levels, and dropout among girls was household work.

4.3 Conducive learning environment for girls

To assess school-related factors that hinder female students' school attendance and drop out this section examines access to basic facilities; namely adequacy and access to a textbook, drinking water and sanitation in particular reference to availability and safety of toilet facilities.

4.3.1 Teachers' assessment of adequacy and safety of water and toilet

Apart from observational data and administrative data were collected from the surveyed schools. Teachers were requested to provide information as to the adequacy and safety of basic services such as the adequacy of water and toilets. The availability of separate toilets for girls were the information that was required from teachers. In general, the school observational data in the surveyed schools suggest that the schools have modest toilets.

Table 1: Adequacy of water and sanitation facilities and safety of school toilets (N = 625)

S.No	Items	Zone	N	Mean	SD	t
1	Female students have a separate toilet rooms	Bench Maji	128	4.54	0.88	20.91**
		Debub Omo	99	3.81	1.48	
		Gamo Gofa_AM	109	4.24	1.04	
		Hawassa C.A	45	4.22	0.99	
		Hadeya	21	4.95	0.22	
		Sidama	143	3.78	0.49	
		Total	545	4.27	1.15	
2	The toilets are clean and well maintained.	Bench Maji	128	3.68	1.16	6.74**
		Debub Omo	98	3.39	1.46	
		Gamo Gofa_AM	111	3.10	1.22	
		Hawassa C.A	46	4.59	1.25	
		Hadeya	21	4.38	0.92	
		Sidama	143	3.88	1.01	
		Total	547	3.46	1.29	
3	There is sufficient water for drinking and sanitation purposes.	Bench Maji	128	2.67	1.49	-3.39**
		Debub Omo	97	2.25	1.53	
		Gamo Gofa_AM	108	2.67	4.13	
		Hawassa C.A	46	4.20	0.99	
		Hadeya	20	2.25	1.37	
		Sidama	143	2.28	1.42	
		Total	542	2.53	2.6	
4	It is very safe for girls to use toilets at school.	Bench Maji	126	3.06	1.62	1422.85
		Debub Omo	97	3.11		
		Gamo Gofa_AM	110	2.67	1.44	
		Hadeya	20	1.30	0.73	
		Hawassa C.A.	46			
		Total	541	2.85	1.55	

Note that: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

With regard to have separate toilets for female students in the school, teachers generally agreed (Mean = 4.27, SD = 1.15; $t = 20.91$, $p < .01$; Item 1) that female students have separate toilets in their respective schools and they are clean and well maintained (Item 2: Mean = 3.46, SD = 1.29, $t = 6.74$, $p < .01$). Nevertheless, they were not in a position to say that the school latrines are safe for girls (Item 4: Mean = 2.85, SD = 1.55, $t = -1.83$, $p < .05$) as indicated by the negative coefficient of the t-statistics. Contrary to their ratings of availability and adequacy latrines, teachers disagreed with the idea: "There is sufficient water for drinking and sanitation purposes" (Item 3: Mean = 2.53, SD = 1.62; $t = -3.39$, $p < .01$)

Availability of sufficient textbooks was taken as proxy indicators of the causes of girls' dropout. Here, the researcher examined to what extent girls have access to these activities based on the data obtained from observation and questionnaires completed by 5636

respondents. Figure 7 presents the availability of basic sufficient books in the schools.

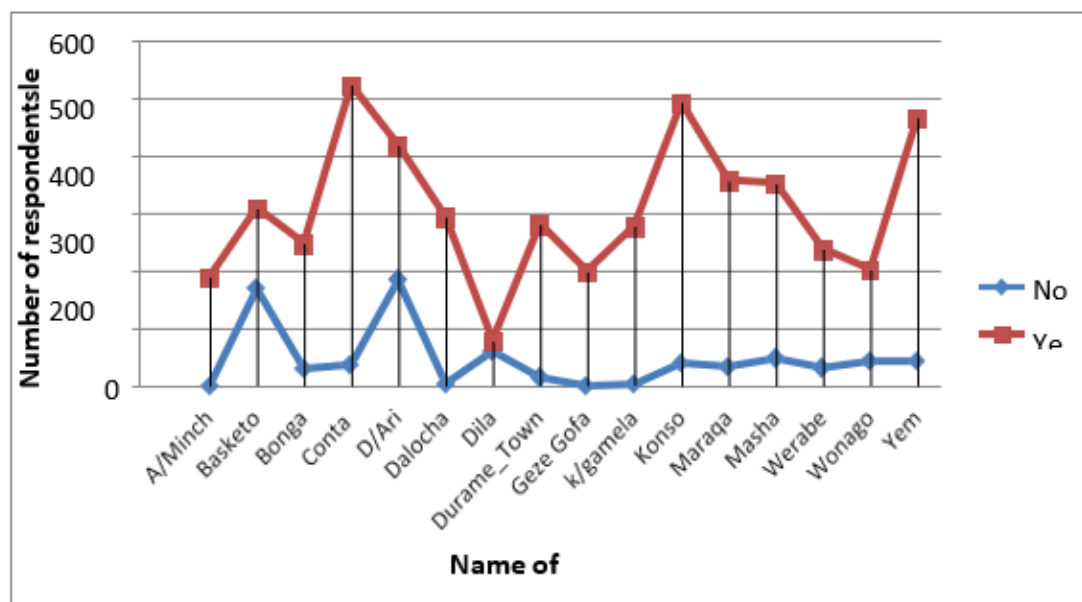


Figure 7: Availability of sufficient books for female students

Figure 7 shows that, the availability of textbooks for female students to support their education is varies amongst woredas. In A/Minch 189 and Geze Gofa 199 woredas respondents confirmed that there are sufficient textbooks for female students in the school. However, most woredas respondents reported that there is a shortage of textbooks for female students such as in Conta 523, Konso 492, Yem 466 and D/Ari 418. Thus the shortage of textbooks affects students learning in general female students in particular. Besides, it hinders the participation of students in in-class activities and their academic performance. As stated in [Zuze and Reddy \(2014\)](#) availability of textbook improves learning and students achievement, enhance the quality of education, and motivate students' participation in the classroom and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, research findings show that in South Africa, students, especially girls, do better on reading tests when they have their copies of textbooks. Thus lack of textbook influence female students educational participation.

5 Conclusions

Female students are lag behind in school participation due to absenteeism and dropout in the SNNP region. The result of the study shows that most parents have a positive attitude towards girls education. However, it was confirmed from the study result that the causes of student absenteeism were household workload, food shortage at home, lack of educational materials and sickness. Among these factors, the household workload is found that as a major one that contributed to girls' school absenteeism. On the other hand, the findings revealed that the major causes of school dropout were economic problems, school distance and marriage. The highest numbers of girls were dropped out as a result of poverty concerning earning money for their survival.

6 Recommendations

The SNNP regional government should work on advocating female education to minimize their workload at home to have study time at home. The SNNPR government should increase awareness about the drawback of early marriage through social media and school education. The regional government education bureau should work on minimizing school absenteeism and dropout, especially for female students. The regional government should find ways of stopping child labour exploitation. Families of dropout students have to be supported economically to fulfill the needs of their children. The regional state considers either introducing economic support or creating job opportunities for the poor households to enable them to minimize female students' dropout. The economic support may take the form of an in-kind or cash support scheme targeting parents who were unable to send their daughters to school due to economic problems and a shortage of food. There is a remarkable achievement in narrowing the distance of the school from home in different areas of the country. However, the research result shows that in some places there is a problem that needs the effort of the government to narrow the school distance problem. Thus, the region has to exert efforts to build more schools closer to where students live. Finally, the regional education bureau of SNNPR should organize experience sharing forums taking as a model the achievements registered by successful woredas in the region.

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Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

Declaration of interests' statement

The author declare no competing interests.

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