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Factors Influencing the Girl Child's Transition from Primary to Secondary School: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

The transition from primary to secondary education presents significant challenges, particularly for girls, because of various social, cultural, and economic factors. This systematic review aims to identify both positive and negative factors influencing this transition, addressing a critical gap in existing literature that often overlooks the distinct challenges faced by girls. Anchored in the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on gender equality (SDG 5), poverty eradication (SDG 1), and quality education (SDG 4), the research emphasizes the necessity of understanding these factors to promote gender equality, empower girls, and foster socio-economic development. The study selected published works (36) from January 2005 to December 2024 and extracted, analyzed, and summarized the findings based on the positive and negative factors influencing girls' transition from primary to secondary school from both the Global South and North. The findings indicate that the key primary factors positively influencing the transition of the girl child from primary to secondary school include a supportive learning environment, parental motivation and support, personal strategies, commitment, aspirations towards education, and support from peers. The key negative factors include social reasons, cultural challenges, inadequate school facilities, policies & performance, gender bias, bullying, body shaming, conflict & negative peer influence, distance to school, female genital mutilation, and early pregnancy & marriage. By consolidating insights into both positive and negative influences, this review offers actionable recommendations for policymakers and educators to design targeted interventions that promote inclusive education and foster sustainable development.

Keywords: Transition, primary–secondary school, Girl child, SDGs, positive and negative transition factors

1. Introduction

The transition from primary to secondary education remains a critical phase for children, particularly girls, as it is often accompanied by significant challenges. These challenges stem from changes in the school environment and broader social contexts, which, if not addressed, can lead to both immediate and long-term consequences (Eccles et al. 2018; Spernes 2022). In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly gender equality (SDG 5), poverty eradication (SDG 1), and quality education (SDG 4), understanding the factors that influence this transition is essential. For girls, these factors include social, cultural, and economic barriers that hinder their educational progress (Burgess et al. 2008). Addressing these challenges is key to fostering an equitable educational environment and reducing school dropout rates. SDG 5 highlights the importance of achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls by tackling systemic barriers such as child marriage, gender-based violence, and harmful gender norms (Monaco 2024). These issues are major contributors to school dropouts among girls (Shukla et al., 2023; Guaita-Fernández et al. 2024). SDG 1 focuses on eradicating poverty, which can reduce economic obstacles to education, encourage families to invest in their daughters' schooling, and enhance women's financial independence (Esquivel and Sweetman 2016; Pradhan et al. 2017; Zavyalova and Krotova 2019). Meanwhile, SDG 4 aims to improve the quality of education globally, ensuring equal access for girls, equipping them with essential skills, and challenging stereotypes and discriminatory practices (Oganetse and Phiri 2025; Patel 2024; Sanchez-Tapia and Rafique 2020). Together, these goals aim to create an inclusive educational environment that promotes gender equality and reduces disparities in school attendance.

Understanding the factors that influence a girl's transition to secondary education is crucial for advancing gender equality, empowerment, and socio-economic development (Siddhu 2011). Secondary education equips girls with knowledge and skills that improve their economic prospects, health outcomes, and social participation while reducing early marriages and pregnancies (Pesambili 2020). It empowers girls to make informed decisions, break the cycle of poverty, and contribute positively to their families and communities (Zuilkowski et al. 2016). Policymakers can leverage this understanding to design targeted interventions and policies that address barriers to education, fostering inclusive education and driving broader social and cultural change. Girls often face unique challenges, including cultural norms, financial constraints, and societal expectations, which can hinder their educational progress (Burgess et al. 2008). Addressing these obstacles requires focused strategies such as scholarships, awareness campaigns, and improved school infrastructure. Education provides girls with the tools to make informed choices, actively participate in society, and escape poverty (Filmer and Schady 2008). Educated girls are more likely to secure better job opportunities, achieve higher earnings, and contribute to economic development (Burgess et al. 2008). They also tend to delay marriage and childbirth, prioritize their children's education, and foster a cycle of positive development within their communities (Ngware et al. 2006).

Ensuring that girls transition to secondary education yields significant social and economic benefits (Pesambili 2020). Education improves health outcomes, reduces child marriage rates, and enhances overall community well-being (Filmer and Schady 2008). It allows societies to optimize human capital and advance sustainable development. By addressing barriers to education, decision-makers can empower girls to thrive, enabling them to play transformative roles in their families, communities, and countries (Zuilkowski et al. 2016). Promoting girls'

education is not only a matter of equity but also a strategic investment in the future, driving progress toward the SDGs and fostering a more inclusive and prosperous world.

This study addresses the critical need to identify factors influencing the transition of girls from primary to secondary school, focusing on both positive and negative factors. While existing literature and surveys explore this transition, they often lack a comprehensive review that consolidates these factors in a single paper. Previous research has either focused on both genders or emphasized positive factors, leaving a gap in understanding the full spectrum of influences specific to girls. This systematic review aims to fill that gap by examining the factors (positive and negative) that impact this transition.

The paper is structured as follows: The methodology section details the approach used for the review. The results section presents the findings and analysis. The discussion section delves into the positive and negative factors affecting the transition, along with their theoretical and practical implications. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings and suggests directions for future research.

2. Methods

This systematic review aims to identify negative and positive factors influencing the transition of girls from primary to secondary school. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) criteria were followed in conducting a systematic review of the literature on quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research. This review method included the identification, screening, and inclusion phases according to the established protocols (Page et al. 2021). PRISMA guidelines were adopted due to their relevance for systematic reviews centered on educational interventions (Sohrabi et al. 2021) and their usefulness in enabling academic authors to efficiently compile thorough systematic analyses of significant interest within the research community (Sarkis-Onofre et al. 2021). The authors initially developed specific questions for the study that corresponded with the research's objective. The Population, Exposure, and Outcomes (PEO) framework, as outlined by Moola et al. (2015), was employed to assess the relevance of the research questions for the current systematic review study (see Table 1).

Table 1
Research Questions & PEO Framework.

Criteria	Research Questions	Considerations
Population	What samples are used in empirical studies on the girl child's transition from primary to secondary school published from 2005 to 2024?	The population includes girls aged 10 -16 years. This age range is selected to help include girls who are in the transition period from the end of primary school to the first year of secondary school, as well as those at a critical stage of their educational journey, which encompasses girls preparing to leave primary school, those entering secondary school, and those in the early years of secondary school. The age range set for the girls encompasses all required academic grade levels standardized in countries associated with the 36 papers used in the study.

Exposure	What are the key factors that have a positive or negative influence on the girl child's transition from primary to secondary school?	This also includes parents, teachers, head teachers, district educational officers, chiefs, elders, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community gatekeepers. Positive and negative influences that have arisen as a result of the girl child's transition from primary to secondary school. This also includes the experience, views, or attitudes of the girl child.
Outcome	What are the needs for future research regarding the girl child's transition from primary to secondary school? How can the research designs, theoretical frameworks, and models used in existing research be applied to address the barriers facing girl child's transition from primary to secondary school?	The recommendations made, limitations, research design, and theories used in this area of research, and how they can be applied to address the girl child's transition from primary to secondary school.

2.1 Search strategy

The authors searched seven (7) electronic databases for relevant studies from January 2005 to December 2024. The review spans from January 2005 to December 2024 to include the most up-to-date and relevant research on this topic, thus making sure that the systematic review accurately shows current trends and challenges in the field. Furthermore, while the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1, SDG 5, and SDG 4) associated with the study were adopted in 2015, the selected timeframe for the research was chosen to facilitate the authors' understanding of how global priorities have influenced research in this domain. The databases used in the study include Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, ProQuest, PsycINFO, and EBSCOhost. The search strategy employed in this study used the following specific keywords and phrases: "girl child," "transition," "primary school," and "secondary school." To specifically identify the articles employed in this study, the search strategy consisted of these terms as follows:

- a. "Girl child" OR girl OR "young girl" OR "schoolgirl" OR "teenager"
- b. "transition" OR "transformation" OR "transit" OR "transfer" OR "transitional" OR "transitioning"
- c. "Secondary school" OR "middle school" OR "senior high school"
- d. "Primary school" OR "elementary school" OR "basic education" OR "elementary level" OR "elementary school education" OR "primary school"

The Boolean "AND" was used to merge a,b,c, and d. The authors used these keywords and phrases to examine the current articles addressing factors influencing the transition of girls from primary to secondary school.

2.2 Selection criteria

The selection criteria called for the authors to perform a first exploratory search to assess the adequacy of accessible literature resources for the study field. This resulted in a comprehensive search of each of the seven (7) electronic databases separately to obtain relevant articles. Subsequently, the authors downloaded and exported the literature materials from the search databases into Excel. The study utilized the software package JabRef (<https://www.jabref.org/>) as a substitute for Excel in the context of ScienceDirect and Emerald Insight. This was attributable to the database's absence of export-to-Excel functionality and its restricted capability to download and export just 100 and 50 articles, respectively, at a time. The study subsequently combined and exported all downloaded articles to Excel for additional review and selection of relevant articles by the authors. The authors also utilized the software tool Zotero (<https://www.zotero.org/>) to save and organize relevant articles. Furthermore, the study restricted the search parameters to English-language sources, specifically journal articles, without imposing any limitations on the country or territory.

The study excluded articles that lacked the relevant information suitable for the study to address the research questions presented in the study. Upon selecting relevant publications, the authors removed all articles that failed to satisfy the established inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study. This procedure produced a total of 6,215 articles. Prior to further screening, the authors removed a total of 175 articles due to duplication. The articles underwent additional screening, concentrating on their titles, abstracts, and keywords. This facilitated a comprehensive evaluation of the selected articles for quality assessment. The methodology employed for the identification and selection of articles utilized in the study is presented in Fig. 1.

2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria encompass publications obtained from scholarly journals, including but not limited to the following:

- a. Articles primarily aimed at examining the factors influencing the transition of girls from primary to secondary education in both the Global South and North.
- b. Articles published between January 2005 and December 2024.
- c. Articles written in English.
- d. Articles that include girls between the ages of 10 and 16 years.
- e. Articles that factor in the opinion of parents, teachers, head teachers, district educational officers, chiefs, elders, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community gatekeepers on girls' child transition from primary to secondary school.
- f. Articles that are either qualitative, quantitative, or mixed in nature.
- g. Articles that were peer-reviewed.

The study considered the following exclusion criteria:

- Articles that comprised solely an extended abstract or a PowerPoint presentation.
- Articles with the primary goal of examining the factors influencing boy child transition from primary to secondary school.
- Review articles, data papers, and conference papers.
- Books and magazines.

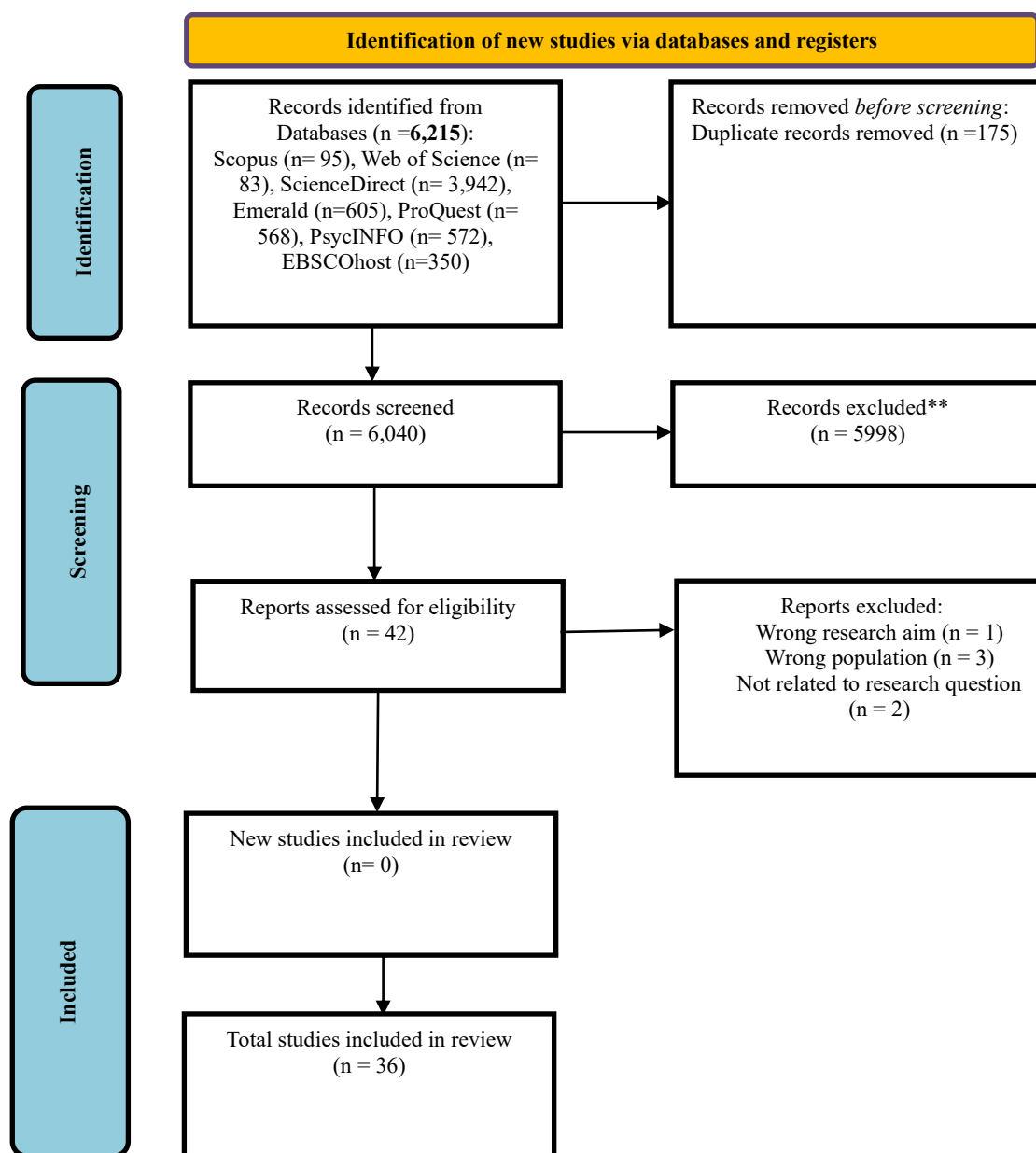


Fig. 1. PRISMA flow diagram for eligible articles.

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28	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Good
29	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Good
30	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
31	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Good
32	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
33	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Fair
34	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
35	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
36	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good

Yes– criteria set is present; **No**– criteria set is not presented; **Can't tell** – criteria set is not seen

Good – less risk of bias; **Fair**– moderate risk of bias; **Poor**– considerable risk of bias

1- Siddhu (2011); 2- Warrington and Kiragu (2012); 3- Zuilkowski et al. (2016).; 4- Pesambili (2020); 5- Virtanen et al. (2019); 6- van Rens and Groot (2023); 7- Ngware et al. (2006); 8- Temba et al. (2013); 9- Filmer and Schady (2008); 10- Driessen et al. (2008); 11- Burgess et al. (2008); 12- Kwarikunda et al. (2023); 13- Lorian et al. (2024); 14- Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); 15- Kiuru et al. (2020); 16- Bagnall et al. (2022); 17- Jindal-Snape and Cantali (2019); 18- D'Haese et al. (2016); 19- Iddy (2023); 20- Chedzoy and Burden (2005); 21- van der Kleij et al. (2023); 22- Weller (2007); 23- De Moor et al. (2023); 24- Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018); 25- Knowles et al. (2011); 26- Kingdon et al. (2017); 27- Ngware et al. (2012); 28- Mackenzie et al. (2012); 29- Onetti et al. (2019); 30- Vaz et al. (2015); 31- Waters et al. (2014); 32- Werunga et al. (2011); 33- Raymond (2021); 34- Abuya et al. (2017); 35- Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); 36- Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).

2.4 Data Extraction

Following the systematic identification of the publications utilized in the study, the authors commenced data extraction. The research questions outlined for the study guided this process. The study compiled an overview of data regarding the key factors (both positive and negative) that influence the transition of girls from primary to secondary school, including research design and theories utilized in this field of study. The extraction procedure also collected data like the author's name(s), publication year, aim of the study, study settings, sampling approach, and key findings (see Appendix A). Additionally, the journal name (see Table 3) and the publication country (See Figure 3), which is the country where the study sample was gathered, are also included.

2.5 Coding Procedure

The study addressed inter-coder reliability by having two authors initially code the early identified articles (6,215). Following this, the comprehensive coding of all eligible works (36 papers) was carried out by two additional authors, who split the article list evenly and coded their assigned portions. Following their initial coding, the authors exchanged lists and collaboratively double-coded each other's work. The process facilitated the verification of all studies at least two times, with most undergoing a review process four times. We addressed disagreements in the coding process through discussion until we finally reached an agreement. This process guaranteed consistency and reliability in the coding of the studies incorporated in our analysis.

273 **2.6 Data Analysis**

274 The review incorporated the 36 studies that met the inclusion criteria to address the
275 established research questions. Findings from all included studies, providing comparable
276 evidence, were combined to draw the conclusions of the study. A narrative synthesis approach
277 was employed to analyze the collected data, as described by Rodgers et al. (2009), who noted
278 that this method enables researchers to summarize and interpret findings from multiple studies,
279 explore relationships, evaluate evidence strength, and guide practice or policy. To effectively
280 present the data, the authors used various visualization techniques, such as funnel and line charts,
281 along with tables to summarize and display the study's results.

282 **3. Results**

283 A comprehensive search of the databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect,
284 Emerald, ProQuest, PsycINFO, and EBSCOhost, resulted in a total of 6,215 results.
285 Subsequently, 175 duplicated records were eliminated, resulting in a total of 6,040 records that
286 were then subjected to screening. The screening resulted in the exclusion of 5,998 papers from
287 the study due to not meeting the established inclusion criteria. Consequently, the screening
288 process resulted in a selection of 42 articles that fulfilled the eligibility criteria. After a thorough
289 examination of these articles, an additional five were excluded due to wrong research aims,
290 inappropriate populations, and lack of relevance to our research questions. The final article list
291 comprised 36 relevant studies conducted between January 2005 and December 2024, all of
292 which met our inclusion criteria.

293 **3.1 Description of included studies**

294 The characteristics of the 36 selected papers, including the study and its aim, journal,
295 participants/location/design, sample, type of analysis, theory, settings/sampling, and key
296 findings, are presented in Appendix A. Additionally, the journal name (see Table 3) and the
297 publication country (see Figure 3) are presented.

298 **3.1.1 Publication source**

299 Table 3 provides a summary of the articles' publication sources. A total of thirty-two
300 scholarly publications published the papers that were included in the study. The International
301 Journal of Educational Development has the most publications (4), followed by the Journal of
302 Youth and Adolescence (2) and PLoS One (2).

303 **Table 3**

304 Publication source (January 2005 – December 2024)

Journal	Authors	Total
International Journal of Educational Development	1,2,3,4	4
Journal of Youth and Adolescence	13,15	2
PLoS One	29,30	2

Learning and Individual Differences	5	1
Heliyon	6	1
Equal Opportunities International	7	1
Journal of International Cooperation in Education	8	1
Economic Development and Cultural Change	9	1
European Sociological Review	10	1
Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers	11	1
International Journal of School & Educational Psychology	12	1
Journal for the Study of Education and Development	14	1
British Journal of Educational Psychology	16	1
British Educational Research Journal	17	1
International Journal of Behavioural Medicine	18	1
International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education	19	1
Research in Education	20	1
Child Development	21	1
Children & Society	22	1
Self and Identity	23	1
Journal of International Development	24	1
Journal of Physical Activity and Health	25	1
International Journal of Behavioural Development	26	1
London Review of Education	27	1
Issues in Educational Research	28	1
Australian Journal of Education	31	1
Problems of Education in the 21st Century	32	1
Educational Research for Policy and Practice	33	1
International Journal of Adolescence and Youth	34	1
Review of Education	35	1
Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research	36	1

1- Siddhu (2011); 2- Warrington and Kiragu (2012); 3- Zuilkowski et al. (2016).; 4- Pesambili (2020); 5- Virtanen et al. (2019); 6- van Rens and Groot (2023); 7- Ngware et al. (2006); 8- Temba et al. (2013); 9- Filmer and Schady (2008); 10- Driessen et al. (2008); 11- Burgess et al. (2008); 12- Kwarikunda et al. (2023); 13- Lorian et al. (2024); 14- Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); 15- Kiuru et al. (2020); 16- Bagnall et al. (2022); 17- Jindal-Snape and Cantali (2019); 18- D'Haese et al. (2016); 19- Iddy (2023); 20- Chedzoy and Burden (2005); 21- van der Kleij et al. (2023); 22- Weller (2007); 23- De Moor et al. (2023); 24- Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018); 25- Knowles et al. (2011); 26- Kingdon et al. (2017); 27- Ngware et al. (2012); 28- Mackenzie et al. (2012); 29- Onetti et al. (2019); 30- Vaz et al. (2015); 31- Waters et al. (2014); 32- Werunga et al. (2011); 33- Raymond (2021); 34- Abuya et al. (2017); 35- Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); 36- Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).

3.1.2 Publication year

The articles used in this study were published from January 2005 to December 2024. Figure 2 shows that most articles used in the study were published in the years 2008, 2011, 2012, 2019, and 2023. After 2023, the data presented in Fig. 2 indicates a significant decline in publications within this field of research. The notable decrease can be associated with the change in focus following the COVID-19 pandemic, as increased emphasis on mental health may have eclipsed studies related to gender-specific transitions. Over time, the policies implemented by governments to address these transitions may have fostered the impression that the associated challenges are resolved. However, the presented data clearly indicates a pressing need for additional research.

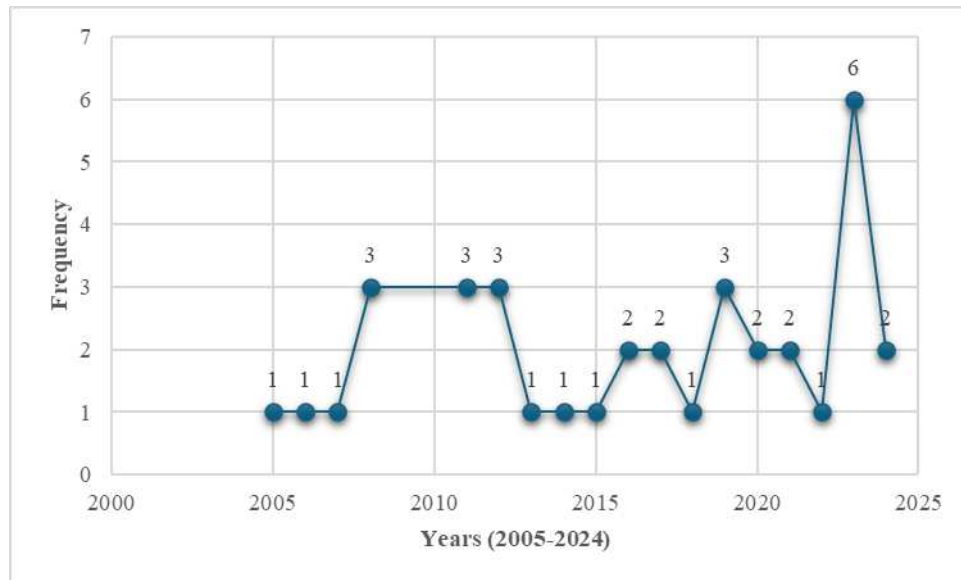


Fig. 2. Publication year

3.1.3 Publication Country

Fig. 3 shows the distribution of studies by country, highlighting that the majority of papers utilized in this research to identify factors influencing the transition of girl children from primary to secondary school originated from the United Kingdom (8). Kenya (6), Tanzania (5), the Netherlands (4), Australia (3), and Finland (3) followed in that order. In the United Kingdom, a high number of studies were recorded, as data indicates that the Department for Education has actively commissioned research to address transition challenges and enhance outcomes. In contrast, Kenya and Tanzania have faced notable gender disparities in education. According to the data from this study, sociocultural barriers such as early marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), and household labor, along with economic constraints, have significantly impacted the transition of girls from primary to secondary education, leading to an increased focus on studies in this area.

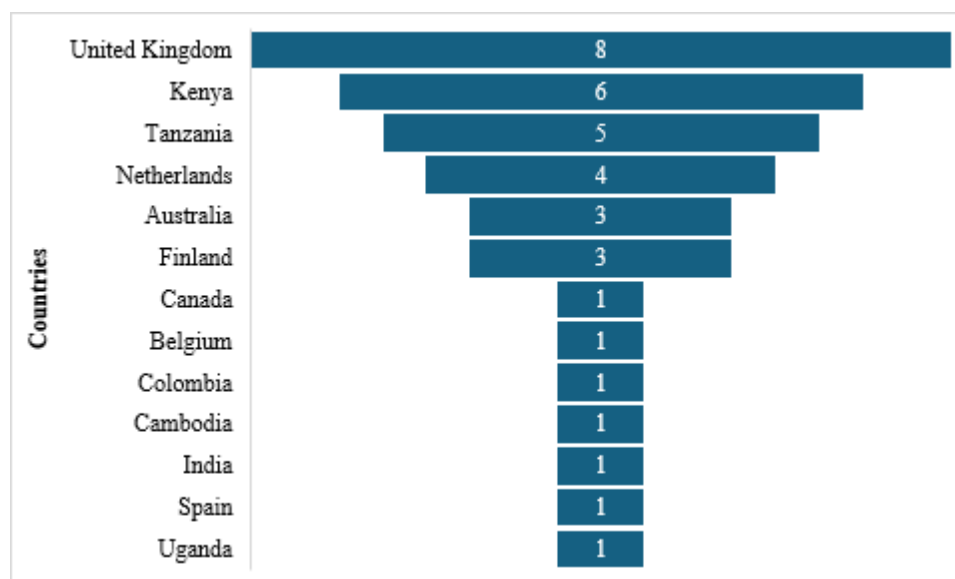


Fig. 3. Publication Country

3.1.4 Research Design

The findings indicate that most studies in this field employed a quantitative research design (16), followed by a mixed methods design (12), while a qualitative research design (8) was the least utilized approach (see Table 4).

Table 4

Research Design.

Research Design	Paper	Frequency
Quantitative	5, 7, 9,10,11,13, 15, 18, 21, 23, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35	16
Mixed Method	1, 3, 12, 16, 17, 20, 22, 24, 27, 28, 34, 36	12
Qualitative	2, 4, 6, 8, 14, 19, 25, 33	8

1- Siddhu (2011); 2- Warrington and Kiragu (2012); 3- Zuilkowski et al. (2016).; 4- Pesambili (2020); 5- Virtanen et al. (2019); 6- van Rens and Groot (2023); 7- Ngware et al. (2006); 8- Temba et al. (2013); 9- Filmer and Schady (2008); 10- Driessen et al. (2008); 11- Burgess et al. (2008); 12- Kwarikunda et al. (2023); 13- Lorijn et al. (2024); 14- Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); 15- Kiuru et al. (2020); 16- Bagnall et al. (2022); 17- Jindal-Snape and Cantali (2019); 18- D'Haese et al. (2016); 19- Iddy (2023); 20- Chedzoy and Burden (2005); 21- van der Kleij et al. (2023); 22- Weller (2007); 23- De Moor et al. (2023); 24- Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018); 25- Knowles et al. (2011); 26- Kingdon et al. (2017); 27- Ngware et al. (2012); 28- Mackenzie et al. (2012); 29- Onetti et al. (2019); 30- Vaz et al. (2015); 31- Waters et al. (2014); 32- Werunga et al. (2011); 33- Raymond (2021); 34- Abuya et al. (2017); 35- Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); 36- Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).

3.1.5 Theories

Table 5 presents the theoretical frameworks utilized in the studies included in this research. The predominant framework employed in the analyzed papers is human capital theory (4). This was followed by the grounded theory (3), Jindal-Snape's Multiple and Multidimensional Transitions theory (2), Sen's Capability Approach (2), Person-environment fit theory (2), and

Theory of Social Capital (2). Additionally, some of the studies failed to explicitly state the theory that was applied (2).

Table 5
Theories.

Theories	Papers	Frequency
Human Capital Theory	8,10,11,25	4
Grounded Theory	7,20,30	3
Jindal-Snape's Multiple and Multidimensional Transitions (MMT) theory	23, 35	2
Sen's Capability Approach	3,33	2
Person-environment fit theory	6,31	2
Theory of Social Capital	28,30	2
Not Clearly specified	14,27	2
Post-colonial theory	5	1
Expectancy value theory	36	1
Risk and resilience framework	34	1
Theoretical model of self-concept	29	1
Cognitive transactional theory of stress	28	1
Opportunity to learn (OTL) framework	36	1
Life course theory	35	1
Identity theory	29	1
African Feminism	25	1
Liminality theory	25	1
Transactional model of development	21	1
Meritocratic Principle	12	1
Resilience Theory	15	1
Stage-Environment fit Theory	19	1
Theory of Planned Behavior	24	1
Adolescent Development Theory	26	1
Theory of Learned Helplessness	33	1
Harter's Competence Motivation Theory	34	1
Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) Framework of Exclusion	2	1

1- Siddhu (2011); 2- Warrington and Kiragu (2012); 3- Zuilkowski et al. (2016); 4- Pesambili (2020); 5- Virtanen et al. (2019); 6- van Rens and Groot (2023); 7- Ngware et al. (2006); 8- Temba et al. (2013); 9- Filmer and Schady (2008); 10- Driessen et al. (2008); 11- Burgess et al. (2008); 12- Kwarikunda et al. (2023); 13- Lorijn et al. (2024); 14- Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); 15- Kiuru et al. (2020); 16- Bagnall et al. (2022); 17- Jindal-Snape and Cantali (2019); 18- D'Haese et al. (2016); 19- Iddy (2023); 20- Chedzoy and Burden (2005); 21- van der Kleij et al. (2023); 22- Weller (2007); 23- De Moor et al. (2023); 24- Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018); 25- Knowles et al. (2011); 26- Kingdon et al. (2017); 27- Ngware et al. (2012); 28- Mackenzie et al. (2012); 29- Onetti et al. (2019); 30- Vaz et al. (2015); 31- Waters et al. (2014); 32- Werunga et al. (2011); 33- Raymond (2021); 34- Abuya et al. (2017); 35- Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); 36- Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).

3.1.6 Key samples

Table 6 indicates that the primary samples utilized in the reviewed studies predominantly consist of Grade 6 students (14), parents (12), Grade 8 students (9), Grade 7 students (9), primary

379 school teachers (6), community elders (5), dropouts (4), headteachers (4), Grade 5 students (3),
 380 and district education officers (3).

381
 382 **Table 6**
 383 Key Sample.

Sample	Paper	Total
Grade 6 students	5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 18, 19, 27, 28, 34, 35, 36	14
Parents	1, 3, 4, 16, 17, 19, 22, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36	12
Grade 8 students	1, 12, 13, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29	9
Grade 7 students	5, 22, 16, 20, 24, 28, 30, 31, 33	9
Primary school teachers	3, 16, 22, 24, 27, 36	6
Elders in a community	4, 8, 19, 33, 34	5
Dropouts	3, 4, 19, 33	4
Head teachers	8, 19, 27, 32	4
Grade 5 students	2, 4, 14	3
District Education Officers	8, 19, 33	3
Chiefs	4, 34	2
Ward education coordinators	8, 17	2
Secondary school teachers	16, 24	2
Secondary school students (form 1)	24, 35	2
Upper primary grade students	3	1
Mentors	6	1
Households	7	1
Religious leaders	19	1
Grade 5 (students)	29	1
Traditional leaders	33	1

384 1- Siddhu (2011); 2- Warrington and Kiragu (2012); 3- Zuilkowski et al. (2016); 4- Pesambili (2020); 5- Virtanen et
 385 al. (2019); 6- van Rens and Groot (2023); 7- Ngware et al. (2006); 8- Temba et al. (2013); 9- Filmer and Schady
 386 (2008); 10- Driessen et al. (2008); 11- Burgess et al. (2008); 12- Kwarikunda et al. (2023); 13- Lorian et al. (2024);
 387 14- Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); 15- Kiuru et al. (2020); 16- Bagnall et al. (2022); 17- Jindal-Snape and Cantali
 388 (2019); 18- D'Haese et al. (2016); 19- Iddy (2023); 20- Chedzoy and Burden (2005); 21- van der Kleij et al. (2023);
 389 22- Weller (2007); 23- De Moor et al. (2023); 24- Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018); 25- Knowles et al. (2011); 26-
 390 Kingdon et al. (2017); 27- Ngware et al. (2012); 28- Mackenzie et al. (2012); 29- Onetti et al. (2019); 30- Vaz et al.
 391 (2015); 31- Waters et al. (2014); 32- Werunga et al. (2011); 33- Raymond (2021); 34- Abuya et al. (2017); 35-
 392 Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); 36- Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).

393 3.2 Positive key factors that influence the girl child's transition from primary to secondary 394 school

395 The analysis of the reviewed papers shows that the top ten primary factors positively
 396 influencing the transition of the girl child from primary to secondary school are as follows (see
 397 Table 7): a supportive learning environment (15) ranks highest, followed by parental motivation
 398 and support (14), personal strategies, commitment, and aspirations towards education (12).
 399 Additional factors include support from peers (12), the child's academic performance (7), the role
 400 of teachers (7), family support (6), government policies and initiatives (6), school transition
 401 practices (6), and parental education (5).

402 Additionally, the least positive factors that affect a girl child's transition from primary to
 403 secondary school, according to Table 7, to mention a few, include proximity to parents (1),

prospects for marriage (1), shared experiences and backgrounds (1), teacher gender (1), availability of teaching materials (1), lack of bullying (1), cultural pluralism (1), support from some fathers (1), and education as a tool for poverty alleviation (1). It is important to acknowledge that the positive least factors identified in this study differ from the negative factors (see Table 8). For instance, while a father's reluctant and negative attitude is categorized as one of the least negative key factors influencing girls' transition from primary to secondary school, in its position as a least positive factor, literature only captured support from some fathers without considering their reluctance. Bullying (its presence and absence) and the gender of teachers emerged as two key factors that show similar attributes in both positive and negative contexts regarding the transition from primary to secondary school. While bullying is reflected as a negative factor, often paired with body shaming, its absence is examined as a positive factor, highlighting how the lack of bullying encourages girls to attend school regularly and participate in extracurricular activities.

Table 7

Positive key factors.

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Supportive Learning Environment		*	*											*	*					
Parental Motivation & Support	*					*						*				*		*	*	
Personal Strategies, Commitment, & Aspirations towards Education		*			*					*		*		*			*		*	*
Support from Peers					*	*						*	*			*	*			*
Child's Academic Performance	*		*	*						*					*					
Role of Teachers		*			*	*									*					*
Family Support		*	*		*												*		*	
Government Policies and Initiatives							*	*											*	
School Transition Practices					*	*						*					*			*
Parental Education	*		*				*			*										
Skill Development																	*		*	
Economic Status	*		*		*														*	
Role Models & Mentors		*				*														*
Extracurricular Activities																				*
Community & External Support		*																		
Emotional Support and Encouragement															*	*				
Sibling Support																				

1- Siddhu (2011); 2- Warrington and Kiragu (2012); 3- Zuilkowski et al. (2016); 4- Pesambili (2020); 5- Virtanen et al. (2019); 6- van Rens and Groot (2023); 7- Ngware et al. (2006); 8- Temba et al. (2013); 9- Filmer and Schady (2008); 10- Driessen et al. (2008); 11- Burgess et al. (2008); 12- Kwarikunda et al. (2023); 13- Lorijn et al. (2024); 14- Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); 15- Kiuru et al. (2020); 16- Bagnall et al. (2022); 17- Jindal-Snape and Cantali (2019); 18- D'Haese et al. (2016); 19- Iddy (2023); 20- Chedzoy and Burden (2005).

426 **Table 7**

427 Positive key factors (cont.)

Factors	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Total
Supportive Learning Environment	*	*		*	*		*	*	*	*	*			*	*		15
Parental Motivation & Support	*	*	*	*				*		*				*	*		14
Personal Strategies, Commitment, & Aspirations towards Education			*	*	*				*								12
Support from Peers		*	*	*				*							*		12
Child's Academic Performance							*								*		7
Role of Teachers							*	*									7
Family Support									*								6
Government Policies and Initiatives									*			*	*				6
School Transition Practices		*															6
Parental Education												*					5
Skill Development		*				*		*									5
Economic Status																	4
Role Models & Mentors				*									*				4
Extracurricular Activities								*		*					*		4
Community & External Support												*		*			3
Emotional Support and Encouragement								*									3
Sibling Support		*		*				*									3

428 **21-** van der Kleij et al. (2023); **22-** Weller (2007); **23-** De Moor et al. (2023); **24-** Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018);
 429 **25-** Knowles et al. (2011); **26-** Kingdon et al. (2017); **27-** Ngware et al. (2012); **28-** Mackenzie et al. (2012);
 430 **29-** Onetti et al. (2019); **30-** Vaz et al. (2015); **31-** Waters et al. (2014); **32-** Werunga et al. (2011); **33-**
 431 Raymond (2021); **34-** Abuya et al. (2017); **35-** Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); **36-** Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).
 432

433 **Table 7**

434 Positive key factors.

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Coping with Environmental Challenges				*													*			
Community Awareness and Advocacy							*													
Influence of Educated Mothers								*												
Experience from Towns and Cities								*	*											
Scholarship Program									*											
Co-transitioning Peers													*	*						

	Positive Perception of New Subjects and Teachers Attendance	*		
	Perceived Benefits of Education		*	
	Alternative Incomes & Improved Life		*	
	Leadership Opportunities		*	
	Household Income Level			*
	School Availability			*
435	1- Siddhu (2011); 2- Warrington and Kiragu (2012); 3- Zuilkowski et al. (2016); 4- Pesambili (2020); 5- Virtanen et			
436	al. (2019); 6- van Rens and Groot (2023); 7- Ngware et al. (2006); 8- Temba et al. (2013); 9- Filmer and Schady			
437	(2008); 10- Driessen et al. (2008); 11- Burgess et al. (2008); 12- Kwarikunda et al. (2023); 13- Lorijn et al. (2024);			
438	14- Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); 15- Kiuru et al. (2020); 16- Bagnall et al. (2022); 17- Jindal-Snape and Cantali			
439	(2019); 18- D’Haese et al. (2016); 19- Iddy (2023); 20- Chedzoy and Burden (2005).			
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443				

444 **Table 7**

445 Positive key factors (cont.)

Factors	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Total
Coping with Environmental Challenges																	2
Community Awareness and Advocacy												*					2
Influence of Educated Mothers						*											2
Experience from Towns and Cities																	2
Scholarship Program							*										2
Co-transitioning Peers																	2
Positive Perception of New Subjects and Teachers									*						*		2
Attendance																	1
Perceived Benefits of Education																	1
Alternative Incomes & Improved Life																	1
Leadership Opportunities																	1
Household Income Level																	1
School Availability																	1

446 **21-** van der Kleij et al. (2023); **22-** Weller (2007); **23-** De Moor et al. (2023); **24-** Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018);
 447 **25-** Knowles et al. (2011); **26-** Kingdon et al. (2017); **27-** Ngware et al. (2012); **28-** Mackenzie et al. (2012);
 448 **29-** Onetti et al. (2019); **30-** Vaz et al. (2015); **31-** Waters et al. (2014); **32-** Werunga et al. (2011); **33-**
 449 Raymond (2021); **34-** Abuya et al. (2017); **35-** Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); **36-** Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).

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460 **Table 7**
461 Positive key factors (cont.)

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Targeting of Disadvantaged Girls									*											
Reduction of Financial Barriers									*											
Automatic Eligibility for Continuation									*											
Transparency and Accountability									*											
Reduction in Loneliness													*							
Opportunity for a Fresh Start													*							
Freedom of School Choice													*							
Reflexivity and Self-Improvement														*						
Closeness to Parents															*					
Marriage Prospects																			*	
Shared Experiences and Backgrounds																				
Teacher Gender																				
Availability of Teaching Materials																				
Absence of Bullying																				
Cultural Pluralism																				
Support from Some Fathers																				
Education as a Tool for Poverty Alleviation																				

462 1- Siddhu (2011); 2- Warrington and Kiragu (2012); 3- Zuilkowski et al. (2016).; 4- Pesambili (2020); 5- Virtanen et
463 al. (2019); 6- van Rens and Groot (2023); 7- Ngware et al. (2006); 8- Temba et al. (2013); 9- Filmer and Schady
464 (2008); 10- Driessen et al. (2008); 11- Burgess et al. (2008); 12- Kwarikunda et al. (2023); 13- Lorijn et al. (2024);
465 14- Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); 15- Kiuru et al. (2020); 16- Bagnall et al. (2022); 17- Jindal-Snape and Cantali
466 (2019); 18- D’Haese et al. (2016); 19- Iddy (2023); 20- Chedzoy and Burden (2005).

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Table 7

Positive key factors (cont.)

Factors	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Total
Targeting of Disadvantaged Girls																	1
Reduction of Financial Barriers																	1
Automatic Eligibility for Continuation																	1
Transparency and Accountability																	1
Reduction in Loneliness																	1
Opportunity for a Fresh Start																	1
Freedom of School Choice																	1
Reflexivity and Self-Improvement																	1
Closeness to Parents																	1
Marriage Prospects																	1
Shared Experiences and Backgrounds		*															1
Teacher Gender							*										1
Availability of Teaching Materials							*										1
Absence of Bullying										*							1
Cultural Pluralism										*							1
Support from Some Fathers													*				1
Education as a Tool for Poverty Alleviation													*				1

21- van der Kleij et al. (2023); 22- Weller (2007); 23- De Moor et al. (2023); 24- Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018); 25- Knowles et al. (2011); 26- Kingdon et al. (2017); 27- Ngware et al. (2012); 28- Mackenzie et al. (2012); 29- Onetti et al. (2019); 30- Vaz et al. (2015); 31- Waters et al. (2014); 32- Werunga et al. (2011); 33- Raymond (2021); 34- Abuya et al. (2017); 35- Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); 36- Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).

3.3 Negative key factors that influence the girl child's transition from primary to secondary school

An analysis of the reviewed papers according to Table 8 shows that the primary negative factors influencing the transition of the girl child from primary to secondary school are as follows: Social Reasons, cultural challenges (14), Inadequate School Facilities, policies, & performance (11), Gender Bias (9), Bullying, body shaming (9), Conflict & Negative Peer Influence (9), Distance to School (8), FGM and Early pregnancy & Marriage (6), Economic Considerations (6), School Burnout (7), and Parental Influence, Attitude and Decision-Making (6).

Furthermore, the least primary negative factors influencing the transition of the girl child from primary to secondary school, as presented in Table 8, to mention a few, include poor academic performance, repetition and stigma, resistance to change, decrease in motivation, low international support and ineffective NGOs, negative perceptions of girls' education, teacher gender, fathers' reluctance and negative attitudes, poor home learning environment, and household composition.

Table 8
Negative key factors

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Social Reasons, cultural challenges	*			*	*		*			*		*	*	*					*	*
Inadequate School Facilities, policies, & performance		*	*				*		*	*						*	*			*
Gender Bias	*	*	*		*		*		*				*							
Bullying, body shaming						*							*				*			*
Conflict & Negative Peer Influence															*					*
Distance to School	*	*					*	*	*											
FGM and Early pregnancy & Marriage		*		*															*	
Economic Considerations				*					*										*	
School Burnout					*	*									*	*				*
Parental Influence, Attitude, and Decision-Making			*			*		*												
Emotional Struggles														*		*				
Decline in Teacher Support					*	*														
Cost of Education	*	*	*				*													
Socio-economic Status			*		*				*											
Health Issues			*						*			*		*						
Household Size and Income	*						*	*												
Domestic Labor		*																	*	
Low Physical Appearance, respect, Competence				*									*							
Inadequate Preparation for Independence						*						*					*			

1- Siddhu (2011); 2- Warrington and Kiragu (2012); 3- Zuilkowski et al. (2016).; 4- Pesambili (2020); 5- Virtanen et al. (2019); 6- van Rens and Groot (2023); 7- Ngware et al. (2006); 8- Temba et al. (2013); 9- Filmer and Schady (2008); 10- Driessen et al. (2008); 11- Burgess et al. (2008); 12- Kwarikunda et al. (2023); 13- Lorijn et al. (2024); 14- Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); 15- Kiuru et al. (2020); 16- Bagnall et al. (2022); 17- Jindal-Snape and Cantali (2019); 18- D'Haese et al. (2016); 19- Iddy (2023); 20- Chedzoy and Burden (2005).

Table 8

Negative key factors (cont.)

Factors	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Total
Social Reasons, cultural challenges								*	*		*						14
Inadequate School Facilities, policies, & performance	*	*			*												11
Gender Bias									*				*				19
Bullying, body shaming		*		*						*	*				*		9
Conflict & Negative Peer Influence		*	*					*			*	*		*	*		9
Distance to School				*								*	*				8
School Burnout												*			*		7
FGM and Early pregnancy & Marriage				*								*	*				6
Economic Considerations				*		*							*				6
~~School Burnout~~												*			*		7
Parental Influence, Attitude and Decision-Making		*								*				*			6
Emotional Struggles	*	*		*					*								6
Decline in Teacher Support								*			*				*		5
Cost of Education												*					5
Socio-economic Status							*								*		5
Health Issues													*				5
Household Size and Income												*					4
Domestic Labor													*	*			4
Low Physical Appearance, respect, Competence			*							*							4
Inadequate Preparation for Independence										*							4

21- van der Kleij et al. (2023); 22- Weller (2007); 23- De Moor et al. (2023); 24- Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018); 25- Knowles et al. (2011); 26- Kingdon et al. (2017); 27- Ngware et al. (2012); 28- Mackenzie et al. (2012); 29- Onetti et al. (2019); 30- Vaz et al. (2015); 31- Waters et al. (2014); 32- Werunga et al. (2011); 33- Raymond (2021); 34- Abuya et al. (2017); 35- Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); 36- Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).

518 **Table 8**
519 Negative key factors (cont.)

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Class Composition										*		*		*						*
School Transition Challenges												*	*							
Lack of Parental Support															*					
Child's Age	*		*																	
Lack of Awareness and Support									*							*	*			
Conflict with Teachers														*	*					
Poverty	*	*																		
Parental Education	*								*											
Scarcity of Natural Resources		*																		
Sexual Harassment and Violence		*																		
Frequent Migration								*		*										
Patriarchal Ideologies																		*		
Older Students' Behavior																				*
High Competition for School Places																				
Fear, Shame, and Confusion Around Menstruation & sexual health information																				
Caste and Religion	*																			
Corporal Punishment		*																		
Hunger and Malnutrition		*																		
Poor Academic Performance			*																	

520 1- Siddhu (2011); 2- Warrington and Kiragu (2012); 3- Zuilkowski et al. (2016).; 4- Pesambili (2020); 5- Virtanen et
521 al. (2019); 6- van Rens and Groot (2023); 7- Ngware et al. (2006); 8- Temba et al. (2013); 9- Filmer and Schady
522 (2008); 10- Driessen et al. (2008); 11- Burgess et al. (2008); 12- Kwarikunda et al. (2023); 13- Lorijn et al. (2024);
523 14- Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); 15- Kiuru et al. (2020); 16- Bagnall et al. (2022); 17- Jindal-Snape and Cantali
524 (2019); 18- D’Haese et al. (2016); 19- Iddy (2023); 20- Chedzoy and Burden (2005).

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527

528 **Table 8**

529 Negative key factors (cont.)

Factors	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Total
Class Composition																	4
School Transition Challenges	*					*											4
Lack of Parental Support			*	*											*		4
Child's Age									*								3
Lack of Awareness and Support																	3
Conflict with Teachers									*								3
Poverty																	2
Parental Education																	2
Scarcity of Natural Resources	*																2
Sexual Harassment and Violence				*													2
Frequent Migration																	2
Patriarchal Ideologies													*				2
Older Students' Behavior											*						
High Competition for School Places		*								*							2
Fear, Shame, and Confusion Around Menstruation & sexual health information														*			1
Caste and Religion																	1
Corporal Punishment																	1
Hunger and Malnutrition																	1
Poor Academic Performance																	1

530 **21-** van der Kleij et al. (2023); **22-** Weller (2007); **23-** De Moor et al. (2023); **24-** Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018);
531 **25-** Knowles et al. (2011); **26-** Kingdon et al. (2017); **27-** Ngware et al. (2012); **28-** Mackenzie et al. (2012);
532 **29-** Onetti et al. (2019); **30-** Vaz et al. (2015); **31-** Waters et al. (2014); **32-** Werunga et al. (2011); **33-**
533 Raymond (2021); **34-** Abuya et al. (2017); **35-** Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); **36-** Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).

534

535

536 **Table 8**

537 Negative key factors (cont.)

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Repetition and Stigma			*																	
Resistance to Change				*																
Decrease in Motivation						*														
Low International Support and Ineffective NGOs								*												
Negative Perceptions of Girls' Education																		*		
Teacher gender																				
Fathers' Reluctance and Negative Attitudes																				
Poor Home Learning Environment																				
Household Composition																				

538 **1-** Siddhu (2011); **2-** Warrington and Kiragu (2012); **3-** Zuilkowski et al. (2016).; **4-** Pesambili (2020); **5-** Virtanen et
539 al. (2019); **6-** van Rens and Groot (2023); **7-** Ngware et al. (2006); **8-** Temba et al. (2013); **9-** Filmer and Schady
540 (2008); **10-** Driessen et al. (2008); **11-** Burgess et al. (2008); **12-** Kwarikunda et al. (2023); **13-** Lorijn et al. (2024);
541 **14-** Aristizábal and Barbato (2024); **15-** Kiuru et al. (2020); **16-** Bagnall et al. (2022); **17-** Jindal-Snape and Cantali
542 (2019); **18-** D'Haese et al. (2016); **19-** Iddy (2023); **20-** Chedzoy and Burden (2005).

543

544 **Table 8**

545 Negative key factors (cont.)

Factors	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Total
Repetition and Stigma																	1
Resistance to Change																	1
Decrease in Motivation																	1
Low International Support and Ineffective NGOs																	1
Negative Perceptions of Girls' Education																	1
Teacher gender							*										1
Fathers' Reluctance and Negative Attitudes													*				1
Poor Home Learning Environment													*				1
Household Composition																*	1

546 **21-** van der Kleij et al. (2023); **22-** Weller (2007); **23-** De Moor et al. (2023); **24-** Joyce-Gibbons et al. (2018);
547 **25-** Knowles et al. (2011); **26-** Kingdon et al. (2017); **27-** Ngware et al. (2012); **28-** Mackenzie et al. (2012);
548 **29-** Onetti et al. (2019); **30-** Vaz et al. (2015); **31-** Waters et al. (2014); **32-** Werunga et al. (2011); **33-**
549 Raymond (2021); **34-** Abuya et al. (2017); **35-** Jindal-Snape et al. (2023); **36-** Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2021).

550

551 **4. Discussion**

552 The results presented in this study provide a comprehensive overview of the factors
553 influencing the transition of girl children from primary to secondary school, highlighting both
554 positive and negative determinants. The study spans nearly two decades, from 2005 to 2024,
555 with notable peaks in publication years such as 2008, 2011, 2012, 2019, and 2023. The decline in

publications after 2023 can be linked to funding shifts, policy changes, and post-pandemic priorities, as researchers have increasingly focused on broader issues such as how to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and mental health challenges, which may have overshadowed gender-specific transition studies. Nonetheless, donor countries like the United Kingdom, Norway, Canada, Sweden, and Australia remain actively involved in supporting education initiatives in these regions (e.g., Hardman & Sandi 2024). These donors must dedicate more attention to conducting studies that assess whether their investments are producing positive outcomes. Geographically, the majority of studies reviewed are from the United Kingdom, Kenya, and Tanzania, highlighting a significant focus on this research area in both developed and developing nations. In Kenya and Tanzania, the prevalence of such studies reflects ongoing challenges that hinder girls' access to education, retention, and academic success. Researchers and donors may be conducting such studies to understand and address these barriers to foster gender equity and improve educational outcomes. In the United Kingdom, the increasing number of studies can be attributed to its long-standing collaboration with East African countries through aid programs and education initiatives, as well as evolving social dynamics and a strong commitment to equitable learning outcomes. These studies often aim to inform policies and funding strategies for education.

The predominance of quantitative research designs reflects a focus on measurable outcomes, while mixed methods provide a balanced approach to understanding both numerical data and contextual insights. The least utilized qualitative design suggests a gap in exploring in-depth narratives and lived experiences, which are crucial for understanding the challenges faced by girl children. The reliance on human capital theory (Ngware et al. 2006; Filmer and Schady 2008; Temba et al. 2013; Iddy 2023) underscores the prevalence of the economic perspective/view of education, while other theories like Sen's Capability Approach (Warrington and Kiragu 2012; Raymond 2021) and Social Capital Theory (Weller 2007; Vaz et al. 2015) highlight the multidimensional aspects of educational transitions. The diversity of samples, including students, parents, teachers, and community elders, provides a holistic view of the transition process. Grade 6 students (Filmer and Schady 2008; Driessen et al. 2008; Burgess et al. 2008; Ngware et al. 2012; Mackenzie et al. 2012; Temba et al. 2013; D'Haese et al. 2016; Abuya et al. 2017; Virtanen et al. 2019; Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019; Kiuru et al. 2020; Eskelä-Haapanen et al. 2021; Iddy 2023; Jindal-Snape et al. 2023) and parents (Weller 2007; Werunga et al. 2011; Siddhu 2011; Zuilkowski et al. 2016; Abuya et al. 2017; Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019; Pesambili 2020; Raymond 2021; Eskelä-Haapanen et al. 2021; Bagnall et al. 2022; Iddy, 2023) are the most frequently studied groups, emphasizing the importance of direct stakeholders in the education system. However, the limited focus on dropouts (Temba et al. 2013; Abuya et al. 2017; Pesambili 2020; Raymond 2021; Iddy 2023), Head teachers (Werunga et al. 2011; Ngware et al. 2012; Temba et al. 2013; Iddy 2023), Chiefs (Abuya et al. 2017; Pesambili 2020), Mentors (van Rens and Groot 2023), Traditional leaders (Raymond 2021) and district education officers (Temba et al. 2013; Raymond 2021; Iddy 2023) may overlook critical insights into systemic barriers and policy-level interventions. This, in our opinion, is a key gap in the literature that needs to be addressed.

The study further highlights a conducive learning atmosphere as the most significant positive influence (Weller 2007; Knowles et al. 2011; Mackenzie et al. 2012; Warrington and Kiragu 2012; Waters et al. 2014; Vaz et al. 2015; Zuilkowski et al. 2016; Abuya et al. 2017; Joyce-Gibbons et al. 2018; Onetti et al. 2019; Jindal-Snape et al. 2023) along with the motivation from parents and support (Weller 2007; Siddhu 2011; D'Haese et al. 2016; Bagnall et al. 2022;

van Rens and Groot 2023; Kwarikunda et al. 2023; Iddy 2023). In the study conducted by Warrington and Kiragu (2012), it was argued that the quality of schooling and a supportive learning environment were significant factors. Dedicated, approachable, and encouraging teachers played a significant role in motivating the girls to remain in school. Knowles et al. (2011) contend that a supportive environment in primary school is defined by the presence of social support from peers, family, and occasionally from activity leaders or specialist teachers. This assistance contributed to the development of a conducive and motivating environment for engaging in physical activity. This aligns with the findings of Jindal-Snape et al. (2023), which acknowledge that schools that cultivate positive relationships, ensure timely communication, and encourage student involvement in extracurricular activities can have a positive effect on girls' transition experiences. In the case of parental motivation and support, Kwarikunda et al. (2023) state that parents who encourage physical activity and provide time, space, and practical assistance positively impact their daughters' adjustment and resilience during school transitions. Active parental involvement, including psychological and physical care, helps girls adapt to new environments and build positive relationships with schools (D'Haese et al. 2016; Bagnall et al. 2022). Parents who value education and have high aspirations for their daughters are more likely to support their continued education, believing it can lead to independence, well-paying jobs, and societal contributions (Siddhu 2011). Additionally, prioritizing local friendships and selecting schools that maintain these connections further aids in a smooth transition (Weller 2007; Iddy 2023).

Individual strategies, commitment, and goals related to education (Chedzoy and Burden 2005; Knowles et al. 2011; Warrington and Kiragu 2012; Joyce-Gibbons et al. 2018; Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019; Onetti et al. 2019; Iddy 2023; Kwarikunda et al. 2023; De Moor et al. 2023; Aristizábal and Barbato 2024) highlight the importance of personal initiative in addressing the factors influencing the transition of girl children from primary to secondary school. The study conducted by Warrington and Kiragu (2012) highlights the significance of the girls' own enthusiasm for and commitment to their education. They perceived education as a significant mechanism that could unlock career opportunities, foster independence, and empower them to contribute to their families and communities. Additionally, Kwarikunda et al. (2023) indicates that favorable attitudes towards school and educational activities play a significant role in enhancing girls' engagement, persistence, and academic success. Furthermore, Onetti et al. (2019) contended that a positive self-perception in adolescence correlates with improved psychological adjustment, enhanced personal competence, and a decline in behavioral issues. Promoting a constructive self-image can assist girls in managing the transition with greater efficacy. The least positive factors influencing girls transitioning from primary to secondary school identified in Table 7, such as proximity to parents (Kiuru et al. 2020), marriage prospects (Iddy, 2023), shared experiences and backgrounds (Weller 2007), teacher gender (Ngware et al. 2012), availability of teaching materials (Ngware et al. 2012), absence of bullying (Vaz et al. 2015), cultural pluralism (Vaz et al. 2015), support from certain fathers (Raymond 2021), and education as a tool for poverty alleviation (Raymond 2021), highlight areas where targeted interventions could yield significant improvements. Kiuru et al. (2020) emphasize that parental closeness and support play a critical role in enhancing school well-being and academic achievement during transitional periods. Some parents believe that educated girls have better marriage prospects, as modern men often prefer women who can contribute financially to the household (Iddy 2023). Additionally, forming relationships with peers who share similar experiences, such as going through the appeals process or having a common religious

background, fosters solidarity and support (Weller 2007). It is worth noting that the least positive factors influencing girls transitioning from primary to secondary school differ from the least negative factors that influence girls transitioning from primary to secondary school (see Table 8). For example, while a father's reluctance is categorized as the least negative factor affecting girls' transition from primary to secondary school, literature on the least positive factors only highlights support from some fathers without addressing reluctance. Bullying and teacher gender are factors that appear in both positive and negative contexts. While bullying is a negative factor often linked to body shaming, its absence is a positive factor that encourages regular school attendance and participation in extracurricular activities by girls.

Teacher gender and the availability of teaching materials are significant factors, as acknowledged by Ngware et al. (2012). Their study shows that male teachers positively impact girls' performance in certain contexts, particularly in high-achieving schools, suggesting that teacher gender influences academic outcomes. The presence of non-basic teaching materials enhances the learning environment, facilitating girls' academic success and progression to secondary education. Classrooms that embrace cultural pluralism and inclusivity, where diversity is valued, foster a sense of belonging among students (Vaz et al. 2015). Such environments promote acceptance and respect for girls in their new school settings. Schools that effectively address and prevent bullying are essential for creating a supportive environment. Girls who do not experience bullying are more likely to feel safe and supported during their transition. Fathers' support for girls' education, often stemming from an awareness of its benefits, is crucial, as they recognize that education improves family well-being and contributes to community development (Raymond 2021). In low-income communities, education is often seen as a pathway to poverty alleviation, offering children better employment opportunities and the chance to improve their socio-economic status.

Key negative factors influencing girls' transition from primary to secondary school include social and cultural challenges (Chedzoy and Burden 2005; Ngware et al. 2006; Siddhu 2011; Waters et al. 2014; Onetti et al. 2019; Pesambili 2020; Kwarikunda et al. 2023) and inadequate school facilities (Chedzoy and Burden 2005; Ngware et al. 2006; Weller 2007; Filmer and Schady 2008; Driessen et al. 2008; Warrington and Kiragu 2012; Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019; van der Kleij et al. 2023). These factors underscore the need for systemic reforms and cultural shifts. Siddhu (2011) highlights that societal attitudes toward girls' education, particularly concerning their safety and reputation during puberty, contribute to higher dropout rates. A common belief persists that higher education holds limited value for girls, as they are expected to marry and take on domestic roles. Chedzoy and Burden (2005) argue that girls place significant importance on social relationships, and difficulties in forming or maintaining friendships can negatively impact their transition experience. Waters et al. (2014) similarly highlight that girls are more concerned about social integration, forming friendships, maintaining peer relationships, and avoiding ridicule, which can affect their sense of belonging and self-esteem. Early marriage, pregnancy, and cultural practices are additional factors that often lead to girls leaving school before completing secondary education. Formal education can sometimes alienate children from their traditional culture, with higher education fostering negative perceptions of pastoralism (Pesambili 2020). Cultural factors also influence how girls express distress and seek help, often limiting their access to support (Kwarikunda et al. 2023).

Inadequate school facilities, policies, and performance, as indicated by Warrington and Kiragu (2012), along with the dispersion of schools over vast distances and the absence of fundamental amenities, hinder girls' regular attendance and full educational advancement.

Moreover, girls residing at longer distances from secondary schools encounter additional challenges, including prolonged trip durations and safety concerns, which may deter them from consistent school attendance (Filmer and Schady 2008). Students in metropolitan areas were observed to obtain marginally inferior educational recommendations on average, due to the diminished academic performance of students in these areas. Females in major metropolitan regions may be influenced by this tendency. Ngware et al. (2006) also recognized that the restricted availability of secondary schools, particularly in rural regions, can impede girls' access to education.

The results from the study also indicate that gender bias (Ngware et al. 2006; Filmer and Schady 2008; Siddhu 2011; Warrington and Kiragu 2012; Zuilkowski et al. 2016; Virtanen et al. 2019; Onetti et al. 2019; Raymond 2021; Lorijn et al. 2024), and bullying and body shaming (Chedzoy and Burden 2005; Weller 2007; Waters et al. 2014; Vaz et al. 2015; Joyce-Gibbons et al. 2018; Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019; Jindal-Snape et al. 2023) highlight persistent societal issues that hinder progress. These researchers indicate that societal and cultural biases frequently favor boys' education, resulting in diminished transition rates for girls (Siddhu 2011). This bias is intensified by economic hardship and longstanding forms of disadvantage. Further confirms that in a strongly patriarchal culture, fathers often did not value education for their daughters, viewing it as an economic cost with no direct benefit to the family. According to Filmer and Schady (2008) and Zuilkowski et al. (2016), girls encounter challenges that elevate their risk of dropping out, including significant household responsibilities, early marriage, and pregnancy. These factors hinder their capacity to attend school and fulfill their educational targets. This aligns with the findings from Virtanen et al. (2019), which show that girls may encounter distinct societal pressures and expectations that can intensify stress and impact their self-esteem during this transitional phase. Similarly, Ngware et al. (2006) confirm that cultural biases and discrimination in the education of girls may negatively influence their transition to secondary school.

The results further indicate that concerns regarding bullying and body shaming, as highlighted in studies (Chedzoy and Burden 2005; Weller 2007; Jindal-Snape and Cantali 2019), are prevalent issues that may negatively influence the transition experience for girls navigating a new school environment. A considerable number of girls have voiced concerns regarding the possibility of being bullied by older students. This concern can induce anxiety and negatively influence their transition experience. The worry surrounding bullying underscores the importance of girls cultivating a strong network of friendships. Individuals lacking strong friendships may face increased susceptibility to bullying, which can adversely affect their transition. Additionally, it has been noted that girls who indicate experiences of bullying during primary school tend to have lower belonging scores (Waters et al. 2014; Vaz et al. 2015). The effects of bullying can profoundly influence emotional well-being and feelings of security, complicating the transition to secondary school. Even though bullying decreases as a girl enters secondary school, the study from Jindal-Snape et al. (2023) contends that bullying experiences can still have a detrimental effect on her transition.

Economic considerations (Filmer and Schady 2008; Joyce-Gibbons et al. 2018; Pesambili 2020; Raymond 2021; Iddy 2023) and female genital mutilation and early marriage (Filmer and Schady 2008; Werunga et al. 2011; Warrington and Kiragu 2012; Joyce-Gibbons et al. 2018; Pesambili 2020; Raymond 2021; Iddy 2023) further reflect the intersection of poverty and cultural norms in limiting educational opportunities for girls. According to Pesambili (2020), economic challenges, such as the inability to pay school fees, can prevent girls from continuing

their education. Girls are viewed as important assets for generating wealth through marriage. Educating girls is seen as a poor investment since they are expected to marry and move to a different household, taking the benefits with them. For Filmer and Schady (2008) and Raymond (2021), families in poverty may prioritize immediate economic needs over long-term educational benefits. Girls may be required to work to contribute to the household income, which can prevent them from attending school. In families with limited resources, boys are often prioritized for education because they are seen as future heads of families who will provide for their parents (Iddy 2023). Girls, on the other hand, are perceived as temporary members of the family who will marry and benefit from their husbands' families (Joyce-Gibbons et al. 2018).

The results from the study also highlight that female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage are widespread practices that significantly hinder girls' education. Warrington and Kiragu (2012) state that socio-cultural practices, such as FGM, act as major barriers to education among the Maasai pastoralist community in Tanzania. FGM is closely associated with early marriage, as girls who undergo the procedure are often deemed ready for marriage, leading to their withdrawal from school. This cultural expectation deprioritizes girls' education, preventing many from transitioning from primary to secondary school as they are expected to fulfill traditional roles as wives and mothers. Raymond (2021) similarly states that FGM often precedes early marriage, marking a girl's readiness for marital responsibilities. Once married, girls face domestic duties, childbearing, and family pressures, which further obstruct their educational pursuits. In communities where FGM and early marriage are common, girls' education is often viewed as economically unviable, with families prioritizing boys' education under the belief that girls will marry into other families, rendering investment in their education a loss. FGM perpetuates cultural norms that undervalue girls' education, with girls often seen as having limited roles beyond marriage. Some parents marry off their daughters at a young age to prevent them from becoming "enlightened" and rejecting arranged marriages (Werunga et al. 2011; Pesambili 2020; Raymond 2021). Early pregnancy further exacerbates dropout rates, as pregnant girls are frequently expelled or suspended from school. The lack of sex education and awareness compounds this issue. Concerns about early pregnancy or marriage also lead some parents to avoid enrolling their daughters in school, particularly when schools are located far from their homes.

The least negative factors influencing the transition of girls from primary to secondary school, including poor academic performance (Zuilkowski et al. 2016) and teacher gender (Ngware et al. 2012), indicate areas that require further study to comprehend their implications. This is clear as Zuilkowski et al. (2016) indicate that a lower baseline performance in literacy and numeracy assessments serves as a significant predictor of dropout rates. Students facing academic challenges often experience a decline in their engagement with school, which can lead to higher dropout rates. In the context of bottom-performing schools, evidence suggests that instruction from a male teacher may exacerbate the gender gap in academic achievement, benefiting boys. This shows that the gender of teachers may occasionally have an adverse effect on the academic achievements of girls.

The findings also highlight the need for further research on the transition of girls from primary to secondary school, emphasizing the importance of qualitative studies to capture detailed narratives and their lived experiences. The reviewed studies acknowledge that the increasing prevalence of quantitative research designs often overlooks this aspect. Consequently, acknowledging the unique narratives and situational obstacles experienced by these girls is essential for understanding the emotional, social, and cultural impediments encountered during

their transitional phase. There is also a need for research in this area to focus on marginalized groups such as traditional leaders, dropouts, and district educational officers, since their perspective is also often underrepresented in the current literature. Their valuable insight into the barriers and policy-level interventions must not be overlooked. Finally, the impact of poor academic performance and teacher gender on the girls' transition experiences should be given the needed attention since the findings indicate that these factors are very significant but currently underexplored.

4.1 Theoretical and practical implications

The study highlights several theoretical and practical implications for improving the transition of girls from primary to secondary school. Theoretically, it underscores the relevance of Human Capital Theory, Sen's Capability Approach, and Social Capital Theory in understanding the economic, multidimensional, and relational aspects of educational transitions. It also emphasizes the need for frameworks addressing cultural norms, biases, and societal expectations that hinder girls' education. Practically, the findings suggest policy-level interventions to improve school infrastructure, reduce economic barriers, and ensure access to secondary education. Parental and community engagement is crucial for motivating girls and shifting cultural attitudes toward valuing their education. Teacher training programs should focus on fostering inclusive environments and addressing gender biases, while anti-bullying initiatives can enhance emotional well-being and belonging. Additionally, combating harmful practices like female genital mutilation and early marriage, providing economic support such as scholarships and sanitary materials, and focusing on marginalized groups can further facilitate smooth transitions. These implications call for a multidimensional approach combining theoretical insights and actionable strategies to address systemic barriers effectively.

5. Conclusion

The study conducted a systematic review analysis of the factors influencing the transition of girls from primary to secondary school, emphasizing both positive and negative determinants. It emphasizes the importance of supportive learning environments, parental motivation, individual commitment, and systemic reforms to address cultural and economic barriers. However, the study has limitations, including a predominance of quantitative research designs, which may overlook in-depth narratives and lived experiences crucial for understanding the challenges faced by girls. Additionally, the limited focus on marginalized groups such as dropouts, traditional leaders, and district education officers restricts insights into systemic barriers and policy-level interventions. Future research will prioritize qualitative approaches to exploring personal experiences and expand the scope to include underrepresented stakeholders. Addressing gaps in areas such as teacher gender, poor academic performance, and the impact of cultural practices will further be explored to provide a more holistic understanding of the transition process.

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