code | Rewriting the story for global literacy

Context Matters
— RESEARCH GRANTS —

Investigating Girls' Literacy Practices In and Out of School in Rural Tanzania

Lead Researcher: Daniel Sidney Fussy: Mkwawa University College of Education, Iringa, Tanzania *daniel.fussy@muce.ac.tz*

Co-Researcher: Hassan Iddy Hassan: Mkwawa University College of Education, Iringa, Tanzania hassan.iddy@muce.ac.tz, *iddhassani@yahoo.com*

Research Dates: 2019-2020

Abstract

Evidence from research demonstrates the importance of language and literacy learning for the empowerment of women and girls. This is achieved when emphasis is placed not only on literacy as the ability to read, write and decode meaning, but also on literacy practices that have the potential to empower girls. Guided by the Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST), which insists on culturally, respectful and safe research with Indigenous people, this study sought to generate new knowledge that will lead to initiatives that improve literacy practices for girls in and out of school in rural Tanzania. The research took place in Choma village in the Igunga District of Tabora region, Tanzania. Participants for this research were in-school girls, out-of-school girls, teachers, one head teacher, a Ward Education Officer, parents, and religious, traditional and village leaders. The project adopted a qualitative research approach to generate and analyse data. The findings show that both in- and out-of-school girls had access to a variety of print materials and used print more than any other literacy materials. Except for storytelling, drama and songs, in- and out-of-school girls never reported engaging with traditional literacy materials like poems, folklore, proverbs and metaphors, music, dance, legends, myths, or rituals. This suggests that traditional literacy practices are under-utilized resources in the community, which could be used to strengthen girls' literacy learning. This study provides the following recommendations. First, support teachers through workshops to make more use of a greater variety of reading materials available to girls in their teaching, both print and digital. Second, provide resources and learning opportunities for parents that support them to increase the availability of a variety of literacy tools (both traditional and modern) at home and engage their children in the use of such resources. Third, work with religious and local leaders to promote girls' education and literacy practices in particular through activities that empower these individuals to conduct community awareness campaigns locally. Because these leaders are respected in the village, their involvement can help reduce negative attitudes among community members about girls' education.

Key Words: literacy, Indigenous Standpoint Theory, girls' education, literacy practices, subject clubs

Table of Contents

Introduction

In the field of education, girls and women lag behind worldwide. Based on the available literacy data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), there were 750 million illiterates in the world in 2016: two-thirds were women (UIS, 2017a), and there was no notable change in the statistics of the global illiterate population in 2019 (UNESCO, 2021). The situation is particularly alarming in sub-Saharan Africa. Of all the global illiterate population, 27% resided in sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, according to UIS estimates, more than 617 million children and adolescents are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics (UIS, 2017b). The situation is also worse in sub-Saharan Africa. UNESCO data show that more than 202 million children and adolescents who are not reaching minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics reside in sub-Saharan Africa. This includes more than 138 million children (70 million girls and 68 million boys) of primary school level and 63 million children (31 million girls and 32 million boys) of lower secondary school level (UIS, 2017b).

Tanzania is one of the sub-Saharan countries with lower adult literacy rate for females (73.3%) than males (83.4%). The data further reveals that literacy rates are higher in urban areas (92.3%) than in rural areas (71%). In both urban and rural locations, the literacy rate for females is lower than that of males. In urban areas, the literacy rate for females is 89.8% compared to 95% for males, while in rural areas the literacy rate for females is 65.1% compared to 77.6% for males (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2015). This data indicates disparity in education in favour of males. The national Kiswahili EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) in Tanzania was administered in 2016 to assess the students' progress toward meeting the national reading benchmarks established in 2014. The study found that only 5.3% of the students met the benchmarks. The percentage of girls who can read at the expected level of proficiency was 6.3(RTI International, 2016). This suggests that although the literacy rate for females stood at 73.3% nationally, most girl students still do not read and write at the required grade level.

Nevertheless, overall, Tanzania has made considerable efforts through established educational programmes and reforms to increase the enrolment of children in both primary and secondary schools. Although the current available enrolment data in Ordinary Level secondary schools indicates more female enrolment than male (904,172 females and 863,718

males), not all enrolled girls complete their studies, or they repeat their grades, while the majority of those who manage to complete their secondary education achieve lower results in their final examinations compared to boys (URT, 2020a). For example, a total of 48,478 girls dropped out of their Ordinary Level secondary schools in 2020, compared to 50,509 boys who dropped out of secondary education. Out of 48,478 girls who dropped: 5,274 dropped out because they conceived, 41,943because of truancy, 655 because of indiscipline, while 606girls dropped due to their deaths (URT, 2020a). The percentage of girls' dropout stood at 49% while that of boys was 51%. Similarly, 16,937 (53.5%) girls repeated their secondary school grades in 2020as compared to 14,721 (46.5%) boys (URT, 2020a). Additionally, the available data indicates that girls' performance in the 2018 and 2019 national Form IV examination results was lower than that of boys in all subjects except in Kiswahili (URT, 2020a).

Moreover, many challenges constrain girls in Tanzania in their pursuit of secondary education. Research studies reveal many factors within and outside the school setting that limits girls' educational opportunity in Tanzania, including: sexual abuse and violence from both teachers and male students towards girls (Iddy, 2018; Thomas & Rugambwa, 2013); verbal abuse by male teachers towards girls (Iddy, 2018); discriminatory gender attitudes of male teachers towards girls (Thomas & Rugambwa, 2013); poverty (Iddy, 2018; Raymond, 2014); long distances from home to school (Iddy, 2018); long distances from home to the sources of drinking water (Levison, DeGraff & Dungumaro, 2018); shortages of dormitories (Iddy, 2018); shortage of toilet facilities, running water and other sanitary facilities at schools (Iddy, 2018; Sommer, 2013; 2010); cultural traditions and beliefs (Iddy, 2018; Mollel & Chong, 2017); domestic chores (Iddy, 2018); shortages of role models in schools and in the community (Iddy, 2018; Mbepera, 2015); and patriarchal systems in communities (Iddy, 2021a; 2021b; 2018; Raymond, 2014).

Thus, despite considerable progress, it is evident that many challenges continue to impact girls' school enrolment, participation, and performance. Realising the existing challenges for girls globally, in 2015 the international community, via the United Nations, developed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); three of them focus on education and on eliminating gender inequality: Goal 4 aims at 'ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', Goal 5 insists on 'achieving gender equality

and empowerment of all girls and women', and Goal 10 calls for 'reducing inequalities within and among countries' (UN, 2016).

Evidence from research demonstrates the importance of language and literacy learning for the empowerment of women and girls (Thompson, 2017). This is achieved when emphasis is placed not only on literacy as the ability to read, write and decode meaning, but also on literacy practices that have the potential to empower girls (Thompson, 2017; Wedin, 2004). Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000) and Barton (2001) define literacy practices as the general cultural ways of utilising written language which people draw upon in their lives. Street (2003) defines **literacy practices** as the 'broader cultural conception of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts (p.79).

For the purpose of this study, we expand the definition of literacy practices to include those activities not typically accepted as reading and writing in cultural settings. We use the term **literacy practices** to refer to all literate activities, strategies, and ways (mediated by written texts and spoken language/talk) that help people to access, create, understand, interpret, analyse, synthesise, critique and communicate meanings in social settings. These literacy practices can be found in the homes, schools or the general community environment (Barton, 2001) and need to be empowering so that girls within a community can overcome their challenges.

In Tanzania, no study has been conducted to investigate the relationship between language and literacy learning and girls' empowerment. The bulk of research on this topic originates in developed countries (Thompson, 2017). Nevertheless, an in-depth literature review for this proposed study was conducted and discovered literature from Tanzania on literacy that studied the gender representations in textbooks (Gwajima, 2011); predictors of reading and writing ability (Ngorosho, 2011; 2010); reading and writing difficulties among students (Alcock & Ngorosho, 2003; Mmasa &Anney, 2016); the debate on the medium of instruction in secondary schools (Brock-Utne, 2007a; 2007b); literacy interventions (Kumburu, 2011); health literacy practices (Higgins, 2014); and the relationship between language, literacy, and power (Wedin, 2006; 2004). There is, however, a dearth of studies that have empirically

investigated girls' literacy practices[1]and their relationship to girls' empowerment in Tanzania. This motivated the pursuit of this research in rural Tanzania, exploring different literacy practices in- and out-of school in order to generate new knowledge that will lead to initiatives that empower girls through literacy.

Overall Objective

The main purpose of the research project was to develop new knowledge that will lead to initiatives that improve literacy practices in and out of school in order to empower girls in rural Tanzania.

To address this objective, the study focused on the following:

1. To examine literacy practices present in homes, schools and communities, and to assess whether or not such practices promote girls' empowerment.
2. To examine the kinds of support provided by families, schools and communities to encourage girls' literacy practices.
3. To establish major challenges facing families, schools and communities in supporting girls' literacy practices.
4. To determine possibilities for improving literacy practices to promote girls' empowerment.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the investigation:

i. What are the literacy practices present in homes, schools and communities, and how do they promote girls' empowerment?
ii. How do families, schools and communities support girls' literacy practices?
iii. What are the challenges facing families, schools, and communities in supporting girls' literacy practices?
iv. How can literacy practices be improved to promote girls' empowerment?

---

[1]This paper investigated literacy practices conducted in Swahili, English, and Sukuma language. In Tanzania, Kiswahili is used as the official medium of communication and unification language for over 125 tribes present in different parts of the country who also speak their mother tongues. For example, the Sukuma people speak 'Sukuma' as their first language; yet, they also speak Kiswahili as the second language and national language. English is the second official language used in schools and international offices. Kiswahili is used as the official medium of instruction at pre-primary and primary education levels; except for private pre-primary and primary schools which use English as the medium of instruction. Moreover, English is used as the medium of instruction in secondary education and tertiary/higher education. Secondary education in Tanzania consists of two successive cycles: ordinary level secondary education (O-Level) – runs for four years and advanced level secondary education (A-Level) – runs for two years.

Significance and Contribution of the Study

The findings from this study contribute to the understanding of literacy practices that are critical to girls' empowerment in rural Tanzania. Clearly, there have been a number of studies in Tanzania on literacy, especially in relation to gender representation in texts, predictors of reading and writing, reading and writing errors, literacy interventions, health literacy practices, and the relationship between language, literacy and power. Yet, there remains a research gap in the area of girls' literacy and empowerment. Therefore, this study is an attempt to contribute to that knowledge gap. Additionally, the Landscape Review of Gender and Literacy Research in African Contexts (Thompson, 2017) revealed a paucity of research on gender and literacy in Africa and recommended eight areas for further research in the area of gender and literacy in Africa. As such, this project contributes to the recommended Research Area 2, which is about understanding the literacy practices of girls and boys in school and beyond.

This study also makes a methodological contribution to the Education field. The study was guided by Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST), which insists on culturally respectful and safe research with Indigenous people, which is a new approach in Tanzania. Despite the presence of many Indigenous people in Tanzania, there has been only one study (Iddy, 2018) that used IST to study Indigenous people though this approach is widely used in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This study represents an opportunity to test the relevance and efficacy of this approach in an African context.

Indigenous people in this study refer to those who are part of a tribe (native to a specific region) that has a unique or distinct language, culture and beliefs. This study concentrated on examining girls' literacy practices in the Sukuma Tribe in relation to their secondary education. The Sukuma are a Bantus peaking people covering five administrative regions in Tanzania: Mwanza, Geita, Simiyu, Shinyanga, Tabora. They are the holders of the Sukuma language and they have their own cultural values, philosophy and beliefs, contrary to other ethnic groups in the country. They are the largest ethnic group in the country. Tradition and indigenous knowledge in the traditional Sukuma society are passed on to successive generations by using various genres of oral literacy practices, such as listening to and singing songs in rituals, ceremonies, work, childbirth, and death; listening to and telling folktales, myths, stories, and legends; dances; riddles; proverbs; poems; prayers; puns etc. Such oral

literacy practices are used to educate, instruct, warn, soothe, inculcate positive values, entertain, praise, and encourage members of the society (Mirambo, 2004).

Furthermore, the findings from this study can be useful for governmental institutions responsible for education, as well as for policy makers, parents, educators, teachers, and other stakeholders in establishing, implementing, supporting, and strengthening literacy practices that can contribute to girls' empowerment in Tanzania. This information is especially important given the increased attention to the issue of girls' empowerment and how this supports many national policy objectives including improved health of families, a stronger civil society, and economic growth for all Tanzanians.

Methodology

Study Location

This project was undertaken in Choma village[2] which lies in the Igunga District of the Tabora region, Tanzania (see **Figure 1**). According to the available data, Tabora is the region with the lowest adult literacy rate in the country (59%) (URT, 2015). Moreover, according to URT (2020a), Tabora region has the highest percentage of student whodropout of school (8.9% of total enrolment) followed by Simiyu region (8.4%). Overall, the highest percentage of dropout in the country is observed in the Igunga District (16.2%). Girls make up the largest population of students who drop out of school. The major reason for dropouts is truancy (91.6%) and pregnancy (5.5%).

Choma village was purposively selected based on the poor participation and performance of girls in school relative to boys. The village has two primary schools and one secondary school. This secondary school was the focus of our study. As of December 2020, records indicate that the secondary school had a total number of 520 students (Form I to IV), of which 295 girls were. Although enrolment records indicate there are more girls, the major challenge is to keep these girls in school. Many of the enrolled girls never finished their

---

[2]According to the 2020 data available at the village government office, 5,033 people (2,568 females and 2,465 males) were living in Choma village at the time of the study. Although the Sukuma are the native people to this village, it is possible to find people from other ethnic groups of Tanzania. The major ethnic groups being the Chaga, Nyamwezi, Nyaturu, and Nyiramba. These are mainly government employees, business people, and others who have chosen to settle in the village. The Sukuma region is a mixed farming economy; the major crops grown in the village include rice, maize, millet, sorghum, sweet potatoes, and cassava. The Sukuma are also pastoralists. They keep cows, donkeys, goats, and sheep.

studies, while the majority of those who do stay until graduation fail to obtain satisfactory results in their exams, compared to boys. For example, the 2019 final national Form IV examination results, which were released in January 2020 (URT, 2020b), indicate that there were 0 girls and 3 boys in Division I and II. In Division III, there were 2 girls and 10 boys. In Division IV, there were 28 girls and 30 boys. In Division 0, there were 14 girls and 10 boys. According to the grading of national examination results, Division 1 indicates the highest performance while Division IV indicates the lowest performance, and Division 0 is a failure. Given the frequency of low performance experienced by girls as compared to boys in this school, only 21 girls have been selected to join the Advanced Level secondary education (Form V-VI), compared to 43 boys since 2006 when the Choma secondary school was established.
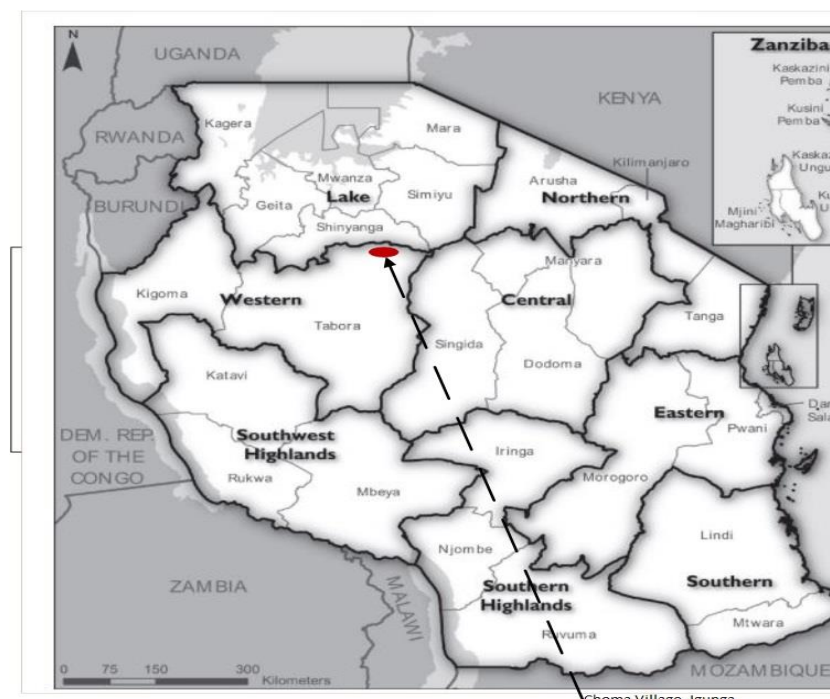
Figure 1: A map of Tanzania showing the research site

Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST)

The selection of this community was further influenced by the Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) adopted for the current study's methodological design. IST emphasises the view that only Indigenous people, non-Indigenous people in partnership with Indigenous researchers, and non-Indigenous people who understand the culture and have developed trustful relationships with the Indigenous community possess the right to conduct research with and

about Indigenous research (Iddy, 2020). This is because a non-Indigenous researcher (who has not developed trustful relationships with the indigenous community) has not been socialised in the Indigenous community and therefore possesses little or no experience of Indigenous life, thus he/she cannot understand the complexities of the community at the same level of empathy as an Indigenous researcher (Foley, 2003, Iddy, 2020). In this study, one of the researchers was indigenous to the community. He was born, raised and attended a local primary school in Choma village. He shares the same culture as the community and holds prior knowledge, understanding and experiences of the community. This familiarity of the community helped the researchers to access knowledge and information which may be inaccessible to someone who is an outsider.

IST calls for the active participation of Indigenous communities at various levels of the research planning, which required observing specific ethical principles and practices beyond just obtaining research permits from relevant authorities. Such principles and practices "embed and reflect Indigenous ways of being or understanding social reality (ontology), ways of knowing (epistemology) and ways of doing culturally responsive and respectful research (axiology)" (Iddy, 2020, p. 3).

Iddy (2020) recommends nine ethical protocols for conducting culturally, respectful and safe research with the Sukuma people in Tanzania, such as: a collaborative approach; reciprocity; respect; deep listening; equality; responsibility and accountability; survival and protection; face-to-face interaction and observance of rules and regulations. These ethical principles and practices were followed to conduct culturally respectful and safe research with the Sukuma people. As part of the IST, it was crucial to have a project steering committee, comprised of local elders, religious leaders and village leaders to participate in the design of the project, the data collection, and the dissemination of the results. There were six members: two religious leaders, one from each of the Muslim and Christian sects, one village chairperson, one traditional leader and two elders. The steering committee helped the research team to identify a pool of potential research participants, while at the end of the day the decision of whom to invite/recruit rested within the researchers. The research team was also guided by the steering committee particularly with regards to traditional values to follow when interacting with research participants in Choma village during fieldwork.

In collaboration with the steering committee, research participants were identified and voluntarily recruited using purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. Sixteen participants were involved in the study. The list of research participants involved in this project includes four in-schoolgirls, one out-of-school girl (out of the originally planned two), three parents (out of the originally planned four), two religious leaders (one each from the Muslim and Christian communities), one traditional leader, one village leader, two teachers, one head teacher, and one Ward Education Officer.

A research permit to undertake the study was obtained from relevant authorities in Tanzania, as required by the guidelines for ethical clearance procedures. Overall, the project adopted a qualitative research approach to explore in detail and to generate rich data on different literacy practices found in and out of school. Data were mainly collected using interviews with the participants. Non-participant observation was also used to supplement data collected through interviews. During observation, the researchers looked at the literacy environment in homes, school and community as well as the presence of any literacy artefacts (e.g., books, magazines, posters) supporting the development of literacy among girls. All materials and research tools were presented to the participants in the Kiswahili language, the language spoken by many Tanzanians. When describing the study for participants, researchers had the opportunity to build rapport through informal conversation and provided the participants with an information statement that described the goals of the study. The rapport and data collection went hand in hand. Researchers spent 20 minutes in informal conversation with the participants, which contributed to building trust. Researchers ensured that the participants had the chance to ask any questions which they found relevant for the study. Participants asked about the purpose of the study, and how they would benefit from it, noting they have observed many studies conducted in their community that have not led to tangible change. The researchers responded to these questions, acknowledging the limitations of the study and emphasizing the plans to include participants among those to whom the findings would be disseminated, besides dissemination within the scholarly community.

Data were analysed by means of qualitative methods. In general, the data analysis process followed five stages as suggested by Creswell (2013), including: preparing and organising data for analysis; carefully reading the data and breaking them into parts; describing and analysing data by themes through coding; interpretation of the data; and representing the data. In the first step, researchers prepared data through translation of the data from Kiswahili to

English and checked whether the translation process preserved the original and intended meaning. The reading and re-reading of data for identifying potential themes and sub-themes followed. Finally, data were arranged into their relevant themes; the description and interpretation of the data under individual themes was completed, followed by compilation in a report. In reporting the findings, especially when using direct quotes, the participants' identities were concealed to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. The authors have used pseudonyms for all participants.

Findings

The presentation of the findings is organized under four sections guided by the study's four research questions: girls' literacy practices, support towards encouraging girls' literacy practices, challenges towards supporting girls' literacy practices, and opportunities for improving girls' literacy practices. A summary of key findings on literacy practices in and out of school as identified by the participants is documented in **Table 1**.

1. Girls' Literacy Practices

This section presents and analyses the findings related to the first research question: **What are the literacy practices present in homes, schools and communities, and how do they promote girls' empowerment?** The presentation and analysis of the findings is organized into three sub-sections: girls' literacy practices present in homes; girls' literacy practices in schools; and girls' literacy practices in the community.

Table 1: Summary of the findings on girls' literacy practices in and out of school

Key Issue	Context			Capacity to promote girls' empowerment
	Homes	**School**	**Community**	
Literacy practices available for girls	• Storytelling • Listening to the radio • Watching television • Reading print materials (magazines, religious books and textbooks) • Paraphrasing • Summarizing	• Reading print materials (journals, magazines, books, dramas, novels) • Debates • Morning speeches • Subject clubs • Paraphrasing • Summarizing • Sports and	• Reading print materials (posters in hospitals and in streets) • Singing and preaching in religious sermons • Community awareness seminars and workshops	• Yes, school girls are encouraged to participate in debates, increases confidence and literacy skills • Print literacy materials are more encouraged than digital literacy

		games		materials and traditional literacy materials
Support for encouraging girls' literacy practices	• Providing basic school supplies, e.g., stationery and school uniforms • Monitoring academic progress • Availing time to study	• Academic advising • Supplying through loan some literacy materials to read beyond classroom • Supervising group reading and discussions	• Ad hoc supported, out of school girls cannot access a library, a bookstore or other source for novels, plays etc.	• Yes, school girls are encouraged to participate in debates, increases confidence and literacy skills • Print and modern literacy practices are more encouraged than digital literacy and traditional literacy practices
Challenges to supporting girls' literacy practices	• Patriarchal attitudes • Household chores • Uncaring parents • Limited literacy resources	• Language of instruction • Biased teachers • Girls' negative attitude towards education • A shortage of teaching and learning materials • Absence of a school library	• Patriarchal attitudes • Household chores • Uncaring parents • Absence of a community library	• Not supported
Opportunities for improving girls' literacy practices	• Cultivating a positive attitude towards girls' education • Reducing household chores • Increasing availability of resources for literacy development	• Cultivating a positive attitude towards girls' education • Reducing household chores • Increasing availability of resources for literacy development	• Cultivating a positive attitude towards girls' education • Reducing household chores • Increasing availability of resources for literacy development	• Supported - homes, school, and the community play an integral role in creating environments and opportunities that promote literacy acquisition for girls.

Girls engage in literacy practices at home through storytelling with their parents or guardians, listening to the radio, watching television, and reading magazines, religious books and textbooks. The level of engagement in literacy practices varied from one family to another, as not all families engage in all four mentioned literacy practices. A Christian religious leader highlighted the literary practices they engage in within their family:

> *When we are at home in the evening prayer, I do appoint one girl to read the verses in the Bible and then explain them in detail. This helps her build up courage to speak in public but also gives her an understanding of her God. Other activities include watching TV, listening to the radio, and singing in the choir* (Emmanuel).

Parents encourage and allow their daughters to read texts in books and religious books, and eventually invite them to interpret and present their own understanding of the content, a literacy practice known as paraphrasing. The ability of a girl to paraphrase (to express what somebody else has spoken or written using one's own words) text written by another person is a clear indication that the girl understands the meaning of the text. Parents and girls perceived such reading of books including religious books at home to contribute to empowering girls by increasing their self-confidence and ability to speak publicly and develop other literacy skills. This self-confidence and public speaking skills in turn can empower girls to speak out about their problems and concerns, and potentially also, to advocate for change in response to those problems.

Patrina (an in-school girl) mentioned that the literacy practices at home help her to develop her ability to read, write, speak, and listen:

> *The home literacy activities help me develop my ability to read, write, speak and listen.*

The above verbatim statement by Patrina points to another important literacy practice at home known as summarizing or summarization. Summarizing text helps girls make meaning of what is read, taking a large selection of text and rewriting only the important points. As researchers, we had the opportunity to review girls' summaries of materials by other authors, such as books, stories, and teachers' notes, with these summaries being another good

indication that the girl understands the text. Such practices may in turn contribute to higher performance in schools.

Amina, an in-school girl, also explained how she developed literacy skills through various literacy practices:

> *At home, I watch TV. When I watch, I develop listening skills. Also, on TV there are broadcast programs teaching various secondary school subjects, so I get instructed through those programs. But also, when I watch those episodes I often write some notes hence developing writing skills.*

Azza, an out-of-school girl, expanded on the different literacy practices she engaged with at home:

> *Here at home, we have several things to broaden my understanding, among which are reading books, listening to the radio and watching television. On TV, I can also learn entrepreneurship programs.*

Through reading books, listening to the radio, and watching television, in-school girls and out-of-school girls get the opportunity to read about various issues, and listen to and watch various programs including those related to school content (for those girls in school) and entrepreneurial content (for those girls who are out of school), hence increasing their knowledge and confidence in engaging with these topics.

b. Girls' literacy practices present at school

Girls engage in literacy practices at school through reading journals, magazines, books, dramas, novels, debates, morning speeches, subject clubs as well as sports and games. George (Ward Education Officer) explained that the school in question conducts a debate every Thursday at 4:00p.m. The debate is conducted in English, which is the language of instruction in Tanzania's secondary schools and consists of proposers and opposers of the motion. The debate is intended to build the communication skills of the students, including girls.

Ester, an in- school girl, explained debate and the subject club further. While debates can consist of a general motion or topic, subject clubs are designed to discuss a specific subject topic:

> *About the debate and the subject club, we only do them once a week which is Thursday, and it goes in the following order: If this week we have a debate, then next Thursday we will have a 'subject club'. In debate, there is a motion or topic issued and then there are two groups, opposers and proposers, then we discuss the motion. As for the subject club, there is a topic about a particular subject then we discuss it.*

Patrina, an in-school girl, described the morning speech, explaining that it takes place every morning. Students are selected to give a speech to the other students who are assembled on the school ground:

> *Yes, there is a morning speech where any student is chosen to go in front and talk about anything or topic of his/her interest.*

In response to how these activities could empower girls, teachers and students explained that debates and morning speeches build a girl's confidence, increase awareness of issues, and develop time management and interactive skills. Kelvin, a teacher, highlighted that:

> *Some girls can participate as chairpersons of the debate and others are given the opportunity to speak in front of their peers, thus the act of a girl going there and giving her opinion already builds her confidence.*

Patrina, an in-school girl, also explained how morning speeches help her develop vocabulary and become a fluent speaker, contributing to her learning:

> *For example, morning speech helps me to become fluent in the language. The more I speak English at school the more I will acquire new vocabulary. If I know the language well, I can correctly answer the questions I have been given and that helps me have good grades in my studies.*

In addition to speaking activities, there are also reading activities in which girls engage at school. Girl students explained that they read various books, dramas and novels. They were also reading magazines such as *Fema Magazine*.

Fema Magazine contains information relevant for academic learning and for developing self-awareness in girls including sexual and reproductive health, building life skills, engaging in civil society, and entrepreneurship. One particular topic in one issue related to defending themselves when encountering threats or dangers such as rape, stalking, or unethical people in the community.

Figure 2: Sample of *Fema* magazines read by girls to promote their literacy skills

For instance, Ester explains:

> *Here at school, I read various journals such as Fema magazine. In the Fema magazine, there are things that are related to class lessons, so we read and gain knowledge.*

David, the head of school, emphasized the relevance of *Fema Magazine* and similar magazines being available in school. His views are that they help to raise confidence and awareness to girl student when they read them:

> *Girls in our society is one of the vulnerable groups in case of raping, and in case of anything else, so when they read for example FEMA magazine, they read a lot of things over there. They become educated on what steps they should take if it happens that the individual has been raped or detecting signs of becoming the next rape victim. They learn something over there, by that they become in position to escape these problems.*

When it comes to writing, in-school girls explained that when they read books they normally prepare a summary of what they have read, which helps them to develop writing ability. Patrina, an in-school girl, comments on the empowering aspect of reading:

> *First, I read various textbooks and narrative stories. Also, when I finish reading, I take a summary of what I was reading; in so doing I develop my writing skills.*

David, a head of school, described sport and games as another avenue to build literacy practices at school. Girls and other students participate in talent shows, repeating words,

speed reading, and singing cultural and national songs. These promote cooperation among students, encourage communication and engagement with their cultural identity:

In talent shows, the individual will appear in the audience, and they can show their talents. Some others are good at animating the voices of other leaders, some are able to manipulate, to read something in a hurry. Also, we have singing and dancing, some students sing in Kiswahili and sometimes they sing in English and sometimes they sing national songs, also cultural songs, they sing in Sukuma. These encourage communication and cooperation between themselves.

c. Girls' literacy practices present in the community

Girls engage in literacy practices in the community through preaching and singing in religious sermons, reading posters in hospitals, and participating in community awareness seminars and workshops.

Mariam, an in-school girl, explained that there are different literacy activities involved when girls attend church sermons including preaching, singing, writing and reciting Bible verses, and listening to religious leaders or others preaching during the church service:

There are activities like preaching that can promote one's ability to listen. To improve our reading skills, we can read the Bible scriptures, and to improve our writing, we can take notes on the word of God recited and preached on Sunday service.

Charles, a parent, also expressed how religious services expose girls to information and knowledge:

In a society there is a combination of many different information that she will be getting for example when she goes to church to pray, there are good teachings from the priests they receive and expand their knowledge.

Some participants expressed the view that religious teachings expand girls' knowledge on reading, writing, listening and reciting verses and scriptures and increase girls' confidence and good manners. Abdallah, an Islamic religious leader, substantiated this function of religious books, and further pointed to religious ceremonies (*Maulid*) and posters that teach how to pray and encourage girls to sing and read in front of other believers.

Posters displayed in public places such as hospitals, roads and markets are also perceived to provide an avenue for girls to practice and develop literacy. According to Emmanuel, a Christian religious leader:

> *In society, a girl may find some posters that provide various education. For example, right now due to eruption of Corona, there are many posters on the street or in the hospital that focus on how to protect yourself from corona virus, or how to use contraceptives. All these can raise awareness to the girl child.*

Azza, an out-of-school girl, also brought up the posters:

> *You may come across various posters, such as HIV/AIDS, unprotected sex. Then I can learn something from the posters.*

In addition, girls participate in community awareness seminars and workshops run by various organisations and stakeholders including the charity World Vision, health workers and community development activists. Through listening to keynote speakers or facilitators and taking part in the discussions, and sometimes being selected to speak on one's own life experiences, girls get the chance to practise different literacy skills. According to Ester, an in-school girl, girls become educated on different topics related to health, self-awareness and the importance of hard work:

> *Through meetings and seminars, mobilizers call girls, and they educate them about the importance of education and ways to succeed in our studies.*

A similar perspective on the empowerment role and literacy benefits of seminars was shared by Azza, another out-of-school girl:

> *For example, in 2019 there was a seminar I attended that was given in the hospital; it was about HIV prevention, self-care issues, and self-confidence.*

2. Support for Encouraging Girls' Literacy Practices

The presentation of the findings in this section respond to the second research question: **How do families and schools support girls' literacy practices?** The section is divided into two parts: support for girls' literacy practices provided by families, and then, by schools.

a. Support at the family level

At the family level, there are three major kinds of support that girls receive for their literacy skills development. The support includes providing them with basic school necessities, monitoring their academic progress, and availing them of time to study at home.

The findings show that parents and guardians monitor school-girls' academic progress by asking what they have learnt at school, looking through their exercise books, and by visiting schools and talking with teachers on their children's progress. Abdallah, an Islamic religious leader, shared how:

Parents monitor their children's results and check their exercise books. By so doing, a girl becomes serious with studies.

Catherine, a parent, said:

I sometimes go to school to meet teachers and confirm if she has attended school the whole week.

Ester, an in-school girl, confirmed that her guardian routinely monitors her school progress:

Another help I get at home is to be taught various subjects by my uncle. Every test I do he wants to see it, and he regularly asks [about] my performance and position in class.

Respondents described how school-girls were also given time to study at home. Catherine, a parent, explained how she reduced her daughter's household chores so that she had time for studying:

I make sure the home environment is friendly for learning by not assigning her a lot of works, and I prepare food for her so that she has time to study.

Amina, an in-school girl, also described being relieved of some domestic duties to have time to study:

Yes, my parent spares time for me. I usually start reading from 9 to 10pm.

Similarly, parents and guardians we interviewed saw themselves as responsible for buying school supplies like stationery and school uniforms, and for paying school contributions to

ensure the girl goes to school and participates fully in their studies. While not directly related to literacy practices, these actions contribute to ensuring the girls have access to school, where they can develop their literacy skills. Amina, an in-school girl, shared how:

My parent also provides me with all the necessities and needs that I tell him; for example notebooks, pens, school uniforms and so on.

Charles, a parent, also described the kind of support he provides to his daughter:

I provide her with the basic necessities she needs, for example food, stationery, learning materials, depending on the subjects she is studying and [I am] paying her various school contributions.

While our respondents expressed their view of the importance of supporting girls in school, they also raised their concern around other parents and guardians who do not do so, explaining that some parents discourage girls from going to school and push them towards marriage instead. These kinds of parents reportedly encourage girls to drop out of school by failing to provide them with the basic necessities they need for school and generally discourage girls' school attendance. Emmanuel, a religious leader, had this to share:

Parents also differ; there are the kind of parents who strongly encourage their daughters to study hard, buy them basic school necessities and give advice so they can do well. But there are some parents who can't even give them the chance to study; they give them a lot of work hence fail on their studies, return home and get married so that parents benefit by receiving bride price.

Maganga, a village chairperson, had a similar view in relation to parents who are not supportive of their girl children:

But some parents are also obstacles toward girl child education; instead of encouraging them to go to school, they give her different household chores that deprive her the opportunity to study.

b. Support at the school level

At the school level, the kind of support that girls receive includes academic advisory and encouragement, literacy materials to read beyond classroom requirements and supervising group reading and discussions. Ester, an in-school girl, explained that:

When a teacher notes a low performance in a subject, he may call you and advise you to do well or if he sees your progress is not good, he calls you and tells you what to do to improve. So, we get such advice from teachers…. Other help is being given [in the form of] *various materials by a teacher. Apart from notes provided in class, the teacher may give you extra materials such as books for reading and we later return them to him.*

On the supervision of group discussions, Amina, another in-school girl, explained:
Teachers help us form group discussions and they often supervise us. They give us past papers, books, and magazines. They really support us.

Rebeca, a teacher, described literacy materials provided for students:
Girls are given books so that they can read at home. They are also given past papers to read at home. Some but very few, especially those who get good grades in their academic performance, are awarded notebooks and pens.

3. Challenges to Supporting Girls' Literacy Practices

The findings presented in this section respond to the third research question: **What are the challenges facing families, schools, and communities in supporting girls' literacy practices?** The presentation structured into two sub-sections reflecting the challenges experienced at the community and school levels.

a. Challenges experienced at the family and community level

Girls' literacy practices at the family and community are hindered by prevalent patriarchal attitudes and by heavy household chore burdens. With regards to patriarchal attitudes, the findings show that girls are normally considered inferior to boys, leading to their denigration, whether overtly or covertly, through words and actions. David, a head of school, explained that patriarchal attitudes cause parents to consider girls unworthy of education nor of investments in their literacy:
There are some words which try to put the girls inferior, for example, a girl cannot get anywhere, you end up becoming pregnant, so no need for you to read and write, just get there do house chores but these boys can read, study and become ministers of this country. Normally, it is the father or mother who produced that kind of words.

George, a Ward Education Officer, highlighted that:

> *The parents from our Sukuma communities believe that if you are a girl you should not go to school; instead, you have to get married. They say, "When you go to study who will you marry? Who will marry a scholar? If you go to school, you will finish our cows and never get married". Then the girl gives up after being told that.*

Kelvin, a teacher, added that some parents have a negative influence on their girl children due to ingrained patriarchal attitudes:

> *Some parents do not know the importance of education, thus encouraging their children, especially girls, to drop out of school. Poor beliefs also contribute to this; there are some misconceptions that a girl child can do nothing.*

Mariam, a school girl, pointed to the false beliefs of parents regarding the capacity of girls in education and literacy activities:

> *Many community members discourage girls to get education. They believe that girls should only get married. Even some of our peers may dare to ridicule by saying, 'have you seen that girl, how possible that she goes to school!'*

In addition to some parents' and community members' negligence of their daughters' right to education, girls also face the challenge of heavy household chores. Patrina, a school girl, shared:

> *Another challenge is having many tasks at home which leads to have no time for self-study. For example, fetching water from the river, which is far indeed.*

Emmanuel, a religious leader, explained that:

> *The challenges at home are many because parents provide them with a lot of works to do after school, like washing dishes, fetching water, going to the farm, and cooking, thus lacking even little time to go through what has been taught at school.*

b. Challenges experienced at the school level

At the school level, girls face many challenges related to education and literacy practices, including: the language of instruction, biased teachers, girls' negative attitude towards

education, and a shortage of teaching and learning materials. Observation data revealed that only a few students are conversant with the English language. During debate competitions, subject clubs, and morning speeches, all students were observed struggling to communicate their ideas in English. This raised doubts as to how well students are able to learn and understand their lessons using English. The inability to communicate in English appeared to deter students from actively participating in class.

George, the Ward Education Officer, points to the ongoing biased practices of teachers in favor of boys:

> *Teachers are very selective; classrooms are full of students, but a teacher chooses very few students to deal with, especially boys even when giving an example, just refers to those only. Now the others are becoming less recognized. Teachers should also be instructed on how best to involve with all students.*

Rebeca, a teacher, stressed the negative attitude shown by girls towards education, suggesting that most girls have absorbed false beliefs from their parents, such as the value marriage over education, making it difficult for teachers to instill the value of learning in girls. Girls go to school only to pass the time, or because parents wish to avoid legal consequences for their children's truancy:

> *In Sukuma tribe, most students attend schools to pass the time, to avoid the rules that have been set against children who do not go to school. Failure to send children to school, the parent is seriously arrested and taken to court.*

Charles, a parent, expressed how the shortage of teaching and learning materials presented another challenge to girls' literacy practices, which he believes would lead to a poor understanding of students in the classroom.George, the Ward Education Officer, points to the absence of a school library or community library in his jurisdiction. However, George confirmed that there are books in schools that students can borrow.The other respondents of this study also reported the absence of libraries in the community and that libraries are not common. Consequently, it remains the responsibility of parents or guardians to buy books and other reading materials for their children. Due to poverty, it was observed that while some families had some books at home, these were generally limited in number, while a majority of the families visited lacked any books or other reading materials. Indeed, it is difficult for the children to become literate with limited literacy resources at home and in the

community, and a lack of access to books and other resources may help explain why many children in rural areas perform poorly in examinations.

Similarly, observational data show that the school in the study location does not have a library. Books and learning materials are stored in the teachers' offices (see Figures 3 and 4) which normally bars public access to both students and out of school children alike. This situation is the norm: at the national level, 70% of secondary schools do not have proper libraries, as books are only kept in teachers' offices, and these offices are opened only at the teachers' discretion (URT, 2020). As observed in the current study, the storing of books and other literacy resources in the teachers' office could limit students' motivation to read and engage in literacy practices because of the lack of space to sit during reading or practise literacy, the lack of freedom to decide when to access the library and what resources to read.

Figure 3: A teachers' office with different bookshelves

Figure 4: A bookshelf in the teachers' office

4. Opportunities for Improving Girls' Literacy Practices

This section presents the findings that respond to the fourth research question: **How can literacy practices be improved to promote girls' empowerment?** The study has established three major opportunities, including cultivating a positive attitude towards girls' education, reducing household chores, and increasing availability of resources for literacy development.

a. Cultivating a positive attitude towards girls' education

The findings show that promoting girls' literacy practices should begin with the development of positive attitudes towards girls' education. Charles, a parent, explained that some parents and guardians in the village do not provide equal education opportunities for both girls and boys, and expressed his views on what should be done to promote educating girls:

> *In the community, various seminars or trainings should be offered to educate us parents and guardians on the importance of a girl child education. We should not think of marrying them and instead send them to school.*

Azza, an out-of-school girl, further explained the importance of promoting new attitudes towards girls' education:

> *Society should be educated -- especially boys and men - they should be educated that girls are not to be used or taken for granted; let them study because once a girl is educated [she] can help back the society.*

Emmanuel, the Christian religious leader, also shares views on how the community can better support girls to promote their confidence and empowerment:

> *Society should start treating [the] girl child positively. They should also be educated to get rid of misconceptions that oppress the girl child.*

b. Reducing household chores

Girls should be provided with adequate time at home to attend to their literacy skills development. This can be done only if their household chores are reduced by their parents or guardians. In relation to this concern, Patrina, an in-school girl, had the following to share:

> *Parents should give us enough time to study; they should minimize household tasks when we return home in the evening. Children should be open to their parents to freely express their challenges or problems.*

Emmanuel, the religious leader, also explained the necessity of reducing the domestic workload on girl children to afford these girls time to practise literacy skills:

> *I advise parents to make sure their daughters have enough time to study after school by not giving them a lot of household chores.*

Kelvin, a teacher, added that parents should make time to sit with their children to monitor their school progress and advise them:

> *Parents should educate their children regarding self-awareness education. Also, parents should have monitor their children's school progress like asking what they have studied after coming back from school or if they had any problem at school.*

c. Increasing availability of resources for literacy development

Our findings show that respondents think it's important for there to be adequate facilities to meet the literacy development needs of children both at home and at school. Mariam, an in-school girl, explained that parents can be good resources at home if they set aside time to tell their children stories and allow children to watch television or listen to the radio's various literacy programs.

George, the Ward Education Officer, highlighted that schools should have facilities to develop all three language skills and build capacity for teachers to integrate the literacy skills in their teaching and learning:

> *Schools should have tools that will help children listen, write and read; also having a library will help. As well, teachers should be oriented on using those facilities. There should be capacity building for teachers to understand deeply what listening, reading and speaking is and how [it] effectively should be reinforced.*

Charles, a parent, also stressed the need to increase the number of teachers and learning materials to promote girls' literacy practices:

> *I would ask the government to increase the number of teachers in the school, materials like textbooks should also be increased so that children do not have difficulty in learning.*

Analysis and Implications

The results of this study have implications for parents, teachers, policy makers, the government, and religious and other local leaders. First, girls in this study generally reported using a variety of different print literacy materials in and out of school but rarely mentioned any non-print literacy materials, which may represent a missed opportunity to supplement literacy development in locally relevant and meaningful ways. While some participants

mentioned girls engaging in storytelling with their parents/guardians, watching education TV programmes and listening to radio at home, the majority of the girls, by and large, reported engaging with only traditional print materials such as textbooks, magazines, and religious books. This reliance on print materials was also observed in the community and at school. This suggests that families and teachers equate literacy learning with the use of print-based materials, and that the perceptions that print-based literacy resources are "legitimate" learning materials could be because there is a lack of financial resources among families and schools to buy or access to digital literacy resources such as computers, laptops, cell phones, smart phones, tablets, and other technological devices. This raises the questions of whether girls in this community and others like it are being left out of an increasingly digital society when their literacy development appears to not involve any digital tools. Indeed, the absence of libraries in the community and at school suggest a role for digital literacy tools to fill this important resource gap in helping girls acquire literacy skills.

With the exception of storytelling, drama and songs, girls in-and out-of-school did not report engaging with any other traditional literacy practices like poems, folklore, proverbs and metaphors, music, dance, legends, myths, talk circles, and rituals, among others. This indicates that many traditional ways of acquiring literacy skills, which were part of the cultural heritage and ways of learning language of older generations, are vanishing as a result of the perception that only print based materials contribute to literacy development. While adults, including parents, are considered the custodians of culture, it appears traditional literacy practices are not seen as part of tools to assist in acquiring literacy skills. According to IST, this influence of modern cultures, as a result of globalization, leads to communities losing their cultural identity (Chilisa, 2012; Iddy, 2020; Martin, 2008). As such, Indigenous theorists advocate for diverse and flexible Indigenous literacy tools as they are really expressions of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing (Chilisa, 2012; Iddy, 2020; Martin, 2008; Smith, 2012).

Second, the study findings indicate that parental assistance for girls' literacy skills development is demonstrated in the form of providing girls with basic school supplies, monitoring their school attendance and academic progress, and providing the girls with sufficient private study time at home. This is encouraging progress that may help girls to acquire literacy skills. It also represents a diversion from findings prevalent elsewhere in rural sub-Saharan Africa (Mollel & Chong, 2017; Plan International, 2012; Warrington & Kiragu,

2012) that consistently show a lack of parental support in girls' education and suggest that the majority of parents prioritize educating boys over girls. The findings are encouraging evidence that many parents in this rural community have started to give greater significance to girls' education.

However, while this observation is important, the parents' support for their girls' education was limited in its scope. For instance, it appeared to omit hands-on support such as working at the table with girls to supplement their learning, guidance with reading textbooks to explain content, or helping with homework. This may be due to most of the parents being uneducated or minimally educated, at least in the formal sense. Indeed, research has long shown that children who receive abundant support from their parents report better school attendance (Jeynes, 2007), greater academic motivation (Simons-Morton & Chen, 2009), higher grades (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012), and higher graduation rates (Fan & Chen, 2001) than children who receive less parental support.

The inability of parents to provide academic support to their girls was further compounded by the use of English as the medium of instruction in secondary schools. It is difficult for parents to help their girls successfully because the homework and the lessons are in English. As revealed by the data, in-school girls and teachers also struggle with the English language in teaching and learning. In other words, the language of instruction does not allow learners to acquire literacy skills sought by the school curriculum. This has implications for the current educational system in Tanzania, especially for policy makers looking at language of instruction policy in Tanzania's multilingual context. Indeed, when learners are offered opportunities to learn using the language most familiar to them, they are more likely to understand the lesson and succeed in school, and their parents are more likely to be in a position to provide support to their children's learning (Brock-Utne, 2007; Qorro, 2013).The use of local languages in schools is also advocated for by Indigenous theorists who argue that language is used not just as a tool for exchange of information, but as a vehicle that conveys tradition and indigenous knowledge to successive generations (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012).

Third, this study's findings also suggest, in line with the findings of Iddy (2021a; 2021b; 2018), Mtey (2020), and Raymond (2021; 2014), that, as reported by participants, some of the parents' peers still do not provide support to their daughters' education by not providing them with school necessities, while also encouraging them to de-prioritize school and get

married. This suggests that such parents are unaware of, or unconvinced of, the benefits of sending and keeping girls in school. By implication, there is a need for continued awareness raising and behaviour change campaigning among parents on the benefits of educating girls.

Fourth, the findings of this study further suggest that girls encounter many challenges -- at home, school, and the community -- to literacy skills acquisition, that must be addressed through a holistic approach. Patriarchal attitudes, heavy household chores, the language of instruction, inadequate literacy practices tools at home, at school, and in the community, parents'/guardians' low level of education, poverty, biased teachers, and the absence of school and community libraries, will remain challenging without the meaningful engagement of parents, schools, girls, government officials, and religious leaders. Awareness campaigns, reduction of household chores, increasing availability and access to a variety of print and electronic literacy tools, training of teachers, and creation of school and community libraries, can help to address these challenges, and likewise, have the capacity to yield positive impacts in and out of school.

Lastly, given that relatively few studies have utilized IST in studying Indigenous people in Tanzania (Iddy, 2020; 2018), the use of IST in this study has contributed to identifying findings that can inform policies and programs aimed at improving the lives of girls in the community (Ntseane, 2011). IST's collaborative approach provides a chance for local people to participate in the research process, enabling the voices of Indigenous people to be heard. Indeed, a focus on participants' voice has become an important aspect in Indigenous research as a means to overcome previous practices of misrepresentation (Chilisa, 2012; Ntseane, 2011; Smith, 2012).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Family, school, and the community play an integral role in creating environments and opportunities that promote literacy acquisition for girls. Girls attain knowledge from literacy events practiced in their families, communities, and schools, and these practices can vary by culture. This research has provided an example of girls' literacy practices in homes, school, and community, most of which are print-based. These print-based literacy practices maybe largely in response to the economic situation in which the families live, including the lack of digital resources, as well as on account of the prevalent role that religious affiliations continue to play in local life in the community, as demonstrated through the emphasis on

reading religious texts. While print-based literacy practices are important as they help girls to acquire literacy skills, relying on them as the exclusive means of literacy development has limitations, given the current context of digital media, and the lack of diverse print resources present in the community studied. It is therefore important to provide girls with a wide variety of literacy tools, including both digital based resources and literacy tools derived from local culture and heritage, to help them fully integrate all available sources and modes of representation into their literacy learning.

This study therefore recommends the following for the consideration of governmental actors and policymakers, national and international civil society organizations involved in literacy, education and girls' empowerment work in Tanzania, and other stakeholders interested in the empowerment of girls such as local education authorities, parents' associations, communication associations, and international organizations among others:

1. The ordinary level secondary education curriculum should integrate local literacy practices at the secondary level, including use of mother tongue, and multilingual literacy activities.

2. Support schools to build libraries and reading corners and increase the availability of both print and electronic literacy tools. To the extent possible, libraries should include materials in both the language(s) of instruction at school but also in mother tongues commonly spoken in the community, as well as bilingual or multilingual literacy materials in a variety of formats (text, visual, audio, digital).

3. Support teachers through seminars, workshops, and in-service trainings and other professional development opportunities to make more use of a greater variety of reading materials available to girls in their teaching, both print and digital.

4. Promote the use of reading materials that show girls in a variety of roles and acting with agency.

5. Encourage schools to establish extra-curricular reading clubs and activities like reading contests for girls to create a safe social space or environment in which to discuss, share experiences, and acquire various literacy skills.

6. Provide resources and learning opportunities for parents that support them to increase the availability of a variety of literacy tools (both traditional and modern) at home and engage their children in the use of such resources.

7. Create an awareness raising campaign among parents and guardians on the importance of educating girls in secondary schools through public meetings in

villages, aimed at changing prevalent local attitudes among parents towards girls' education, and ensuring all girls and boys enjoy equal educational opportunities.

8. Work with religious and local leaders to promote girls' education and literacy practices in particular through activities that empower these individuals to conduct community awareness campaigns locally. Because these leaders are respected and trusted in the village, their involvement can help reduce or eliminate negative attitudes among community members about girls' education.

Overall, by building the capacity of community members, parents, teachers, religious and local leaders, literacy practices not only have the potential to support girls' acquisition of literacy skills, but also could lead to a better future for girls, their families and their country.

Knowledge Dissemination Strategy

To promote the sharing and uptake of knowledge generated from this project, the team has and will do the following to make their research findings available to different audiences. First, the findings have been shared in summary form with the steering committee in Choma village. According to members of the steering committee, this act of sharing research findings made them feel a sense of being appreciated, honoured, recognised, and acknowledged for their contribution to knowledge, which in turn may promote trust and encourage strong and long-lasting collaboration between researchers and the community. They cited two examples showing the extent to which some researchers who went in the village to conduct research never returned to share findings with the community, a situation which they interpreted as a sign of disrespect to them, discouraging future research participation. Members of the steering committee also commented that sharing findings helped them to understand key issues that promote literacy acquisition for girls and the related challenges, hence helping them to make effective and informed future decisions to address the challenges. Lastly, the steering committee explained that sharing research results helped to increase public awareness of the impact of research and decrease a sense of secrecy by researchers.

Second, the report will be deposited on the CODE's website and the University of Dar es Salaam's research repository. Third, a paper based on the findings will be published in an international education journal. Fourth, the findings of the report are also expected to be presented in the annual *Research and Innovation Week* of the University of Dar es Salaam in

April 2022. Since 2015, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) has been running the Research and Innovation Week (RIW) for showcasing quality research results, research outputs and new innovations to diverse groups of community members, undergraduate and postgraduate students, local and international researchers, academics, teachers, curriculum developers, policy makers and high-level government officials.

Researchers' Biographies

Daniel Sidney Fussy is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE) – a Constituent College of the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He holds a PhD in Education from the University of Glasgow, UK.

Dr. Fussy currently serves as the Coordinator of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), at MUCE, where he supervises the development of research agendas and projects, dissemination of research outputs in both national and international outlets, and the application of research-based knowledge in teaching and learning. Daniel's research interest – of which he has widely published – centered on learning development in higher education, higher education research and development, research culture and researcher development, comparative education, and teacher professionalism.

Hassan Iddy Hassan is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE), Iringa, Tanzania. He holds a PhD in Education from the University of New Castle, Australia. Apart from his core functions of teaching, research and public service, Hassan also serves as the Deputy Coordinator of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) housed in the Faculty of Education at MUCE.

His research interests focus on gender and education, equity in education, indigenous education, Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST), international and comparative education, primary and secondary education research, qualitative research methods, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Education for All (EFA) agenda. He has vast experience in research and has published widely in international referred journals. His scholarly works have centered on the notion of education as a basic human right and ensuring that the most vulnerable people can access and participate in quality education. His current research article with the title '*Changing perceptions of the value of girls' secondary education among the parents in rural Tanzania'* was published by Routledge in October 2021.

References

Alcock, K. J. & Ngorosho, D. (2003). Learning to spell a regularly spelled language is not a trivial task – patterns of errors in Kiswahili. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 16*, 635-666.

Barton, D. (2001). Directions for literacy research: Analysing language and social practices in a textually mediated world. *Language and Education*, *15*(2-3), 92-104. DOI: 10.1080/09500780108666803

Barton, D., Hamilton, M., & Ivanic, R. (2000). *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context.* London: Routledge.

Brock-Utne, B. (2007b). Learning through a familiar language versus learning through a foreign language: A look into some secondary school classrooms in Tanzania. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *27*(2), 487-498.

Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, *13*(1), 1-22.

Foley, D. (2003). Indigenous epistemology and indigenous standpoint theory. *Social Alternatives*, *22*(1), 44-52.

Galindo, C., & Sheldon, S. B. (2012). School and home connections and children's kindergarten achievement gains: The mediating role of family involvement. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27*(1), 90-103.

Gwajima, E. K. S. (2011). *Gender representations in English literature texts in Tanzanian secondary schools.* PhD Thesis, the University of Edinburgh.

Higgins, C. (2014). Constructing identities through literacy events in HIV/AIDS education. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *35*(7), 709-723.

Iddy, H. (2021a). The right to education for the girl child in Tanzania: Contradictions and confusions in legislation and practices. *Gender Issues*, *38*(3), 324-343.

Iddy, H. (2021b). Changing perceptions of the value of girls' secondary education among the parents in rural Tanzania. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, DOI:10.1080/09518398.2021.1982048

Iddy, H. (2020). Indigenous Standpoint Theory: Ethical principles and practices for studying Sukuma people in Tanzania. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education,* 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2020.

Iddy, H. (2018). *Girls and secondary education in rural Tanzania: Perceptions, obstacles, and future possibilities*. PhD Thesis, the University of Newcastle.

Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The Relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement. *Urban Education*, *42*(1), 82-110.

Kumburu, S. A. (2011). *The effectiveness of short-term literacy skills intervention on children at risk of reading and writing difficulties in Tanzania: A study of grade one children with dynamic assessment approach.* PhD Thesis, Abo Akademi University.

Levison, D., DeGraff, D. S., & Dungumaro, E. W. (2018). Implications of environmental chores for schooling: Children's time fetching water and firewood in Tanzania. *The European Journal of Development Research*, *30*(2), 217-234.

Martin, K. (2008). *Please knock before you enter: Aboriginal regulation of outsiders and the implications for researchers*. Teneriffe, Qld: Post Pressed.

Mirambo, S. I. (2004). Oral literature of the Sukuma. *Electronic Journal of Folklore*, *26*, 113-122.

Mmasa, M., & Anney, V. N. (2016). Exploring literacy and numeracy teaching in Tanzanian classrooms: Insights from teachers' classroom practices. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *7*(9), 137-154.

Mollel, N. S., & Chong, R. (2017). Socio-cultural constraints of girls' access to education in Mtwara District, Tanzania. *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 20*(3), 108-125.

Mtey, A. R. (2020). Contribution of power dynamics and women's perceptions to girls' education among pastoral communities in Tanzania. *Papers in Education and Development*, *38*(1), 95-115.

Ngorosho, D. (2011). Reading and writing ability in relation to home environment: A study in primary education in rural Tanzania. *Child Indicators Research*, *4*(3), 369-388.

Ntseane, P. G. (2011). Culturally sensitive transformational learning incorporating the Afrocentric paradigm and African feminism. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *61*(4), 307-323.

Plan International. (2012). *Because I am a girl – African report 2012: Progress and obstacles to girls' education in Africa*. Plan International.

Qorro, M. A. S. (2013). Language of instruction in Tanzania: Why are research findings not heeded? *International Review of Education*, *59*, 29-45.

Raymond, A. (2021). Girls' participation in formal education: A case of Maasai pastoralists in Tanzania. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, *20,* 165-185. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-020-09273-7

Raymond, A. (2014). *Girls' education in pastoral communities: An ethnographic study of Monduli District, Tanzania.* CfBT Education Trust.

RTI International (2016). Assistance to basic education: All children reading (ABE-ACR). Tanzania National Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). https://iercpublicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/FdngsRpt_TZNtnlEGRA_08-Nov2016_FNL.pdf

Simons-Morton, B., & Chen, R. (2009). Peer and parent influences on school engagement among early adolescents. *Youth & Society, 41*(1), 3-25.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Sommer, M. (2013). Structural factors influencing menstruating school girls' health and well-being in Tanzania. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *43*(3), 323-345.

Street, B. (2003). What's "new" in new literacy studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education, 5(2), 77-91.*

Thomas, M., & Rugambwa, A. (2013). Gendered aspects of classroom practice. In F. Vavrus & L. Bartlett (Eds.), *Teaching in tension: International pedagogies, national policies, and teachers' practices in Tanzania* (pp. 133-148). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Thompson, J. A. (2017). *Girls' empowerment through language and literacy (GELL): A Landscape review of gender and literacy research in African contexts.* CODE.

UN. (2016). *The sustainable development goals report 2016*. UN.

UNESCO. (2021). Literacy for a human centred recovery: Narrowing the digital divide. https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ild-2021-fact-sheet.pdf

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). (2017a). *Literacy rates continue to rise from one generation to the next.* UIS fact sheet No. 45. UIS.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). (2017b). *More than one-half of children and adolescents are not learning worldwide*. UIS fact sheet No. 46. UIS.

United Republic of Tanzania. (2015). Literacy and education monograph: 2012 population and housing census, vol. IV. National Bureau of Statistics.

United Republic of Tanzania. (2020a). *Basic education statistics in Tanzania (BEST) 2016-2020: National data.* Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

United Republic of Tanzania. (2020b). CSEE *2019 examination results: S3832 Choma secondary school.* https://onlinesys.necta.go.tz/results/2019/csee/results/s3832.htm

Warrington, M., & Kiragu, S. (2012). It makes more sense to educate a boy: Girls' against the odds' in Kajiado, Kenya. *International Journal of Educ Development*, *32*(3), 301-309.

Wedin, A. (2006). Literacy practices in rural Tanzania: The case of Karagwe. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *27*(3), 225-240.

Wedin, A. (2004). *Literacy practices in and out of school in Karagwe: The case of primary school literacy education in rural Tanzania*. PhD Thesis, Stockholm University.