

Girls' Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools in Two Urban and Semi-Urban School Districts in Niger

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Abstract

Today, girls' schooling is one of the most discussed education issues in Africa, especially in Niger. Many discrepancies along gender lines have been pointed out regarding education in Niger. This study is an attempt to explain the transition of girls from primary to secondary school in two regions of Niger. Specifically, it investigated girls' transition to secondary school and the factors for and against girls' transition to secondary school in Niamey and Dosso. Data collection methods included document analysis, interviews and questionnaires to regional education decision makers, girl students, teachers and parents. Findings confirmed what research elsewhere has already found out, i.e., girls' transition was a reality nationally as well as in the two regions. Girls' transition to secondary school was hindered by socio-cultural and economic factors including the distance from schools and the parents' poverty but also factors related to the nature of girls as humans such as the outbreak of the periods. Better measures of improving transition of girls in school need to be decided and implemented to help change the situation.

1. Introduction

Education is very important for every boy or girl in the world. However, research has pointed out that some communities still discriminate against girl child as far as education is concerned. The report *Children Still Battling to Go to School* (UNESCO, 2000) highlighted that 95% of the 28.5 million children do not get a primary school education in low and lower middle-income countries. Among these, 44% are in Sub Saharan Africa, 19% live in South and West Asia and 14% are in the Arab countries. In Niger, in particular, even though the gross enrolment rate moves from 3.6% in 1960 to 76.2% in 2016, girls' schooling still faces many issues that constitute an obstacle to reaching any Education for all promise. One of the challenges is girls' transition from primary to secondary school. It is this very issue of girls' transition in schools that constitutes the focus of the study that led to this paper. In particular, 13 primary schools in Dosso and in Niamey were investigated to explain the phenomenon of girls' transition from primary to secondary schools and pinpoint the factors that contribute to hindering it.

The work consists of five parts including the problem statement followed by the research objectives and questions. Next, the paper focuses on the review of existing literature, the methodological framework followed by the presentation and interpretation of findings. Some recommendations were made for decision makers and educators.

2. Problem Statement

According to Kieffe (2017), of all educated children in the world, only one-third are girls while two-thirds of the 900 million uneducated adults are women. To reduce gender inequalities in the world, the fourth world conference on women in Beijing in 1995 suggested a strategy known as the gender mainstreaming on what is referred to in French as the *généralisation de l'analyse selon le genre* [generalization of analysis based on gender]. This relies on the principle that sustainable development is not possible so long as gender discrimination persists (UNESCO, 2000).

In most African countries, however, the number of girls in school is far too inferior to that of boys. CONFEMEN (1995), for example, reported that only 44% of girls were schooled against 54% of boys in sub-Saharan Africa in spite of the hike in girls' gross enrolment rate in countries such as Niger where it moved from 3.6% in 1960 to 76.2% in 2016 (MEBA, 2003), with a raise of over 42% between the periods of 2003 and 2016. In addition, the number of girls in school rose from 344,313 to 1,180,851 in 2016. Even in regions of Niamey and Dosso, which constitute the foci of this study, the gross enrolment rates rose respectively from 118.2 to 135.1% and 69.3% to 76.2% between the years of 2011 and 2016 (MEN/A/PLN/EC, 2016).

These figures notwithstanding, gender disparities in school persist in Niger. Many have argued that this is related to issues of lack or scarcity of infrastructure. But could it really be so when, since independence in 1960, the various governments have made education one of the focal points of struggle. For example, from 2012 to 2016, the rate of education expenses increased from nine to 10.8% of the national budget. Concurrently to this amount, the number schools increased from 6,770 to 17,283, thus raising the number of newly-cement-block-built classrooms from 19,416 up to 70,056. Even the number of teachers, which many have decried as too limited, increased from 20,553 to 72,021 between 2013 and 2016. The question to ask here is to know why, in spite of all the efforts, gender disparities still remain in Niger especially when it comes to retention of girls in school. Within the issue of girls' retention in school lies that of transitioning for one level of education to another.

Worse still, many who happen to climb up to the grade ladder stagnate at the national examination level because they never are able to pass. Although the government of Niger decided to banned the end-of-primary school national examination that allows

students to enroll in junior high school three years ago, many elementary school enrollees still do not make the transition. Many of these students do secure the required averages for passing to junior high. In the case of girls, sometimes even when they were able to pass the exam or obtain the required grades to go to junior high, they may end up not continuing to the next level. One may wonder why girls end up failing, for example, their first cycle of primary school, consequently, leaving school because unable to continue to secondary school. This paper resulted from a study that sought to understand girls' failure to transition effectively to secondary school and pin down factors contributing to the issue in two large districts of Niamey, the capital city, and Dosso, a provincial city in Niger.

In essence, the study attempted to respond to the following two specific questions: 1) How does transition from primary to secondary manifest itself? 2) What factors contribute to explaining girls' transition from primary to secondary school?

3. Review of Existing Literature

The various governments of Niger since independence in 1960 agreed with and signed many international education conventions including the Dakar world forum of education for all (EFA) in 2000, which aims at eliminating among many other disparities in education gender inequalities by 2015. At the national level many efforts and initiatives have been made and carried out to ensure equal chances for both girls and boys as well as women and men in education. These include the creation of the *Cellule Technique Pour la Scolarisation des Filles* (CTPSF) [Technical Council for Girls' Schooling] in 1994, which later became the *Direction de la Scolarisation des Filles* (SCOFI) [National Office of Girls' Education] in order to promote the education of the girl child.

Furthermore, in 1998, a presidential decree put into law the *Loi d'Orientation du Système Éducatif Nigerien (LOSEN)* [Niger Education Reform Law], which was operationalized into the *Programme Decennal pour le Développement de l'Éducation (PDDE)* [Ten-Year Programme for the Development of Education] in 2003. Ten years later, the PDDE was renewed under the *Programme Sectoriel de l'Éducation et de la Formation (PSEF)* [Sector-Specific Programme for Education and Training] for the period of 2014-2024 (République du Niger, 2013). The renewed ten-year programme encompasses not simply the pre, primary, secondary and higher education but also the vocational and professional training sectors.

These documents clarified the government's position regarding the promotion of girls' schooling. For instance, the LOSEN in its article 14, last line, stipulates that one of its objectives is to identify and eradicate « hurdles to socio-economic and cultural

development of full potential of girls and women in the learning process » while the PDDE specifically aimed at increasing girls' access to school by raising the rate of school attendance to 52% by 2015 from 28.9% in 2002 (MEBA, 2003, cited in Chekaraou and Goza, 2013, p.170).

Moreover, to strengthen the sensitization efforts to promote girls' education, the national office of girls' education (SCOFI) initiated and sponsored the signing into law a letter of engagement favouring schooling and training girls and women (République du Niger, 2017). The letter aimed at providing protection, support and assistance to school girls to ensure success.

Regarding the transition of school children from primary to secondary schools nation-wide, the PSEF highlighted that the achiever rate in primary school evolved from only 49.3% to 59.8% in 2014; 62.4% in 2015; and 65% in 2016 (République du Niger, 2013, p.17). The 2016 rate of 65% of primary school achievers is higher than the transition rate to secondary school which is 50% of the total enrolled children, regressing from 65% in 2010 (*ibid.*, p.19).

These data reveal that failure to transition to secondary school is indeed a reality among Niger school children and, certainly, worse in the case of the girl child as supported by PSEF report that only 43% of girls finished primary school compared to 60% of boys in 2011 (*Ibid.*, p.5). They also urge us to ask a few questions including: Why is the achiever rate higher than the transition rate in 2016? Where did the rest of the students go? Why had the transition rate regressed to 50% in 2016 from 65% in 2010? How does this nation-wide reality compare with that of Dosso and Niamey in the case of girls? What factors could explain the issue of girls' transitioning from primary to secondary schools in Dosso and Niamey?

4. Conceptual and Methodological Framework

To investigate the transition of girls from primary to secondary schools in Niamey and Dosso, we chose elements of the participatory approach to research, i.e., involvement of all stakeholders. According to Krishnaswamy (2004), involvement of diverse stakeholders in the research process enhances the chances for identifying all relevant issues and adds to the usefulness of the research. Doing so would help us capture the whole picture of what is really happening. This is a relevant and an applicable approach to this study because of the assumption that such factors contributing the hindering girls' transition as those related to culture may not be easily pinned down without the involvement of all stakeholders in the data collection process.

This participatory approach pushed us to select a group of sites consisting of 13 primary schools including six from Dosso primary school district and seven from Niamey

school district IV. The latter has a total 71 schools among which 50 public 21 private. Our seven participating public schools from Niamey (10% of the total) were randomly selected from the 71 public. Another two private schools were also randomly selected of the 21 private schools in Niamey. The Dosso primary school district was composed of 67 primary schools (58 public, two semi-private and seven private schools) out of which we randomly selected six including five public schools and one private school. The six selected schools also represented 10% of the total number.

Our target population consisted of 132 participants chosen at random. Among them there were 111 girls and 21 parents. The number of parents was low due to the majority of them being unavailable during the rainy season as they spent the whole day working on their fields. Conveniently, we decided to work with the only parents who were accessible to us.

Three data instruments were used in the study including document analysis, interviews and questionnaires. The document analysis was carried out to examine the number of girls who succeeded in their exam from 2011 to 2016 in Niamey and Dosso. The latest educational statistical reports documents of Dosso and Niamey districts were analysed. This helped document the actual manifestation of girls' transition from primary to secondary schools from the school statistical data.

Two types of interviews were utilized. The first type consisted of preliminary research interviews that allowed us to gather first-hand information on girls' transition from the education decision makers. The second type of interviews were concerned with the actual research interviews which were conducted around our research questions. The results of the two types of interviews and the questionnaires served to corroborate the results gathered through the document analysis and pin down the factors contributing to the failure for girls to transition effectively to secondary school.

The items of the questionnaires were constructed to reflect the socio-cultural, institutional and economic factors of the target districts. The questionnaires were administered to primary and secondary school girls in first and second grades as well as to their parents.

5. Findings from Document Analysis: Transition in Dosso and Niamey

Our preliminary interviews with decision makers in both Niamey and Dosso school districts revealed that the issue of transition is a reality. However, we decided to corroborate the information through an analysis of the official school statistics book in both Niamey and Dosso. In Niamey, the transition rate from primary to secondary school has evolved from 79.3% in 2011, 59.97% in 2012, 45.49% in 2013, 70.04% in 2014 and 71.5% between the years of 2015 and 2016.

In Dosso, interviews with decision makers also revealed that the issue of girls' transition from primary to Secondary school in Dosso was a reality. The transition rates, however, vary depending on whether the areas were urban or rural, with the rates being higher in the former: For example, it was 25% in the rural village of Agali in 2013 versus 77.27% in the more urban town of Garantché II. Region-wide though, the transition rate evolved from 37.47% in 2012 to 75.64% in 2013, 67.71% in 2014, 57.08% in 2015, and 81.15% in 2016.

To discover the girls' rate of transition to secondary schools, we also compared the results of the secondary-school-entrance exam to the number found in the first grade of secondary school. In Niamey, our analysis revealed that in 2016, out of 1,083 girls from seven of our study schools who passed their exam and, therefore, should proceed to secondary school, only 813 (75.06%) were in secondary school. This implies a gap of 270 girls (24.93%) who did not transition into secondary school.

Similarly, in Dosso, out of a total of 540 girls from our six target schools who passed their exam in 2016, only 310 (57.4%) girls were found in secondary school. This implies that 230 (42.59%) of the girls did not transition to secondary school.

Comparing the girls' transition rate in Niamey to that of Dosso, Niamey's rate of girls' transition was higher (75.06% versus 57.4%). This is fully understandable since Niamey is the capital city where the people's perception of schooling is slightly more positive than that of the inhabitants of semi-urban areas such as Dosso. We notice, however, in both cases that there was still a transition issue since many girls (25% in Niamey and 42.59% in Dosso). This shows that failure to transition from primary to secondary school is indeed a reality in both sites in spite of their being socio-economically and culturally different. The question to ask next is to wonder what data reveal concerning the factors contributing to the persistence of this girls' failure to transition into secondary school?

6. Findings Pinpointing Factors Influencing Girls' Transition to Secondary Schools

In this section, we first present data regarding the factors that influenced the transition of girls to secondary school in Dosso prior to exposing the factors explaining the girls' transition into secondary school in Niamey to end with a synthesis. The results in this section came from interviews and questionnaires and presented in tables.

Table 1a: Factors in favor of girls' schooling in Dosso

Items	Responses								
	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know		Strongly Agree		Total No.
	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	
School changes a girl positively	100	75.75	27	20.45	5	3.78	-	-	132
The curricula should include sensitization ideas on girls' schooling	99	75	20	15.15	13	9.84	-	-	132
Harassments against school girls are punished by law	40	30.3	20	15.15	65	49.24	7	5.30	132
A sixth-grade girl must continue up to secondary school	90	78.18	32	24.24	10	7.57	-	-	132
Mean score		68.2		18.02		4.84		1.06	132

From the information given in the table above four of the five items classified as factors in favor of girls' schooling were agreed upon by 68.2% of the 132 participants added to 1.06% who strongly agreed (thus more than 69% agreeing). 18.02% of the participants disagreed with the items in favor of girls' schooling. The percentage of participants who disagreed is still high in a country where many efforts are made to suppress gender disparities, but having almost 70% who are in favor of girls' schooling still remains a success, albeit a limited one. Let us look at what the population of Niamey believed regarding this.

Table 1b: Factors in favor of girls' schooling in Niamey

Items	Responses								
	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know		Strongly Agree		Total No.
	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	
School changes a girl positively	29	38.67	30	40	1	1.33	15	20	75
The curricula should include sensitization ideas on girls' schooling	36	48	6	8	5	6.67	28	37.33	75
Harassments against school girls are punished by law	31	41.33	10	13.33	4	5.33	30	40	75
A sixth-grade girl must continue up to secondary school	30	40	6	8	2	2.67	37	49.33	75
Mean score	34	44.26		14.66		4.8		36.26	

Table 1b shows that if we add up the 44.26% agree and the 36.26% strongly agree, we have more than 80% of the respondents who were in favor of girls' schooling, meaning that almost all the stakeholders supported girls' schooling to its end. This can be explained by the fact that Niamey population may have a relatively more positive perception of education than people in provincial cities.

To be more certain about this almost unanimous support to girls' schooling both in Dosso (almost 70%) and Niamey (more than 80%), however, we supplemented the items in Table 2a with another item questioning who helped the school girl in her efforts to remain in school. The results from this added item in Dosso showed that 41.6% of the respondents argued that mothers and fathers supported their daughters' schooling while 13.6% said that they were helped by their mothers, fathers and teachers. At the same time, 7.58% of the participants said that girls' schooling is supported by mothers, fathers and brothers while 3.03% of the respondents argued that girls were helped by their fathers and 3.03% by NGOs, fathers and the government supported girls' schooling. Only 0.76% agreed that they were helped by mothers only. The data shows that a great many girl students were actually helped in their schooling and that parents remained at the forefront of those efforts to assist. Similar results were found in Niamey where the mothers helped the girls by 53% and the fathers by 21% (a total score of 74% of support coming from both parents, the rest being from NGOs and other stakeholders).

In sum, the above data showed that most participants, especially parents, agreed with what we called the factors in favor of girls' schooling. This implies that these factors did not contribute to the failure for girls to transition. What about the factors that we termed as the ones contributing to the failure for girls to continue? What level of acceptance did they obtain from our participants?

From the responses given in Table 2a, most participants disagreed with six out of eight items that were classified as related to the socio-cultural factors constituted a hinderance to girls' schooling. Two items out of eight seemed to receive our respondents' agreements at a higher rate than average. These were items related to an educated girl not being obedient to her future husband (57.72%) and that highlighting that girls who started their periods should stop going to school (60%). Literature does not mention the items related to girls stopping to attend school as soon as they see their first menses as a factor against girls' schooling but in this research, it turned out to be so. It is important to stress, however, that the majority of the participants disagreed with the majority of the items, thus, being against girls' not being in school. The following table tells us what happened in Niamey.

Table 2a: Socio-cultural factors against girls' schooling in Dosso

Items	Responses									
	Agree		Disagree		Don't know		Strongly Agree		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	No.
A girl child will be the member of her future husband's family	64	48.48	48	36.36	7	5	13	9.8		-
Girls don't stay in school due to of early unwanted pregnancy	79	23	23	18.69	14	10.66	20	15.15		132
The proper place of woman is at home	94	71.21	23	17.42	14	10.61	1	0.76		132
It's better for a girl to get married early than to stay in school	98	74.24	13	9.84	5	3.78	16	1.21		132
A girl should not stay in school because she will have a husband to look after her	80	60.60	35	26.51	9	6.81	8	6.06		132
A girl is inferior to a boy	75	56.87	30	22.72	17	12.87	10	7.57		132
A girl who attends school will not be obedient to her future husband	37	28.03	71	57.72	18	13.63	7	5.30		132
Girls should stop schooling as soon as they see their first periods	43	32.57	80	60.60	9	6.81	-	-		132
Mean Score	71	49.13	39	41.64	13	10.14	9	-		-

Table 2b shows that the majority of respondents in Niamey disagreed with only two of these factors against girls' schooling. These items concerned the one related to stopping to attend school for fear of having an early pregnancy and the idea of girls stopping school when they see their first menses. The majority of respondents agreed (Agree and Strongly Agree scores added together) with six of the items on the list. For Niamey, this is surprising since agreeing with six of the items means that girls' schooling was not supported. Again, this standpoint may have resulted from the influence of the many religious preaching sermons that happened more often in urban areas than in semi-urban regions. We do not believe that this agreement is an accurate reflection of people's belief in supporting girls' schooling.

Table 3a shows that 59.59 % of the participants in Dosso agreed that economic factors were the ones which did not allow girls to attend school. But the participants were split equally on the items highlighting that a girl's schooling benefited her future husband more than anyone else (42.42% agree added to 2.27% Strongly Agree versus 49.24% Disagree) and that a girl was more useful in hawking than in school (37.87% Agree added to 6.06% Strongly Agree versus 47.72% Disagree). This is understandable since according to the culture and the religious teachings, it is commonly believed that women who are married are normally taken care of by their husbands not the opposite. Would Niamey present a similar picture?

According to Table 3b, Niamey population was equally split on these economic items against girls' schooling with almost 50% (48.88%) of participants Agree and Strongly Agree compared to 49.77% who Disagree. The details of scores, however, show that 73.33% (41.33% Agree added to 32% Strongly Agree) of the respondents reported that parents' poverty in particular hindered girls' schooling and up to 79% argued that comparatively to a boy child, girls' education has many opportunity costs. The table also reflects, by a score of 85.33% Disagree, that girls' education was not a waste of resources. These results show once more that Niamey is slightly different from Dosso in the way they saw education of girls.

Table 2b: Socio-cultural factors against girls' schooling in Niamey

Items	Responses								Total
	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know		Strongly Agree		
	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	
A girl child will be the member of her future husband family	52	69.33	8	10.67	6	8	9	12	75
Girls don't stay in school because they fear getting pregnant before marriage	8	10.67	55	73.33	12	16	-	-	75
The proper place of a woman is at home	29	38.67	24	32	2	2.67	20	26.67	75
It is better for a girl to get married early than to stay to school	24	32	27	36	1	1.33	23	30.67	75
A girl shouldn't stay in school because she will have a husband to look after her later	40	53.33	23	30.67	2	2.67	10	13.33	75
A girl is inferior to a boy	60	80	2	2.67	6	8	7	9.33	75
A girl who attends school will not obey her future husband	68	90.67	1	1.33	5	6.67	1	1.33	75
Girls stop schooling as soon as they see their first periods	1	1.33	67	89.33	7	9.33	-	-	75
Mean score		47		34.5		6.83		11.66	

Table 3a: Economic factors against girls' schooling in Dosso

Items	Responses								Total No.
	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know		Strongly Agree		
	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	
An educated girl does not have enough time for family	85	64.39	35	26.51	8	6.06	4	3.03	132
Girls' education is a waste resource	70	53.03	39	29.54	13	9.84	10	7.57	132
A girls' education benefits go to her future husband	56	42.42	65	49.24	8	6.60	3	2.27	132
Girl child is more useful in hawking than in schooling	50	37.87	63	47.72	11	8.33	8	6.06	132
Girls' education has many opportunity costs	115	87.12	16	12.12	1	0.76	/	/	132
Parents poverty prevents girls from staying in school	96	72.73	30	22.73	6	4.54	/	/	132
Mean score	79	59.59	41	31.31	9	6.68	3	2.02	-

Table 3b: Economic factors against girls' schooling in Niamey

Items	Responses								Total No.
	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know		Strongly Agree		
	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	
An educated girl doesn't have enough time for her family	10	13.33	46	61.33	7	9.33	12	16	75
Girls' education is waste of resources	1	1.33	64	85.33	8	10.67	15	20	75
A girl's education benefits go to her future husband	37	49.33	21	28	2	2.67	15	20	75
A girl child is more useful in hawking than in schooling	3	4	69	92	2	2.67	1	1.33	75
Girls' education has many opportunities costs	29	38.67	12	16	1	1.33	33	44	75
Parents' poverty prevents girls from staying in school	31	41.33	12	16	8	10.67	24	32	75
Mean score		24.66		49.77		6.22		22.22	

Table 4: Factors that are related to prejudice against girls' schooling in Dosso

Items	Responses								
	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know		Strongly Agree		Total
	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	
Girls who stay many years in school become pregnant before marriage	25	19	92	70	10	8	5	4	
Primary school education is enough for a girl	27	20.45	94	71.21	6	4.54	5	3.75	
A girl who studies does not easily get a husband	45	39.09	62	46.96	17	12.87	18	13.63	
School teaches a girl western idea that contradict social norms and values	15	11.36	80	60.6	25	18.83	12	9.09	
School teaches immorality to a girl child	15	11.36	80	60.6	28	21.21	9	6.81	
Junior high school is enough for a girl	11	8.33	80	60.6	30	22.72	11	8.33	
School changes negatively girl's behavior	25	18.93	65	49.24	32	24.24	10	7.57	
An educated girl's dresses are like a European	17	12.87	52	39.39	40	30.3	23	17.42	
School prevent girl child from doing household duties in future husband's family	30	22.72	70	53.03	18	13.63	14	10.6	
Mean score	23	18.23	75	56.81	22.88	17.38	11.88	9.02	

The findings show us from this table 65% of the respondents disagree with the idea which is hidden by the nine items listed as prejudice for the transition of girls. So, this rate reveals that people want the girls to keep on their schooling.

Compared to Dosso, Niamey exposed a picture showing that 66.66% of the respondents disagreed with these factors that are related to prejudice against girls' education. This is understandable since the city mentality of these respondents was supposed to reflect less prejudices and stereotypes than the semi-urban mentality, especially when it is combined with the habit of seeing the benefits of schooling both for girls and boys holding highly important and prestigious jobs.

For example, 86.67% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that “girls who stay in school become pregnant before marriage” while 94.67% of the respondents disagreed that primary school was enough for a girl while 60% disagreed that junior high school education was enough for a girl. Both scores support that a girl should continue to the highest level of schooling. The scores in Niamey also showed by 73.33% that a girl's school was not a barrier to helping with household duties.

Table 5a: Other emerging issues regarding girls' schooling in Dosso

Items	Responses								Total No.
	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know		Strongly Agree		
	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	
Distance from school compromises girls' schooling	68	52.27	42	31.82	10	7.58	11	8.33	132
A secondary school girl who gets a husband should marry him	11	18.33	108	81.82	9	6.82	4	3.03	132
A girl should get married as soon she finishes primary school	5	3.76	120	90.91	5	3.79	2	1.52	132
Girls are victims of sexual harassment	19	14.39	105	79.55	5	3.79	3	2.27	132
Mean score	26	24.61	94	73.52	7	5.49	5	3.78	132

The findings show that 71.02% of the participant are against the idea which is hidden by the four items listed as issues for the girl's transition from primary to secondary school 25.6% agreed and 3.72% strongly agreed. One of the four items which says that the distance from school compromise girl schooling.

Table 5b: Other emerging issues against girls' schooling in Niamey

Items	Responses								Total No.
	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know		Strongly Agree		
	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	Results	%	
The distance from school compromises girls' schooling	27	36	30	40	8	10.67	10	13	75
A secondary school girl who get a husband should get married and leave school	11	14.67	51	68	6	8	7	9.3	75
A girl should get married as soon as she finishes primary school	2	2.67	60	80	7	9.33	6	8	75
Girls are victims of sexual harassment in school	9	12	33	44	26	34.67	7	9.3	75
Mean score		16.33		58		15.66		10	

Three scores draw one's attention on this table. The respondents disagreed by a great majority that a secondary school girl should get married when she earned a husband (68% of the respondents) and that a girl should get married as soon as she finished high school (by a Disagree score of 80%). This shows that Niamey people were way ahead in their positive beliefs about girls' education. Many of them, however, disagreed that there were sexual harassments against girls in school (44%) although another 34% acknowledged that they did not know. We prefer to be on the Don't Know side since, in a conservative society such as that of Niger where topics such as harassments are taboo and not discussed, it understandable that respondents did not even know what it meant for them to give a very informed view point.

7. Discussion: Comparing Niamey and Dosso Results

Dosso is a provincial city 140 Km East of Niamey. We took seven primary schools from Niamey and six from Dosso. In Dosso 40.58% of the primary school students that should be in secondary school did not transition to their school, whereas in Niamey this rate was 24.65%. Moreover, Dosso's mean score of the five years' transition's rate which was 63.80% was lower than Niamey's (65.97%). The results showed that failure for girls to transition to secondary school was a reality in both Dosso and Niamey.

Regarding the factors contributing or not to the failure of girls' transitioning to secondary school in both school districts of Dosso and Niamey, the following table comparing the mean scores of responses regarding each factor helps highlight the differences and similarities.

Table 6: Percentage of factors for/ against girls' transition to secondary school

School districts	Factors/ issues	Percentage of Responses			
		Agree	Disagree	Don't Know	Strongly Agree
DOSSO	Factors against	49.13	41.64	10.14	-
	Factors in favour	68.2	18.02	4.84	1.06
	Prejudice	18.23	56.81	17.38	9.09
	Other issues against	19.69	71.21	2.27	3.03
	Socio cultural factors	53.78	29.54	9.84	6.81
	Economic factors	59.84	31.06	6.81	1.51
NIAMEY	Factors against	47	34.5	6.83	11.66
	Factors in favour	44.26	14.66	04.8	36.26
	Prejudice	19.7	66.66	7.11	6.52
	Other issues against	16.33	58	15.66	9.99
	Socio-cultural factors	47	34.5	6.83	11.66
	Economic factors	24.66	49.77	6.22	22.22

This summary table indicates that, adding the Agree and the Strongly Agree scores, 69.8% of respondents in Dosso and 80.52% in Niamey were in favor of girls' schooling since they agreed and strongly agreed with the factors in favor. However, Niamey's rate was superior to Dosso's, which is perfectly understandable since Niamey is the capital city and the positive image of girls schooling is a reality therein. Undoubtedly, following from these scores, 18.02% of respondents in Dosso and 14.66% in Niamey still happened to be against girls' schooling based on their disagreement with the factors in favor. Taken individually though, Dosso's rate was higher than Niamey's. We believe that scores against girls' transition in both districts were still too high in a country where giving girls equal opportunities was at the forefront of the government's struggle.

Regarding the factors against girls' schooling, Dosso seemed to be equally split on agreement and disagreement. This is certainly surprising but understandable in semi-urban areas given their mixed feelings about girls' education in general. The scores in Niamey district surprised more since followed the same trend as in Dosso. This was probably due to carelessness on the part of the respondents or simply to the cultural and religious influence on the respondents. To date, many rural and semi-urban people still see no point in schooling a girl child since she is to become the member of another person's family once she gets married.

On factors related to prejudice against girls' schooling, both Dosso and Niamey strongly disagreed (almost 57% in Dosso and 67% in Niamey). The same trend was found in the case of issues against girls' schooling where Dosso respondents disagreed by 71.21% and those in Niamey by 58%. In the case of socio-cultural and economic factors, scores of agreements seemed to be higher in Dosso than in Niamey. This implies that respondents in Dosso were more inclined to believing these factors constituted a hindrance to girls' schooling than Niamey's. Here again, there remained a few who supported girls' schooling by disagreeing with the factors against,

meaning that they were in favor of girls' schooling. The overall trend concerning all factors was that, in both districts, many respondents did not see these factors against girls' schooling as a hindrance although the few who agreed remained a few too many.

By and large, the results of this study in Dosso and Niamey districts showed that the transition of girls into secondary school was not only a reality but also many factors worked against it if we trust the responses from our participants. Doubtless, in many cases the majority of participants had shown that they supported the transition of girls in school but the general tendency of the agreement scores turned around 50 to 70%, which means that there still were issues that needed to be addressed regarding girls' schooling in Niger.

8. Conclusion

In this study, we have investigated the transition of girls to secondary school in two regions of Niger mainly Niamey and Dosso. Results showed that failure for girls to transition effectively to secondary school was indeed a reality. Also, many factors hindered girls' transition to secondary school in the two investigated districts. These included those that literature had so much mentioned, i.e., the socio-cultural factors (early marriage, misinterpretation of religious beliefs, etc.) and the economic factors (poverty of parents, etc.) and those factors least highlighted in research reports mainly the ones related to girls themselves (girls' menses, for example) and institutional variables (distance from school to places of residence or home).

In light of these results, it is essential for parents and stakeholders to pay a great attention to these issues so school can offer the same opportunities to a girl child as the ones offered to boys. This would help local communities advance and reach a more sustainable development amidst success in a fight against poverty, for, as the saying goes in Niger, "where there is knowledge, there is no space for poverty" provided that the knowledge itself is useful knowledge for the stakeholders. With this in mind, initiatives such as building more rural schools, providing food and safe shelter for distant school children (Chekaraou, 2016) and helping poor families through very low-interest or, preferably, no-interest loans should be encouraged and continued. These will make them feel secure, reduce the domestic duties of girls and assist them with the distances that they travel to come to school.

It is our hope that this small study has contributed to explaining the reasons that push girls not to transition to secondary school in Niger.

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