"New era towards gender equality in Uganda?"

A case study in rural Lukonko on households’ perceptions towards sending their girls and boys to primary school.

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ABSTRACT

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Background: Worldwide, gender inequality has existed for a long time due to culture, religion and patriarchal structures, sometimes maintained by law. As a result, millions of girls lose their right to schooling, and it is affecting the development of entire nations. Uganda, on the other hand, has for the past decade had many girls accessing school and hence, an increase in the quantitative perspective of gender equality. This is a result of efforts and different projects to bring girls to school mobilised by many organisations, together with the government. Uganda implemented free universal primary education over 20 years ago, and was the first of all nations in Sub-Saharan Africa to apply free universal secondary education in 2007. However, do these structural changes contribute to a development in the qualitative perspective of gender equality in Uganda? Have this led to changed perceptions in the rural households regarding education for their girls and boys respectively?

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to understand the development of gender equality in Uganda focusing on school attendance. This will be identified through listening to the perceptions of rural households towards sending their girls and boys to primary school. The result intends to contribute to a greater understanding of the qualitative development of gender equality in Uganda, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal number 5 implemented by the United Nations.

Research question: What are the perceptions of rural households in Uganda towards sending their girls and boys respectively to primary school?

Method: A qualitative method through 18 interviews, one focus group discussion and discussions with 22 children in a rural area. The village Lukonko in Eastern Uganda was chosen based on a convenience selection and since the number of girls attending school has grown rapidly in this area.

Conclusion: Girls’ access to primary school was more valued than boys’ access which constitutes reversed gender inequality. The main reason was that girls provide more future support to the household. Yet, many of the reasons for sending girls to primary school were rooted in issues of gender inequality. The qualitative development of gender equality has progressed in terms of the value of the girls’ education, but not regarding the underlying societal issues of gender inequality.

Keywords: Gender equality in rural sites, attendance in primary school, changing perceptions, development, Uganda.
## INDEX

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### ABSTRACT

1.0. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1
  1.1. BACKGROUND ........................................................................................................... 2
    1.1.1. UGANDA .............................................................................................................. 3
  1.2. PURPOSE ...................................................................................................................... 5
  1.3. RESEARCH QUESTION ............................................................................................... 5

2.0. THEORIES .................................................................................................................... 6
  2.1. EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS .............................................................. 6
  2.2. EDUCATION AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS ...................................................... 7
  2.3. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ASPECTS ......................................................................... 8
  2.4. EDUCATION AND REVERSED GENDER INEQUALITY ............................................. 9

3.0. PREVIOUS STUDIES ................................................................................................... 10
  3.1. OBSTACLES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ............................................................... 10
  3.2. DECISION-MAKING ON CHILDREN’S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ................................. 10
  3.3. HOUSEHOLDS’ PERCEPTIONS ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ..................................... 12

4.0. METHOD ..................................................................................................................... 15
  4.1. MINOR FIELD STUDY SCHOLARSHIP ..................................................................... 15
  4.2. RESEARCH STRATEGY – QUALITATIVE APPROACH .............................................. 15
  4.3. REFLECTIONS ON TRANSLATION ......................................................................... 16
  4.4. RESPONDENTS ......................................................................................................... 16
  4.5. DATA .......................................................................................................................... 17
    4.5.1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS ...................................................................... 17
    4.5.2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ............................................................................ 19
    4.5.3. DISCUSSIONS WITH CHILDREN ....................................................................... 21
    4.5.4. TRANSCRIPTION ............................................................................................... 22
  4.6. RELIABILITY ............................................................................................................... 22
  4.7. RESEARCH ETHICS AND ETHICAL APPROACH .................................................... 23
  4.8. METHOD CRITICISM ............................................................................................... 23

5.0. DATA AND ANALYSIS ............................................................................................... 25
  5.1. PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY ................................................................. 25
  5.2. GENDER PREFERENCE AT BIRTH ........................................................................... 25
  5.3. VALUES OF ATTENDANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL ................................................... 27
  5.4. GROUNDS FOR ATTENDANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL ............................................. 32
  5.5. IMPLICATIONS FOR ATTENDANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL ....................................... 34
  5.6. BENEFICIAL FOR GIRLS OR BOYS? ......................................................................... 36

6.0. CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................... 37
  6.1. DISCUSSION .............................................................................................................. 37
  6.2. FURTHER STUDIES ................................................................................................. 39

7.0. REFERENCES .............................................................................................................. 37

8.0. APPENDICES .............................................................................................................. 46
  8.1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS .......................................................................... 46
  8.2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ................................................................................. 46
  8.3. DISCUSSIONS WITH CHILDREN ............................................................................. 46
1.0. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is an issue that has been widely discussed over the past decades and the initiatives towards gender equality from a macro perspective have grown rapidly. The importance of gender equality is emphasized in the Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ongoing between 2015 – 2030, set by the members of the United Nations (UN). UN dedicated SDG number 5 to focus on achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls, in order to tackle the severely rooted gender-based discrimination caused by social norms and patriarchal attitudes worldwide (UN, 2017). The chief of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka declared in 2015 that not a single country, out of the 189 countries that in 1995 adopted a blueprint to achieve equality for women, has reached gender equality and parity (The Guardian, 2015).

The implication of gender equality is equality of both sexes regarding opportunities, rights, responsibilities, participation, visibility and empowerment in all areas of private and public life (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017). Warth and Koparanova (2012) describe gender equality as “rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female”. Holzner, Neuhold and Weiss-Gänger (2010) elaborate a situation where “…all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles; that the different aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally”. Alvarez Lopez (2013) affirms that non-existence of discrimination based on gender is the ultimate aim.

The consequences from gender inequality are many and one of them determines the lives of the children at an early stage; the right to attend school. It is known that through empowering girls by allowing them to attend school, societies, communities and whole nations will be more prosperous and more just (Plan International, 2017). Sen (1999) argues that education appears to provide beneficiary conditions for females and could be a contributing factor for a more sustainable and equal society that decreases poverty.

Economic growth, development and sustainable peace can be achieved if more young women are included in decision-making and in the societies (OECD, 2011). Educated women are less likely to die in childbirth and less likely to get married and have children at an early age. They are more likely to find work and earn more, have healthier and fewer children, improve child nutrition and have children that attend school (Daumerie and Madsen, 2010; World bank, 2017). Thus, empowerment of girls and women is crucial.
Still, over 35 million girls across the world do not have access to education (UNICEF, 2017). As a result, the consequences are multiple and affect the life of the girl child to a great extent. The risks are increased illiteracy, heavy burden from house holding, child abuse, child marriage, pregnancy, risk of getting infected by HIV and complications from childbirth which in worst case can cause death (UNA Sweden, 2016). This marginalization constitutes a huge issue due to the fact that gender equality has been argued to be an essential component in reaching sustainable development (Bayeh, 2016). Because, how can sustainable development occur if women are excluded?

1.1. BACKGROUND

The development and progress from gender inequality to gender equality has not followed the same advancement around the world (UNDP, 2016). Many of the countries that face more challenges and difficulties regarding this matter are located in Africa (UNESCO, 2018). Due to traditions, cultures, religions, norms, values and legislations upheld by a patriarchal society to maintain women at a subordinate position, these countries still have many achievements left before women have the same opportunities and basic rights as men (UNICEF, 2017).

Considering school attendance in Africa, even though there has been a radical increase in girls’ educational participation in most low-income countries since the millennium, the gender inequality is still widely extended (UN, 2012). UNESCO (2014) states that 16.6 million girls are out-of-school in Sub-Saharan Africa. The reasons for this might be due to poverty, religion, cultural norms, social exclusion, geographic inaccessibility, domestic workload, security, ethnicity, living in rural or slum residence, conflicts, poor quality of education or lack of basic facilities. Often these barriers are related to gender which cause bigger disadvantages in attending education (Rutaremwa and Bemanzi, 2013; UN, 2015).

Social power structures and socially constructed norms create gender roles that are influencing the school attainment for girls to a great extent (Mincer 1974; Becker 1991). These gender roles are affecting the opportunities, rights, capabilities and responsibilities for girls to access school (Eagly and Wood, 2012; Sarker, Ahm and Suffiun, 2017; Sida, 2017). In order to close the gender gap in school attendance, especially at higher levels, the systemic discriminatory environments that are affecting girls need to be recognized. Further, even if institutional and legal framework may support achievements, success will not be reached without undertaking the social norms surrounding girls’ education (UNDP, 2016).
1.1.1. Uganda

Uganda has comparatively progressive laws that are promoting gender equality, but still discriminatory norms and traditions continue to be widespread (UNDP, 2016). The low social, political and economic status and discrimination of the Ugandan women is visible through their asset ownership, economic opportunities, overwork at home and on farms (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2014 and 2016). They generally earn less than men and are therefore poorer, less educated, not heads of households and have reduced decision-making power. Simultaneously, they are facing immense risk of rape, violence, forced marriages, female genital mutilation, HIV, abuse and lack of health service (The World Bank, 2017).

Over 13% of female youth in Uganda do not access primary school, mainly because of decisions made by their guardians, parents or relatives (EPDC, 2014). The attitudes of parents are crucial in the decision-making on school attendance for the children (Sarker et.al. 2017). Considering school attendance for girls, the role of the mother seems to be of great importance (Kakuba, 2014; Luz and Agadjanian, 2015). Educated mothers know the value of education and make efforts to ensure that their girls will receive education too (Samal, 2012).

More than half of the children enrolled in Uganda drop out of primary school before completing, majority of them being girls (Pallegedara and Yamano, 2011; EPDC, 2014). Thus, the literacy rate is lower for women at 85% than for men at 90% (EPDC, 2014). Of those enrolled in secondary school, 30.5% of all girls drop out in comparison to boys at 23.5% (Kasente, 2003). Causes for drop outs may be geographical or due to resource shortages (Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook and Hunt, 2010). Further reasons for girls to not be able to access school are cultural and social, where 46.5% of all girls marry before the age of 18 years (UNGEI, 2011). Traditional values and norms that generate gender roles also prevent girls from attending school (Davison and Kanyuka, 1992; Hyde 1993).

Although, the main reason for girls to not get access to school is economic caused by poverty since Uganda is one of the world’s least developed countries, with 33.2% of its population living in absolute poverty (Globalis, 2013). In society, the ideas of education for girls and boys often differ. The boys’ education is considered to be an investment for generating income for the family in the future, while the girls’ education is viewed as an obligation (Samal, 2012). In poverty, where many families cannot afford to send all their children to school, the sons’ education is often prioritized (Daumerie and Madsen, 2010).
Nevertheless, due to this challenging situation resources have been mobilized over the last decades to improve gender equality, focusing on providing education for girls. This as a result of the research done on the positive impacts on the social and economic aspects in the society through educating girls. UN agencies, non-governmental organizations and the government have implemented various models, practices, programs, constructions, social mobilization and advocacy in Uganda to enhance the situation (Rutaremwa and Bemanzi, 2013).

In 2007, Uganda was the first of all nations in Sub-Saharan Africa to implement free universal secondary education. Free universal primary education policy was applied as early as in 1997 (Pallegedara and Yamano, 2011). As a result, the number of total primary school enrolment has tripled since 1996 from 2.7 million to 8.5 million in 2013. The net enrolment ratio in primary school improved from 86% in 2000 to 96% in 2012 (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2013). The achievement of having equally many girls as boys in primary school has been fulfilled. Both in primary school, secondary school and at tertiary levels the ratio of girls to boys has been improved tremendously since 2000. The government implemented a law in 2008 that requires all children to attend primary school. Therefore, since the attendance is mandatory, households that do not send their children to primary school can be convicted to a fine or arrested (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016).

These imposed political efforts and structures, that have been set by the government of Uganda in line with the goals of the UN, seem to be aiming towards accomplishments. Hence, it seems like Uganda is on its way towards gender equality in terms of equal access to school. At least when considering the results from a quantitative perspective. Nonetheless, it is crucial to follow up on the qualitative advancement of gender equality to identify the development (Subrahmanian, 2005). Because if a sustainable and equal world should be achieved it is vital to not just change the numbers, but to also embrace and apply human rights worldwide. There is a difference between the quantitative aspect of education in terms of gender parity, and the qualitative aspect of education in terms of gender equality. Achievements of gender parity is just a start towards gender equality in, within and through education. Assumptions should not be made that gender parity automatically leads to gender equality (Subrahmanian, 2005).

Due to this immense increase of especially girls in primary school an interesting perspective to examine is if more girls are being sent to school out of strategic reasons (Becker 1991; Buchmann, 2000; Mahmud and Amin, 2006; Sarker et.al., 2017). Or, is it because the households have begun to value the education equally among their girls and boys? Or, as in the
study by Edewor (2017), have the households realized the benefits of educated girls and are now favouring them? The increase of girls attending school might in fact result in a reversed gender gap with boys lagging behind (Grant and Behrman, 2010). UNDP (2013) presents a global trend in gender equality where not all gender inequality favours men, especially in education. It is important to examine this trend for fundamental reasons, but also since this decrease in men’s well-being could result in resistance to gender equality policies.

This is why Uganda, with its quantitative increase in gender equality in relation to school attendance, makes an interesting object for this thesis. The city Jinja is located in the Eastern region where the enrolment rate for girls is the highest in the country (Kasente, 2003). There is a fair balance of girls and boys being educated and in some cases, the male pupils are even out countered by the female pupils. This indicates that education for the girl child is highly prioritized in the Jinja district (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Lukonko is a rural village in the district 30 kilometres from the centre. In this area the school attendance for girls has increased vastly during the past decades because of efforts made by the government and non-governmental organizations. Thus, Lukonko constitutes a suitable location for a case study.

Research on different factors that hinder school attendance for girls have been made, but research on the progress of perceptions on gender equality has been limited in Uganda (Rutaremwa and Bemanzi, 2013). UNDP (2016) states in a report that more qualitative data is needed to understand gender equality in relation to education in Africa. Relevant to know is what progress the structural efforts have made on the choice among households to send their girls and boys to primary school. Is there possibly hope for a new era towards a quantitative and qualitative gender equality in Uganda in terms of school attendance?

1.2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the development of gender equality in Uganda focusing on school attendance. This will be identified through listening to the perceptions of rural households towards sending their girls and boys to primary school. The result intends to contribute to a greater understanding of the qualitative development of gender equality in Uganda in line with the SDG number 5.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTION

❖ What are the perceptions of the rural households in Uganda towards sending their girls and boys respectively to primary school?
2.0. Theories

In general, there are three broad theories to explain educational decision-making on household level in developing countries. The first consists of education in relation to economic aspects, the second one being education related to resource constraints, and the third is the decisions on education influenced by cultural arguments and traditional norms (Buchmann, 2000). Lastly, education linked to reversed gender equality is presented in this chapter.

2.1. Education and Economic Aspects

According to Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008), the adoption of education in development policies is grounded in the Human Capital theory. The idea behind education is to make an investment for future benefits in terms of income via improving the human capital through skills, knowledge and social capital. An individual expects economic benefits from consuming time and other goods for school attainment. Reflecting on household level, parents identify the net present value of benefits and costs from investing in their children and it is the result from an economically rational decision. The decision is guided by the anticipation that the success of one family member will benefit everyone in the household (Buchmann, 2000; Sarker et al., 2017). Hence, the decision on educational attainment is mainly based on the expectation of future profits to the household (Mahmud and Amin, 2006).

The labour market is considered to be an influencing factor for investments in children depending on gender (Mahmud and Amin, 2006). It is likely that the performance for the girls and boys differ. The parents ambition for their children is shaped in early years because of the prevailing gender based division of labour (Sarker et al., 2017). This in turn results in low investments in education for girls. Mahmud and Amin (2006) argue that this is especially prominent in developing countries where the perceptions are that the expected return for educational investments in boys is linked to increased opportunities in the labour market. At the same time, the increased opportunities for work is viewed as insignificant for girls. Buchmann (2000) is reasoning in the same way, but adds that the parents are also likely to invest in children with better academic potential. The theory is associated with altruism because the parents invest in their children not only to improve their own living situation, but also since they expect to get support from the children in the future (Becker, 1991). According to Armer and Gewirtz (1986) this model might be particularly suitable in developing countries due to the fact that family welfare is generally valued above individual welfare. The parents often rely on the support from their children as a result of the non-existence of pension programs.
However, the theory assumes a perfect market with wage as a function of human capital and a free entry into the market. Resource limitations hamper the altruism of parents and an aspect of quantity and quality trade-offs becomes significant. An increase in quantity is more difficult if the children are of higher quality, and an increase in quality is more expensive when there are many children. This results in less capacity for the households to educate their children the higher the number of children becomes. This in turn may result in the households educating fewer children as a survival strategy (Becker and Lewis, 1973; Willis 1973; Kakuba, 2014). Conversely, studies in Africa have shown neutral or positive effects of the size of families and education (Gomes, 1984; Chernichovsky, 1985). In African countries, the common system of extended families can instead facilitate school attainment for the children through provision of resources (Shavit and Pierce, 1991). Criticism towards this theory has been given by economists since the theory assumes a perfect market which mostly does not apply in Africa. Reasons for this are a limited access to credit, underestimation the uncertainty of salaries in future employment and diminishing the relation between a child’s background and the benefits of education. And above all, the religious and cultural considerations that affect school attainment and the fact that children can both study and work. (Buchmann, 2000; Kobiané 2006; Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008).

2.2. Education and resource constraints

Resource constraints are another way to determine educational decisions on household level. Inadequate resources in a household limit the parents’ opportunity to follow altruistic ambitions for their children. In the choice of acting for immediate or future needs, poor families find it harder to risk the immediate welfare based on expectations that future education might have been able to give. A common strategy for survival in the poor families is to allow the children to go for income activities (Buchmann, 2000). The resource theory of conjugal power suggests that the influence a partner has on decision-making in a household depends on the resources they bring into the marriages. The implication is that mothers who are salaried employed and bring contribution to the income of the household have more influence on the decisions in the family than unemployed women. Hence, the occupational status of mothers may bring independent influence over the education of the children. More independence of the women will result in the better chances of school attendance for the children, especially the daughters. However, poverty may force mothers to work which can result in girls staying at home to take care of the household chores (Samal, 2012).
2.3. **EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ASPECTS**

Educational decisions can also be associated to social aspects such as cultural opinions, traditional norms and values. According to Sen (1992), cultural aspects have an intermediate role in influencing individual’s choices. Education for girls is significantly associated with the parental attitudes which in turn are related with cultural values that restraints educational gender equity in most developing countries (Hamid, 1993). Moghadam (2004) describes how a patriarchal society is characterized by “male domination, son preference, restrictive codes of behaviour for women, and the association of family honour with female virtue”. Patriarchal norms are a common reason that hinder girls to access school because of favoured treatment of boys (Davison and Kanyuka, 1992; Hyde 1993). Examples in Africa show how the combination of cultural and economic elements can explain the households’ choice of school attendance for their children, such as bride price or social behaviour (Kakuba, 2014). Consequently, parent’s attitudes regarding education of children may differ depending on gender given the culture in the society (Sarker et.al., 2017).

The social role theory claims that gender roles are produced by societal expectations based on stereotypes and the sexual division of labour. Gender roles are closely interrelated with gender stereotypes according to Eagly and Wood (2012). Traditionally, in the neoclassical model of the family, men have been considered as the financial providers and the women have been seen as the caretakers of the households (Mincer, 1974; Becker 1991). Hence, the girls are being raised accordingly to these expectations which is of more weight than provision of education. These cultural perspectives of patriarchy influence the decisions made by the parents towards school attendance for their children depending on gender. This in turn generates gender inequality in school attainment (Sarker et.al., 2017).

In many societies, including Uganda, it is expected for the girls to be married and move away to become a member of the husband’s household. The boys stay with the family and inherit the land. Conservative and traditional gender perceptions pervade the rural individual households. Subsequently, parents in rural households expect similar traditional roles in their children’s future marital life. Hence, parents consider the best investments in education is for boys as a long-term insurance for maximization of the wealth of the family (Sarker et.al., 2017). These discriminatory attitudes are a result of gender roles, sex stereotypes and patriarchal norms that benefit the boys and hamper the girls (Buchmann, 2000).
2.4. Education and Reversed Gender Inequality

Even though gender inequality is a widespread phenomenon all over the world, the gender gap in education has in many countries changed over time due to efforts by organizations and governments (Ganguli, Hausmann and Viarengo, 2014). From an educational perspective, the gender gap has closed and even reversed in several countries due to many factors. Becker (1992) highlights the service sector and its rapid expansion as a cause. Killingsworth and Heckman (1986), Greenwood, Seshadri and Yorukoglu (2005) and Goldin (2006) bring up the piped water, appliances and electricity that changed the household work. Galor and Weil (2000) discuss technological impact of the change, that shifted from human energy to the mechanical use. Goldin, Katz and Kuziemko (2006) also emphasize technology related to birth-control and the improved access to it. In some countries, the decline in family sizes is also seen as a correlated and possible determinant for the reversed educational gender gap (Caldwell, 1982; Galor and Weil, 1996).
3.0. PREVIOUS STUDIES

3.1. OBSTACLES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Despite relatively high school enrolment, there are still challenges for many children to attend education. Socio-economic indicators such as households’ characteristics and parent’s education, occupation, income and wealth are established factors for education of the children, both in developed and developing countries (Samal, 2012). Kasente (2003) studied gender and education in Uganda and found that the major obstacles for school attendance are physical, geographical and economic reasons. Even though universal primary education and universal secondary education have been implemented in Uganda, there are still costs of uniforms, books, other supplies as well as fees for the school to cover their expenses since the government often delay their payment (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2010; Kakuba, 2014).

The Uganda EdData Survey in 2001 found that even though free primary education was introduced in 1997, excessive poverty and expenses of supplies for school were affecting enrolment and monetary reason was the main factor for not attending school (Uganda Bureau of Statistics and ORC Macro, 2001). The same reason was showing as the main factor in the surveys from 2005/2006 and 2009/2010 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2011). Consequently, despite subsidized education, these fees constitute a challenge in attaining education for poor households (Kakuba, 2014). Alongside, Basu (1999) affirms that the socio-economic resources of the families often determine a child's school attendance. The obstacles of school fees and expensive supplies are minor for wealthier families. It is also less important for wealthier families with the opportunity cost of sending children to school instead of having them to help out at the farm, at home or through an income generating activity (Basu, 1999). Other hurdles for not attending school are poor school quality, not useful education, unwilling parents, unwilling children, displacement and insecurity (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Further, Wilson (2010) studied barriers to girls’ education in Malawi and found that girls are easily influenced by the boys’ attitudes. The boys need to realize and understand that girls are in school for their education.

3.2. DECISION-MAKING ON CHILDREN’S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

A huge determinant of the children’s school attendance is the sex of the household head. Kakuba (2014) discovered that households in Uganda with female heads seem to be more likely to provide education for their children in comparison to households with male heads, even where there were inadequate resources. The same phenomena has been discovered in Burkina
Faso, Ghana, seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Togo (Pilon, 1995; Lloyd and Blanc, 1996; Kabore, Lairez, and Pilon, 2003; Rolleston, 2009). Samal (2012) did a study of parent’s attitudes towards schooling of children in India and found that mothers who have attained education know its value and make sure that their girls also receive education.

Several studies have revealed that mothers, in comparison to fathers, can invest in more love, time and attention in their children which promote educational attendance and achievement. Further, mothers are known to be better at budgeting and investing in welfare and education for the children. Finally, the mothers also expect more support from their children when growing old due to the fact that they have been vulnerable with limited access to resources and poor education as a result of gender inequality (Thomas, 1990; Lloyd and Gage-Brandon, 1994; Pilon, 1996; Duflo, 2003; Kabore et.al., 2003; Kobiané, 2006; Qian, 2008).

Luz and Agadjanian (2015) found the role of the mother to be vast during their study in Mozambique on women’s decision-making autonomy and children’s schooling. The results showed a positive correlation between women’s higher levels of decision-making autonomy and the chance of girls attending school. The opposite was true for the boys and hence, the mothers had a preference for girls’ schooling. The women with lower levels of decision-making autonomy had a smaller impact on the decisions for girls’ education.

Kasente (2003) on the contrary, found in her study that the role of the father in the decision of the child’s enrolment in rural areas of Uganda is a key influencing factor. The Eastern region, where the enrolment rate for girls is the highest, is also the area where the mothers have the lowest decision-making power to determine a child’s enrolment. Hence, Kasente (2003) argues that fathers “can be key players in enhancing girls’ access to primary education”. Warrington found similar results in her study from 2013 in Uganda. The results showed that it is essential for young women to have key role models that enable, support and encourage education. Fathers showed to have better opportunities to support their daughters’ education due to advantages of education, time, authority and money in comparison to the mothers.

Samal (2012) on the other hand, found that the females have almost equal decision-making power as the males in the household regarding children's education. Both the mothers and fathers were in favour of the education of the child, with attitudes indifferent of gender. According to Samal (2012), this was an unexpected result due to the fact that girls normally are disadvantaged in terms of school attendance in comparison to boys. Mercan (2010) studied the
perceptions of parents towards girls’ education in Turkey. The result showed no significance between the amount of children in the family and its effect on girls’ education.

When the parents in the household have attained education, this has a positive impact on school attendance for the children according to studies in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda (Pilon, 1995; Lloyd and Blanc, 1996; Buchmann, 2000; Glick and Sahn, 2000; Deininger, 2003; Ainsworth, Beegle and Koda 2005; Kakuba, 2006; Kobiané, 2006; Lincove, 2009; Bajracharya, 2010). The reason for this can be explained through the correlation between education, employment and wealth. Education is costly, but if the parents have studied, they are most likely to earn a greater income through employment and thereby increase the socio-economic status of the household. Hence, they are more capable of providing education for their children. Though, Mukudi (2002) highlights the issue of parents getting into huge debt from borrowing money for the children’s education. In Kilome in Kenya, the women do everything they can to ensure that the girls are going to school, including jeopardizing their marriages through challenging their husbands (Mukudi, 2002). An educated parent has a more progressive mind-set on the importance of education, and especially of the girl child. Further, children in households with heads that only have primary education, tend to remain excluded from secondary education to a great extent (Kakuba, 2014).

### 3.3. Households’ perceptions on school attendance

Sarker et.al. (2017) conducted a study on parental attitudes, gender equality and school attainment in Bangladesh. In their result, they argue that even though socio-economic factors of the household matter, the factor influencing educational attainment the most is parental attitudes, particularly for the girls. Further, they discovered that cultural and traditional attitudes are of great importance regarding school attainment for girls. Parents focus on raising their daughters to become ideal caretakers of the households, which is of greater importance than receiving higher education. Chisamya, DeJaeghere, Kendall and Aziz Khan (2011) conducted a study in Bangladesh and Malawi. The general opinion that derived from traditional attitudes, roles and norms based on gender, was that girls should aim for becoming a good wife and not focus on education. Sarker et.al. (2017) conclude by clarifying that the traditional gender role attitudes of parents support the model of cultural determinants of school attainment. Parents’ gender bias attitudes favour boys and decreases the opportunities for educational attainment for girls significantly.
Faughnan (2016) found in a study in Uganda that there is a perception that school environment is a threat to the girls’ virginity. Grant (2011) also came across this pattern in a research in rural Malawi on parents’ perceptions on adolescent sexual activity and early pregnancy in relation to their expectations and aspirations on school attendance for girls. The result showed that parents’ concern regards even their daughters that have not yet gone through puberty or are sexually active. In the conclusion, Grant (2011) states that “Although all parents aspire for their children to attend secondary school, these perceptions of daughters' relative risk weaken parents’ motivation to encourage daughters to remain in school”.

Tumushabe, Barasa, Muhanguzi and Otim-Nape (1999) together with other stakeholders, investigated the causes of low participation, performance and persistence of girls in primary school in Uganda. They found that the girls are disadvantaged in some parts of Uganda due to the bride price for marriages. Some parents showed greater interest in the dowry than in the education for the girls with the reasoning that “they will end up in the kitchen” any way.

A study on parental perceptions on children’s enrolment in Kenya by Buchmann (2000) showed that parents are more likely to support education when they expect financial help from the children in the future. Hence, they partly base the decision for the children’s education on securing their own economic welfare. In terms of scarce resources and ability to support education, the households in Kenya chose to invest more in boys. Daumerie and Madsen (2010) discovered the same pattern in Uganda. However, Edewor (2017) found the opposite in a study on parental perceptions on girls’ schooling in Nigeria. The result showed changing perceptions of the parents towards girls’ education, where girls were even favoured. Concurrently, the study in Turkey by Mercan (2010) also found positive perceptions on girls’ schooling and the benefits from it. Several studies in Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa and Thailand found female advantages in educational attainment out of those that had attended primary school (Knodel, 1997; Smith, 2001; Hallman and Grant, 2004; Tfaily, 2006).

The reason being that the parents have come to realize the benefits of educated daughters. Girls tend to help out more in the household, be more caring, loving and remember their parents. But most of all, they contribute with bigger financial and material support for aged parents. Boys on the other hand, tend to forget their parents when they marry and only care for their new family. The parents perceived that the boys were not as caring, less sympathetic and provide less help. If parents are sick, girls will visit, help out with the household chores and leave money. Boys will just visit for a short time to provide medicine. (Edewor, 2017).
Further, the study found that girls tend to favour their mother more than their father. Although, some parents said that it depends on the personality, some girls do not care for their parents while some boys do. Others perceived that the children were equal and that the intelligence were to decide whether the child should attend school or not. In conclusion, the majority of the respondents based their choice of educational attainment on an economic rational decision of future benefits, where the girls were perceived to be more caring, rewarding and beneficial. Parents also based their decision on the social prestige that was associated with educated children. (Edewor, 2017).

In line with this, Grant and Behrman (2010) studied changes in educational gender gap between the periods 1990-1999 and 2000-2006 in 38 countries in six less developed regions. The result showed that the gender gap has declined and been eliminated over time, and in most cases even reversed towards favouring the girls. The findings also proved that girls in South/East Africa achieve better progress in school. Teachers and parents in Bangladesh and Malawi perceived girls to be smarter than boys (Chisamya et.al., 2011). This denotes a nuanced perspective where boys are falling behind in education and a trend where girls’ advantages are emerging. The pattern of boys falling behind raises concern for the educational future of boys (Hewett and Lloyd, 2005; Grant and Behrman, 2010). However, it is possible that the female advantages in primary school are balanced by disadvantages in secondary school (Grant and Behrman, 2010).

The study in Bangladesh and Malawi by Chisamya et.al. (2011) studied the same phenomena as in this thesis. These countries have also had a rapid decline in the educational gender gap with even a reversed enrolment favouring girls. They wanted to investigate if this has impacted the gender equality. The study found that girls’ and women’s secondary status in these countries persist. Female issues regarding security, gender based violence, social norms, economic and legal discrimination remain and the path towards achieving gender equity continue. Hence, the idea that girls’ receiving education will empower women and transform gender relations does not seem to be the result in these cases. In other words, increased attendance for girls in school does not necessarily imply gender equality in the society (Subrahmanian, 2005; Chisamya et.al., 2011). Schuler (2007) also studied a case in Bangladesh and found changed attitudes of girls’ education, but the broader gender norms of education had not changed.
4.0. METHOD

4.1. MINOR FIELD STUDY SCHOLARSHIP

I received a Minor Field Study scholarship that allowed me to conduct my study in Uganda during two months (April-May 2018). I stayed in the city Jinja that is located in the Eastern region. The study took place in the village Lukonko, close to Jinja. This village was chosen partly because one of the translators lives in Jinja and was able to help out with formalities, provision of respondents and translation. But also due to the fact that the amount of girls that have attended primary school has increased immensely in this area during the past decades because of efforts by the government and non-governmental organizations. Hence, Lukonko constitutes a suitable location for a case study.

4.2. RESEARCH STRATEGY – QUALITATIVE APPROACH

The thesis aims to contribute to an increased understanding of the development of gender equality through diverse angles and perspectives from rural households. Therefore, a qualitative approach with an interpretation process is best suited (Pratt, 2009). Bryman and Bell (2015) describe how qualitative methods enable dialogues between people that facilitate the data collection process, systematic organization and search for patterns. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) further explain that qualitative approaches focus more on words than on numbers when processing the information to create an understanding of the social reality.

Grimen and Gilje (2007) discuss methodological individualism and methodological collectivism as different perspectives within sociology. The idea of methodological individualism is that individual human beings constitute the social phenomenon. The idea of methodological collectivism is instead that the action and thinking process of human beings may be brought back to the collective, and not necessarily to every individuals’ motive. Further, they elaborate that thoughts, motives and memories are collective that have forcing power over the individual who is a product of the social systems. Thus, the individual is an expression for the collective in which the society can be explained. Every social phenomenon and individual behaviours are best described through a comparison with other social phenomenon. In this thesis, the structures in the society in terms of programs, laws and projects can be seen as the collective that will impact the perceptions of school attendance within the households, the individuals. The social phenomenon is gender equality and how it is affecting school attendance. The ambition in this thesis is therefore to explain the perceptions of the households based on a methodological collective perspective.
4.3. Reflections on translation
Translators were needed due to the languages Luganda and Lusoga. This may have impacted the result in terms of lost nuances in the translation or less ability to ask spontaneous follow-up questions. However, I was ensured to work with experienced translators. I chose to work with both a female and a male translator so that the respondents could make a choice and be more comfortable, since cultural and social issues might have arisen otherwise. I briefed her and him about the importance of providing impartial and neutral translations and emphasized on only translating the exact words without adding or changing the sentences.

4.4. Respondents
The units of investigation in this thesis were the households in the rural village Lukonko. The various households included in the study were selected on the basis of a convenience selection, which is defined as those available at the time of the study according to Bryman and Bell (2015), and provide suitability and convenience (Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2010). This was mainly due to a geographical demarcation to an area close to Jinja where I lived in order to conduct physical interviews with respondents. In order to strengthen the relevance of the interviews with respondents, a goal-oriented selection criteria was created (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The criteria consisted of respondents being members of a household with both at least one girl child and one boy child in order to embrace the gender perspective.

In Uganda the concept of households is more relevant than the concept of families when discussing access to school attendance. A household includes a group of people who eat and live together under one roof. It does not necessarily entail biological relations among the members, but there can be guardians of the children that no longer are under the protection of their parents for some reason (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002). Reasons for children to stay in another household than the one of their parents may be because they are orphans, it is closer to better schools or they work as houseboys or maids (Kakuba, 2014). A head of the household is a person with authority who is responsible for the household and recognized as the head by the other members due to social status or age (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002). It is often this person that decides the school attendance for the children (Kakuba, 2014).

During the visit in the village Lukonko it was necessary to apply an appropriate approach when entering the village to gain trust in the community (Christopher, Watts, McCormick and Young, 2008). This is essential in order to encourage the people to participate in the study. The translators and I managed to do this in a decent way due to a visit one week before the interviews.
to ask them if the study could be conducted in their village. The chairman that is in charge of
the village was approached and he approved. Since the translators are from Uganda, they are
familiar with the traditions, social behaviours and the language which removes many of the
barriers. A woman assisted in providing respondents and the people in the village were notified
in advance that we would be present during that week. In total, 20 respondents participated. 18
respondents were interviewed through semi-structured interviews which is described in 4.5.1.
Semi-structured interviews. Five of them, along with two new participants, later on participated
in a focus group discussion which is discussed in 4.5.2. Focus group discussion. Figure 1
presents a summary of the different respondents with age and sex.

Figure 1: Summary of the respondents

| No: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Age: | 25 | 30 | 30 | 31 | 34 | 35 | 35 | 36 | 40 | 40 | 41 | 41 | 46 | 50 | 52 | 57 | 58 | 60 | 62 |
| Sex: | F | F | F | F | F | F | F | F | F | M | M | F | F | M | F | F | F | F | F |

Further, 22 children participated through three discussions divided by age and sex which is
explained in 4.5.3. Discussion with children. Figure 2 presents a summary of the children.

Figure 2: Summary of the children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>13-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex:</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5. DATA

4.5.1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The data was mainly collected through 18 semi-structured interviews with members of different
households in the rural village Lukonko. The time frame and budget for this thesis limited the
amount of interviews to 18. Out of these 18 respondents, four were male. These interviews
enabled the discovery of the respondents’ own experiences, understandings, interpretations and
reflections. This method is preferable since it allows the respondents to define, describe and
elaborate their answers (Denscombe, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are flexible and
provide opportunities for the interviewer to manage the interview with follow-up questions for
deeper and more detailed answers (Bryman and Bell, 2015). All the characteristic distinctions
and contemplations needed to be discovered. This was an advantageous approach in this thesis
since the subject has many aspects, which risk receiving answers not connected to the research
question. Bryman and Bell (2015) highlight the importance of embracing open and neutral
questions that provide scope for dialogue with respondents in order to provide comprehensive
responses that facilitate the analysis and conclusion of the thesis. This was taken into consideration when conducting the type, number and sequence of the questions (Eseiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns and Wängnerud, 2017).

Before conducting interviews with the respondents, three pilot interviews were conducted. They were on average one hour each and held with women in their households in a similar area to Lukonko based on a convenience selection. The result from these interviews were not used in the data or as a base for the analysis in this thesis. The purpose was to test the design of the interview questions, if they resulted in relevant answers and to train interview methodology. Pilot interviews tend to provide the opportunities to develop and improve the interview questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The respondents were asked about their opinions of the questions and if they thought any of the questions should be changed, rephrased or added. In the end, one more question was added and it became the final question in the semi-structured interview guide. See appendix 8.1. for the complete interview guide.

We took random walks in the village during one week and started talking to people where they were. Then the respondents got the opportunity to choose the location for the interview. All interviews took place on various occasions with individual and face to face meetings. It would have been preferred to conduct the interviews at neutral places to avoid angled or influenced responses. However, this was compensated by trying to embrace the correct body language, gestures, language use and ability to control the interviews to make respondents feel comfortable and confident in answering the questions (Patel and Davidson, 2011).

Every interview began with information about the ethical approach and the respondent’s approval of us to interview, photograph, record and note. Further, the background and purpose of the interview was explained. Then questions of the basic fact about the respondents in terms of if they had gone to school, their age, their position in and structure of the household, including information about the children. Following, the interview questions began. In order for the respondents to be able to highlight any thoughts about the topic that were not covered by the interview questions, all interviews were concluded with a request if there was anything they wanted to add or if they had any questions. The design of the interview questions needed to be free from the authors’ preconceived values in order to avoid angled results (Yin, 2009). However, Bryman and Bell (2015) argue that an investigation is almost impossible to perform without subjective elements. This was taken into account during the process as a reminder that the study did not take place to reinforce preconceived opinions.
4.5.2. Focus Group Discussion

Data was also collected through a focus group discussion. According to Olsson and Sörensen (2007), focus group discussions are being used to gather information that can be related to reactions, feelings, opinions and experiences from different situations. Bryman and Bell (2015) claim that focus group discussions are better at collecting the respondents’ points of view than ordinary, structured, individual interviews. The focus group discussions are often moderated by a moderator, in this case one of the translators, and an assistant, in this case me, to take notes during the discussion (Olsson and Sörensen, 2007). The benefit with a focus group discussion is that the respondents interact and reason together as they generate different opinions, deeper insights and a broader spectrum of ideas (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Hence, focus group discussions can provide more data in comparison to individual interviews, and that is why it was used in this thesis as a complement to the interviews (Wibeck, 2010).

The focus group discussions are likewise beneficial due to the fact that the moderator and the assistant may examine the general atmosphere among the respondents. The discussions also reveal what subjects that are being accepted in the group, and what subjects that are difficult to discuss which can be ground for further analysis. The purpose of the moderator is not to conduct an interview in the same sense as during semi-structured interviews. Instead, the idea is for the respondents to discuss spontaneously with each other with as little interference from the moderator as possible. The moderator is present to initiate the discussion and later on introduce new aspects of the subject to maintain the discussion. It is essential for the moderator to ensure that all respondents are able to speak their opinion. (Wibeck, 2010).

Focus group discussions can be structured and unstructured. A structured focus group discussion is advantageous since the moderator is able to steer the discussion into relevant subjects. Conversely, there is a risk of that the moderator tends to transfer its own perceptions and understanding to the group members (Wibeck, 2010). However, Hylander (1998) argues that the fact that the group members bring their own questions and comments reduces the risk of a subjective moderator. Unstructured focus group discussions embrace the interest of the group members in an excellent way. Nevertheless, unstructured focus group discussions lead to an unorganized discussion that is difficult to analyse (Wibeck, 2010). During the focus group discussion, a structured approach was applied. The risk of including preconceived perceptions were prevailed through the use of relatively broad and open questions. At the same time, free discussions were encouraged and we learned how to embrace observing roles.
Seven respondents, including one male, were selected to participate in the focus group discussion during 70 minutes. Five of them had previously participated in the semi-structured interviews. Bryman and Bell (2015) recommend smaller group when discussing a complex topic that needs to bring personal opinions within the whole group. It is important to not have several conversations within the discussion (Wibeck, 2010). Hence, seven people felt like a suitable number of respondents. These respondents were collected on a basis of interest of the phenomenon which is crucial when recruiting group members. Bryman and Bell (2015) discuss saturation of information within focus groups discussion where there is no point of conducting additional sessions if no new information is discovered and patterns are repeated. The focus group discussion took place after the 18 semi-structured interviews. I felt after the focus group discussion that I had received enough information to answer my research question, hence I did not continue with further sessions.

One of the biggest challenges with focus group discussions is according to Wibeck (2010) if a group cohesion arises which affects the credibility of the study. This might occur when the group members want to feel that they belong and agree to what seems to be the only socially acceptable way of thinking. This could happen due to exaggeration or group pressure. Then some members might fear to go against the collective mind-set and feel like an outsider (Wibeck, 2010). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) bring up the issue of respondents not providing honest or personal opinions since they might be affected by the other participants. There was a risk of this occurring due to the fact that only one was male. Nevertheless, we tried to bring in everyone in the discussion and the respondents brought their own different opinions and had various viewpoints on the subject.

Since the village Lukonko is relatively small, the group members knew each other which brought both benefits and disadvantages. According to Wibeck (2010) the benefits consist of a friendly atmosphere where no one is shy or afraid to be involved in the conversation. Nonetheless, some concerns might be considered given within the group and hence not discussed or commented during the focus group discussion. Further challenge could be an internal jargon that is difficult to interpret and potential existing conflicts within the group might affect the discussion (Wibeck, 2010). Prevention of these risks were made through focusing on follow-up questions and asking the group members to elaborate their reasoning. This enabled the receiving of well-defined and detailed material to become basis for analysis.
The focus group discussion began with the introduction of the subject and the purpose of the thesis along with all the information of the ethical approach. The discussion was followed by three questions that were constructed in an open way in order to answer the research question. Each question was discussed for circa 15 minutes among the participants with follow-up questions. In the end, the discussion was terminated with a request if there was anything they wanted to add. This resulted in that the respondents brought up another issue related to the topic that provided an interesting angle. See appendix 8.2. for the complete interview guide.

4.5.3. DISCUSSIONS WITH CHILDREN

In order to gain greater understanding of the phenomenon, discussions with 22 children were held dividing them into three groups based on age and sex. The children were not necessarily related to the adult respondents. Their answers were mainly to reinforce and support the answers that had already been alleged. The first group involved 10 boys in the age range of 8-10 years. The second group consisted of 5 girls between the ages of 10-12 years. The third group included 7 girls that were between 13-17 years. The reason for interviewing the children in groups was because of the power dynamic that occurs during all interviews (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). Both because the researcher is the one asking questions and since the researcher is controlling the research process. In discussions with children, power associated with age is also added. This power dynamic can be reduced by interviewing children in groups, because the children tend to be more relaxed when they are accompanied by their peers, and when they outnumber the adults (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002).

Cederborg (2010) emphasizes the importance of adapting and simplifying the language to facilitate the understanding for the children. Hence, the discussions with the children were relatively short and the language was adjusted. The discussions were not made under the same structured conditions as during the interviews and the focus group discussion. Yet, these discussions managed to provide insightful inputs from the children’s perspective with a gender aspect that could enable the analysis and facilitate a ground for discussion in the thesis. See appendix 8.3. for the complete interview guide.

During the collection of the data, an informal way of working was applied. To follow bureaucracy would not have worked in an area like Lukonko. Through avoiding a set-up of meetings and provision of interview guides in advance, more valid and natural responses can be extracted from the respondents according to Gubrium and Holstein (2002). This informal way of working also became a source of establishing a connection in the village. Since we came
every day during a week, we managed to become close to people. In the beginning of the week, most children were in school. Hence, it was a tremendously great opportunity to close the field week with sessions among the children. This ending resulted in a sum up and confirmation of the perceptions already collected from the adults.

4.5.4. TRANSCRIPTION

To reduce the risk of incorrect interpretation of the responses, all conversations were recorded and transcribed afterwards, except two semi-structured interviews that declined and the discussions with the children. The transcriptions made it easier for the analysis, where trends and patterns needed to be disclosed. Attention was payed to what frequency, extent and intensity different patterns occurred in the sessions (Wibeck, 2010).

4.6. RELIABILITY

Within qualitative research, the concept of reliability is discussed by Bryman and Bell (2015) and consists of four distinct sub-criteria. These are the basis for a reliable study and consist of; confirmation, dependability, credibility and transferability. Confirmation indicates whether the qualitative study is correct, impartial and can be confirmed by others where the confirmation is reinforced by a strong correlation between the theory and data. The criterion of confirmation is deemed to be met by the absence of biased opinions. Dependability refers to whether a repeated study would give the same results. In this thesis, this sub-criterion is believed to be fulfilled by the fact that all respondents were relevant considering their knowledge, perceptions and experiences. On the other hand, people's opinions tend to change and thus there is a degree of undependability in this thesis. Credibility implies how carefully the phenomena of the research question is identified and described. This thesis is characterized by credibility since the purpose was fulfilled when the interview questions were based on providing an answer to the research question, which enabled a relevant conclusion. Credibility is also reflected in the thorough review of the background, research phenomenon and previous studies. Transferability refers to whether the achieved understanding of the phenomenon is transferable to other households, including the extent to which the study is generalizable. However, Bryman and Bell (2015) consider that transferability and generalisability are difficult to achieve in qualitative research. This thesis is lacking in transferability due to the different ways of understanding and interpreting the phenomenon. Different factors may have influenced the truth of the answers, such as presence from others. Convenience selection also contributes to a reduced transferability.
4.7. Research ethics and ethical approach

Bryman and Bell (2015) emphasize the significance of an ethically conducted study. The Swedish Research Council (2002) further explain how four different ethical requirements should be considered and met when implementing a study; information requirement, consent requirement, confidentiality requirement and utility requirement. The information requirement is considered fulfilled when respondents were given information about the research question and purpose of the thesis. Moreover, why the information received was relevant and that it would only be used for this thesis. The consent requirement is considered satisfactory because all respondents were informed about the use of their personal data. They were also given the opportunity to approve that recordings and notes occurred during the interview. Confidentiality requirement was achieved since the respondents' information were not disclosed to third parties but only parties concerned by the thesis and everyone were anonymous. The utility requirement is considered reached because all information requested was of scientific interest, and no information has been distributed to any other party.

4.8. Method criticism

The reliability of this thesis is considered to be of good quality according to the above reasons and arguments, while it also contains some methodological shortcomings. Several references are of an older nature such as Becker and Lewis in 1973 and Becker and Tomes in 1976. Gustavsson (2004) believes that the sources should be relatively close in time. The reason why I chose to keep these sources is because of their vital and still relevant content.

The structure of qualitative studies can sometimes assume an unsystematic and subjective form and during the interviews there were times when I experienced difficulties in maintaining my objectivity. Also, although the majority of the respondents approved to be recorded, it may have contributed to a less secure and relaxed environment that can have resulted in less developed answers. Yet, the two semi-structured interviews that were not approved to be recorded may have provided a more secure and relaxed environment, but instead resulted in the risk of incorrect interpretation and lost information.

A more undisturbed environment for the interviews could have prevented distractions among respondents. At the same time, the respondents got to determine the place for the interviews to feel comfortable and secure. However, at two occasions we interviewed women while their husbands were present in the room. Although it was on their own initiative, this might have influenced their answers since it was a struggle to get detailed answers from them. The location
for the focus group discussion was in the house of a person who is highly appreciated in the village, which might have impacted the result if the respondents felt uncomfortable. There were no signs of this during the discussion, but there is no way to know for certain.

Further, it would have been ideal to interview an equal number of women and men to grip the gender perspective and be able to compare in the analysis. But this was not possible because many men declined to participate. One male respondent explained that it was probably because many of the male heads of the households have never gone to secondary school and they are ashamed of that. Hence, the majority of the result is presented from a female perspective that might have been different with equal number of women and men.

The fact that two people in the focus group discussion had not participated in the semi-structured interviews due to time limit might have both benefitted and hampered the result. If they would have participated in the semi-structured interviews prior to the focus group discussion they would have had a better insight into the subject. They would also have had time to contemplate on the questions that they would have already answered. However, there is also a benefit of introducing a subject for the first time since it brings out sincere and honest answers. The other five participants had time to reflect on the questions and their answers from the semi-structured interviews, and after discussing the topic with other respondents in the village they might have altered their answers later on in the focus group discussion.

The qualitative approach, the convenience selection and the few respondents are elements that contribute to the fact that the result in the thesis is not transferable to other villages. The number of respondents was relatively low, the regional demarcation was narrow and the number of households in the study was limited. Assumptions cannot be made that all households reason, experience and value school attendance for their children the same way as the respondents in this thesis. For a more generalizable study, a bigger number of respondents over a larger geographical area would have been necessary. However, the fact that there is no transferability should not be seen as a disadvantage as research can contribute to valuable knowledge without being transferable.
5.0. DATA AND ANALYSIS

The material from the 18 semi-structured interviews will be presented below along with themes from the interview guides. The result from the focus group discussion and the discussions with the children will be included into the answers to reaffirm or contradict the result. The analysis of the data in relation to previous studies and theory will be integrated.

5.1. PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY

All respondents were asked how they perceive gender equality. This was an important question because the term can be perceived in different ways that in turn can explain the reasoning of school attendance between girls and boys. In general, the concept of gender equality was difficult for the respondents to understand and explain. This might be due to the fact that an expression such as “gender equality” is made by the global North and is perhaps not communicated down to rural communities in the global South. However, almost half of the respondents considered women to be submissive and men to have more responsibility and power in decision-making. This also transpired through the fact that some of the female respondents had to ask for permission form their husbands to participate in the interview.

“If we talk gender equality with our men, then we are being disrespectful”
Female respondent

The other half of the respondents answered that their perception of gender equality is mutual understanding and respect, love, sharing responsibilities equally and cooperation between a woman and a man in a household. Roughly half of the female respondents had this opinion of gender equality. Among the male respondents one said that gender equality to him is to not misbehave before one another, to respect and listen to each other. Another male respondent said that gender equality to him is to give opportunities to both girls and boys. Both men and women should be given, share and treated equally. He gave school attainment as an example and I believe that his perception was reflected by the fact that all of his six children have attended school up to university level. Another male respondent on the other hand said that there is no need to have equality because men are on top. The last male respondent believed that the one in charge will not depend on gender, but on financial resources and brains.

5.2. GENDER PREFERENCE AT BIRTH

The respondents were asked how they value having a girl and a boy at birth. This question was significant since it explained a lot of the benefits that they are experiencing from having a girl and boy, and how that might affect the decision of school attendance. 15 out of 18 respondents,
three of them being males, preferred having a girl. Likewise, the female children in group B experienced that girls are more loved than the boys.

“The boys suffered when I grew up since girls were prioritized and preferred which I began to notice when I turned 16-17 years old”

Male respondent

The male respondent who made the statement above is 41 years old and it indicates how the phenomena of favoured girls that disadvantage boys might not be a new occurrence. The major reason for prioritizing a girl at birth was that the girls extend greater future financial and material support. Both to their new family but also to their original family, in comparison to the boys that mainly provide support to their wives’ family. Even the female children in group C stated that they think girls are being preferred because they take care of their parents after attaining education. This is in line with the theory of parents’ expectation of future support from their children that Becker (1991) highlights.

Similar to the study in Nigeria by Edewor (2017), the respondents both in the semi-structured interviews and in the focus group discussion seem to have realized the benefits of girls. Further reasons for prioritizing girls were identical to the reasons found by Edewor (2017). Girls tend to help out more in the household and take care of the family in sickness and in health. The male children in group A gave the same answer. The favouring of girls seems to be based on traditional gender roles where women are seen as the caretakers of the households (Mincer, 1974; Becker 1991) and the same attitudes were found in Bangladesh (Sarker et.al., 2017). These gender roles are based on societal expectations that compose gender stereotypes that limit and burden girls more than boys (Eagly and Wood, 2012). Even though the girls are favoured, this mentality will not result in gender equality since the responsibilities of individuals in these cases depend on gender (Warth and Koparanova, 2012).

The respondents also said that girls are also more caring and remember their parents in comparison to boys. One female respondent explained how boys might give money to the fathers, but the fathers will not disclose it to the wives. This is against the theory of Buchmann (2000) and Sarker et.al. (2017) where they claim that success of one family member will benefit everyone in the household. A male respondent that preferred girls argued that girls are more useful and love the parents more. Two other female respondents described how girls listen more and can understand the mother and the parents. Likewise, all the 12 female children said that they would most likely support their mother in the future. This bond between mother and
daughter that was portrayed by the respondents, was also found in the study by Edewor (2017), where the result showed that girls tend to favour their mother above their father. This might constitute an issue. If the fathers believe that they will not receive as much support from their girls, then they might prioritize school attendance for their boys instead, since Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) discuss education as an investment for the future. However, this does not seem to be the case in this sample since the majority of the male respondents preferred girls and many of them stated that it is because of the support.

Nevertheless, the three respondents, two females and one male, that preferred boys at birth did it out of the idea of conservative and traditional gender perceptions that Sarker et.al. (2017) discuss. It is because the boys are staying with the parents and the girls are leaving for the husband’s household. The respondents felt secure and enjoyed the company of having the boys at home. The boys will inherit the house, take care of it, help broaden the clan and bring home a wife. Even though the minority of the respondents preferred boys at birth, it can still constitute an issue if the opinions are being transferred and spread to the next generation as well. Because these discriminatory attitudes are a result of gender roles, sex stereotypes and patriarchal norms that benefit the boys and hamper the girls according to Buchmann (2000) and can generate gender inequality in school attendance (Sarker et.al., 2017).

5.3. VALUES OF ATTENDANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL
The respondents were asked how they value attendance in primary school for a girl and a boy respectively. This was perhaps the most essential question since it regarded the very core of the research question. In general, the observation was that all respondents seemed to value education for their children equally because all of their children in school age were enrolled. This, even though the average number of children per family among the respondents was five, which is against the theory of less capacity for the household to educate their children the higher the number of children becomes (Becker and Lewis, 1973; Willis 1973; Kakuba, 2014). It is more in line with what was found by Mercan (2010) and the premise by Gomes (1984) and Chernichovsky (1985), that a bigger sized family has a positive effect on education. Perhaps since the extended families in Lukonko can enable education for the children through provision of resources which is argued by Shavit and Pierce (1991). Relatedly, 13 out of 18 respondents declared that they send their children to school depending on age and not gender. The one who is born first gets to attend first and they all attend school at a specific age. All male respondents had this opinion. From this perspective, it seems that even though the majority of the
respondents prioritize the girls at birth, they still provide equal opportunities of schooling for girls and boys. This in turn would indicate a movement towards gender equality in terms of school attendance (Holzner et al., 2010).

Yet, the result has shockingly striking similarities with the study made by Edewor (2017), because a tendency towards prioritizing girls’ education was salient. 12 out of 18 respondents, including one male, valued the education for girls more than the boys. Similarly, 12 out of the 22 children said that they felt that girls are being preferred in terms of education. An interesting observation was that all female children that participated went to school, while three of the male children did not. This could be a coincidence or perhaps due to economic reason that has been found to be a huge barrier for schooling in Uganda (Kasente, 2003; Kakuba, 2014). In contrast to previous studies it seems to be affecting the boys this time. The respondents in the focus group discussion mentioned the issue that also has been brought up by Mukudi (2002), namely getting into huge debt to be able to send children to school.

“If I have to choose between a boy and a girl attending school because of poverty, I choose girl”

Female respondent

The statement is the very opposite of what is argued by Davison and Kanyuka (1992), Hyde (1993) and Sarker et al. (2017), who claim that parents’ gender bias attitudes and patriarchal norms favour boys and decreases the opportunities for educational attainment for girls significantly. The result is also against the study in Uganda made by Daumerie and Madsen (2010) and the study in Kenya made by Buchmann (2000) where they found that many poor families prioritize school attendance for boys. There are a few theoretical approaches to explain this occurrence. Many of the respondents that valued the education for girls above boys had attained education themselves. This leads to a more progressive mind-set on the importance of education, and especially for girls according to Kakuba (2014). The occasion of educated parents and its positive impact on school attendance for children has also previously been found in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda (Pilon, 1995; Lloyd and Blanc, 1996; Buchmann, 2000; Glick and Sahn, 2000; Deininger, 2003; Ainsworth et al., 2005; Kakuba, 2006; Kopiancé, 2006; Lincove, 2009; Bajracharya, 2010). Also, the fact that 11 out of the 12 respondents that valued girls’ education were women can have impacted the result. In particular mothers who have attained education make sure that their girls also get educated (Samal, 2012).
Moreover, many of these women had decision-making power of the school attendance or were the heads of households. Several were contributing with an income to the household which can be related to the hypothesis by Samal (2012); that more independent women will result in the better chances of school attendance for the children, and girls in particular. This result can also support the findings made by Luz and Agadjanian (2015) in Mozambique. They found that mothers with high level of decision-making autonomy have a preference towards girls’ education. It is also in line with what was discovered in Burkina Faso, Ghana, seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Togo and Uganda. Namely that households with female heads seem to be more likely to provide education for their children (Pilon, 1995; Lloyd and Blanc, 1996; Kabore et.al., 2003; Rolleston, 2009; Kakuba, 2014). This result is in contradiction of the findings by Kasente (2003) and Warrington (2013) that found that fathers have more decision-making power in Uganda. Further, Kasente (2003) even argues that women have the lowest decision-making power of a child’s school attendance in the Eastern region, where Lukonko is. It can be because the study by Kasente was made 15 years ago and also since the universal secondary education was applied in 2007.

Since this study is not comprehensive enough to generalize, there is no way to know if there is an upcoming trend towards prioritization of girls’ education in rural Uganda or not. Yet, this is the result in Lukonko under these specific conditions and similar findings have been found in Bangladesh, Egypt, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand and Turkey (Knodel, 1997; Smith, 2001; Hallman and Grant, 2004; Tfaily, 2006; Mercan, 2010; Chisamya et.al. 2011). However, even though this at first glance would appear to be a trend towards increased values of girls, many of the reasons for prioritizing girls were in fact because of gender inequality.

These inequalities became prevalent when five respondents explained why they chose to send their girls to school at an earlier age than the boys. One reason was because they experience that girls mature faster and when they enter puberty, they get a lot of distraction from boys and men. This was also found by Wilson (2010) in Malawi. Boys however, do not suffer from this distraction or disturbance according to the respondents. Additional evidence of prevailing gender inequality was given by three respondents that mentioned that it is more difficult for girls to return to school than boys. This was also cited by the female children in group C. Early pregnancy was given as an example since the girl has to drop out and stay at home with the baby while the boy can continue schooling. Hence, the respondents make sure that the girls get at least a few years of schooling before they expect them to drop out. This reasoning was
confirmed in the discussion with the female children in group C. Just as Sarker et.al. (2017) argue how the culture in the society might affect the parent’s attitudes of children’s education depending on gender, this seems to be the case in Lukonko. Also, it indorses the impact that the methodological collectivism in the society has on individual perceptions. The school constitutes a safer place for the girls according to these respondents, which is the very opposite of what Faughnan (2016) found in Uganda and what Grant (2011) found in Malawi. The parents in their studies perceived the school as a threat of the girls’ virginity and a risk for early pregnancies. Perhaps the risk varies depending on the area.

These answers point to the fact that gender inequality is prevalent because girls are being discriminated and can lose their right to schooling just because they are girls. Even though girls might be the first ones to attend, they might also be the first ones to drop out. Besides education, they might face discrimination, disadvantages and deprived rights in other spheres of life, because of gender inequality. One female respondent even acknowledged that the future of the girl child is filled with many struggles. This result was also found in Bangladesh and Malawi by Chisamya et.al. (2011) and Schuler (2007). Thus, as Subrahmanian (2005) argues, even though more girls are attending school, it might not certainly imply improved gender equality which can best be characterized with the statement below:

“I want to bring my girls to school so that they will not suffer like I did.”

*Female respondent*

Many of the female respondents reasoned in the same way as the respondent who made the statement above. This can be connected to the studies that found that mothers expect more support from their children when growing old due to the fact that they have been vulnerable with limited access to resources and poor education as a result of gender inequality (Thomas, 1990; Lloyd and Gage-Brandon, 1994; Pilon, 1996; Duflo, 2003; Kabore et.al., 2003; Kobiané, 2006; Qian, 2008). The female children in group C even said that the girls get support from their mothers because the mothers want them to go beyond, and that they will suffer if they are uneducated. Nevertheless, the implication from favouring girls’ education above boys’ education is that boys might be disadvantaged and forgotten in terms of education which yields reversed gender inequality and is discussed by Ganguli et.al. (2014). Reversed gender inequality has been found by Grant and Behrman (2010) in many countries in less developed regions, especially in East Africa when Uganda is located. This incidence was even highlighted by one of the male respondents through the statement:
He further explained how people have been very responsible for the education of the girls which has resulted in more girls than boys in school because non-governmental organizations have boosted the girls’ education. Now this has become dangerous since it has resulted in boys falling behind, dropping out of school, going for manual work at early ages and trying to convince girls to drop out as well to come and join them earning money. This was brought up in the focus group discussion and by the female children in group C as well. This can be explained through the theory of education and resource constraints by Buchmann (2000). Inadequate resources in a household limit the parents’ opportunity to follow altruistic ambitions for their children and poor families might allow the children to go for income generating activities instead. The respondent ended by saying that we will face danger in the future because of this which is highlighted by Hewitt and Lloyd (2005) and Grant and Behrman (2010) as well. The educational future and well-being of boys is under great concern because of this trend and might foster resistance among the boys for gender equality policies. The respondent himself, along with one male and two female respondents, valued attendance in primary school for girls and boys equally. Equal favour of the child’s education regardless of gender was also found by Samal (2012). In order to achieve gender equality, this is the ultimate understanding and perception to strive for.

The remaining two respondents, one female and one male, valued boys’ education more. One reason was that they perceived boys to be smarter than girls, which was the opposite perception among the parents and teachers in Bangladesh and Malawi in the study by Chisamya et.al. (2011). The respondents further favoured boys because they will in general stay longer than girls in school. This has been discussed above and seems to be a general understanding among the respondents. They reasoned that since the boys get more education, they can in the end provide more support to them. The male respondent further said that he never went to school and that might be a reason for him to prioritize his son because he wants him to have a better future. Hence, it appears to be a pattern where uneducated mothers want their girls to attend school, and uneducated fathers want their boys to attend school. Thus, the conclusion in the long run could be that the school attendance for the children depends on what parent that has the decision-making power and if they have attained education or not.
5.4. **GROUND FOR ATTENDANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The respondents were asked on what grounds they chose to send a girl respectively a boy to school. The question was substantial since it provided an advance understanding of on what incentives they send their girls and boys respectively to school. Eight out of 18 respondents, including two males, send their children to school to give them a better future. The expectation from providing education for their children was so that they can get a job and an income to take care of themselves in order to be happy. Three female respondents explained that they send their girls to school because boys fear educated girls and cannot approach them. This is an example of how empowering girls can bring safer grounds and in the long run, build towards gender equality. Three female respondents said that educated girls bring them happiness, girls are a pride to the family and that they have future hopes in the girl child. Moreover, Edewor (2017) found that parents base their decision on the social prestige that is associated with educated children, and even the parents in Lukonko did so.

One male respondent explained how he gives his children three chances if they have to retake a class. If girls still not succeed after three chances, they will be given additional opportunities to take courses in manual work such as sewing. The boys however, if they do not succeed after three chances, they are not given extra opportunities. He argued that girls are more fruitful since they bring greater support to the family. In relation to this, another female respondent argued how it is more difficult for girls to sustain themselves without education. The female children in group C also confirmed this opinion by saying that girls without education have nowhere to go and will have a hard time to find survival activities. There is a possibility that girls are being favoured in terms of education and given more chances because of the lack of opportunities otherwise. This favouring in turn is not a result of gender equality, but the very opposite; because of gender inequality since it once again suggests lack of equal opportunities in life based on gender, also argued by Chisamya et.al. (2011).

This is related to the discussion by Mahmud and Amin (2006) and Sarker et.al. (2017), where they describe how the labour market is considered to be an influencing factor in parents’ ambition for investments in children depending on gender. However, the result in Lukonko diverges from the theory that claims that this leads to high educational investments for boys and low educational investments for girls. Unlike the reasoning of Buchmann (2000), where parents are likely to invest in children with better academic potential, some respondents seem to base their decision of educational investment on gender, in favour of girls.
This can be explained through the argument of Armer and Gewirtz (1986) where family welfare is generally valued above individual welfare. And, once again, many respondents brought up how providing education for their girls results in a positive correlation to extended future support for the whole household. Another male respondent stated the following:

“I did not go to school but I want to create a new trend by supporting my girls, because I want them to be the source of support for the family”

Male respondent

At the same time, he argued how he sends his girls to school so that education can be the foundation for their future. This reasoning is a bit ambiguous and was made by several respondents which brings a relevant question. Is it the children’s own future, or the respondents own future support that is of greatest importance in the decision of sending the children to school? Considering it from a theoretical economic perspective, the later alternative would be applicable. Parents seem to make an economically rational decision of investing in their children as they identify the net present value of benefits and costs and the expectations of future profits (Becker 1991; Buchmann, 2000; Mahmud and Amin, 2006; Sarker et.al, 2017). Still, it might in fact be the girls’ husbands that are supporting their in-laws, and not necessarily the girls through their own income. Since, as Mahmud and Amin (2006) argue, the opportunities on the labour market are greater for boys than for girls.

This was confirmed by a general consensus in the focus group discussion and by seven respondents, including one male, in the semi-structured interviews. They explained that they send their girls to school based on the ground that education is the key to find a good husband that in turn will generate more future support for them. According to them, a good husband is someone who is educated and responsible so that the girls receive some respect in the area. The female children in group C gave the same answer. The male respondent also stated the opposite, that he wants his boys to get good wives that are educated and wealthy.

“If you did not study and you are a girl, what man would take you?”

Female respondent

This opinion is similar to what was found in Bangladesh by Chisamya et.al. (2011). The general belief derived from traditional attitudes, roles and norms based on gender was that girls should aim for becoming a good wife. The respondent who made the statement above further vented how she does not want her girls to become a burden if they do not get married. Similarly, three females and one male respondent stated that men nowadays want educated women which becomes a driver for parents to educate their girls as an insurance for their own future support.
Their use of the expression “nowadays” implied that the men’s request for educated girls could be a recent phenomenon. This is an example of how collective mind-set in the society therefore shapes the action and thinking process of individuals.

Three respondents mentioned that they send their children to primary school because they risk getting arrested or convicted a fine otherwise since it is mandatory. This was also brought up by everyone in the focus group discussion. Once again, the methodological collectivism is noticeable since the structures in the society affect the perception of school attendance among the individuals. The female children in group C revealed that their mothers use this as a strategy to provide education for their children. The majority of all the children said that they get their support for school from their mother because according to them, she cares and loves them more and wants them to study to help with their future. The mother in turn pressures the father to provide money for school. If he does not, she threatens to report to the police.

The same extreme measure, that could jeopardize the marriage through challenging the husbands, was found in Kenya (Mukudi, 2002). This is an interesting perspective due to the fact that the parents turn against each other, with what seems to be an empowered role of the mother that fights to provide education for the children to a greater extent than the father. The respondents in the focus group discussion even said that men leave the responsibility of teaching children to women. Hence, the result in this thesis can further support the pattern that has been found in various studies before. That mothers, in comparison to fathers, invest more love, time and attention in their children which promote educational attendance and achievement (Thomas, 1990; Lloyd and Gage-Brandon, 1994; Pilon, 1996; Duflo, 2003; Kabore et.al., 2003; Kobiané, 2006; Qian, 2008; Kakuba, 2014).

5.5. IMPLICATIONS FOR ATTENDANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

In order to better understand why households chose to send or not send their girls and boys respectively to primary school, the benefits and consequences from it must be identified. Consequently, the respondents were asked what the implications are for sending or not sending their girls and boys to primary school. Many of the issues that have already been discussed were brought up again, but some new insights were also put forward at this stage.

“Girls and boys are facing almost the same challenges with no education”

*Male respondent*
The statement above indicates that there is no reason for the households to prefer education for a child based on gender since there is no difference considering the consequences. Accurately, the consequences that were discussed in the interviews regarded in general both girls and boys. Without education there could be poorer opportunities for marriage and work as well as an increased risk for early pregnancies, dependence and a destructive way of life irrespective of gender. Consequently, the question of why girls seem to be favoured in terms of attendance in primary school in Lukonko might be explained by the benefits instead.

“It is important to support girls because of marriage and dowry. The dowry will be greater if she is educated”

Female respondent

Alongside with what Sen (1992), Hamid (1993) and Kakuba (2014) clarify, the combination of cultural and economic elements can explain the households’ choice of school attendance for their children, with bride price as an example. The respondents in the focus group discussion described how it is important to send girls to school because of the dowry that is paid to the family when a girl gets married. And, just as mentioned before, educated girls tend to generate a better chance of getting an educated and wealthier man, which results in a greater dowry. Tumushabe et.al. found the importance of the dowry in terms of access to primary school to be great in Uganda already in 1999. However, the implication of the dowry and its impact on girls’ education was the opposite in their study. The parents showed greater interest in the dowry than in the education for the girls with the reasoning that “they will end up in the kitchen” any way. Perhaps there has been a shift in Uganda since this study almost 20 years ago, with the realization of a greater benefit to the family if girls receive education. This improves the chances for girls getting education and uplifts the value of the girl in the society, but it does not automatically provide a society based on gender equality.

In summary, economic reason appears to be the driving factor for educating girls in Lukonko. The model by Armer and Gewirtz (1986) of family welfare above individual welfare does undeniably seem to be extremely strong in Lukonko since the respondents bring up the expected support from the children in every question. Hence, I believe it is important to emphasize this occurrence even though I risk repeating myself. The explanation might be that the village is located in a rural area with limited opportunities and access to employment. The result might be different in an urban area with greater possibilities. Another reason could be that since girls leave to live with their husbands, the household can no longer support them from the distance. Perhaps that creates a strong incentive to provide education for them so that they can manage
themselves, while the boys remain and can be supported from home. An alternative motive could be since boys remain, they possibly provide a vast range of practical help in the household. The girls cannot help out with practical issues, since they are absent, and therefore they provide financial help instead. This monetary assistance could be more valuable for the households due to the economic reasoning above and thus, girls are favoured.

5.6. Beneficial for Girls or Boys?

As a conclusion of the subject and a very interesting input to my research question, the respondents were asked if they think it is better to be born as a girl or a boy in Lukonko in terms of access to primary school given the conditions they have stated. The majority answered boys which, after listening to the perceptions of the respondents, was surprising. The reasons have been mentioned previously; boys are not as disturbed in and on the way to school, not as occupied with household chores and do not have to drop out when they start a family. These reasons are rooted in a society characterized by gender inequality in favour of boys. Maybe the trend of ensuring that girls access primary school despite this, is a reaction on these inequalities and a way towards a society more based on gender equality. Although, changes of perceptions and norms require time and efforts. One female respondent said that she believed that both girls and boys have equal access to study in primary school, but that boys are more likely to study in secondary school. The fact that female advantages in primary school are offset by disadvantages in secondary school has also been discussed by Grant and Behrman (2010). The respondents, including two males, that said that girls have a better chance at accessing primary school, asserted that it is because they have more energy and are easily convinced to go to school. This was also said by the female children in group B.

The issue of the neighbouring sugarcane plantations was also brought up by almost all of the respondents and its issues with minimal wages and negative effects on the bodies. Almost exclusively boys go for these income activities, sometimes at very early ages instead of school. The respondents that stated that it is better to be born as a boy said that the households want to avoid that their boys end up there, hence they ensure that they attend primary school instead. The respondents that stated that it is better to be born as a girl said that the risk of them ending up in the sugarcane plantations instead of primary school is not as big as for boys. Most likely, it is a prevalence that is extremely depended on the personality of the people in the households and their previous experience on the sugarcane plantations.
6.0. CONCLUSION

6.1. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this thesis was to understand the development of gender equality in Uganda focusing on school attendance. This was identified through listening to the perceptions of rural households towards sending their girls and boys to primary school. The research question was: “What are the perceptions of the rural households in Uganda towards sending their girls and boys respectively to primary school?” Based on the research and empirical result in this thesis, I have got enough information to answer the research question and fulfil the purpose.

The majority of the households in the rural village Lukonko valued girls’ access to primary school more than the boys’ access. Girls were favoured because the households had realized the benefits of educating girls. The main reason for this favouring seemed to be rooted in economic benefits for the households. The general understanding was that educated girls provide more future support to the original family in comparison to educated boys. Hence, the motive for the households to send their girls to primary school appeared to mainly be to secure their own future welfare just like Mahmud and Amin (2006) argue. However, the fact that the majority of the respondents were women may have angled the result since mothers tend to prefer girls’ education (Luz and Agadjanian, 2015).

The implementation of universal primary education and universal secondary education in Uganda has succeeded in bringing vastly more girls to school. Further, it appeared that the law on mandatory school attendance in primary school also has affected some households in the decision. Considering this, it might be efficient for other countries to apply free education and mandatory attendance if they want to achieve the same positive result of bringing more girls to school. Even though this requires economic resources, it will in turn benefit the entire nation in many aspects. Nevertheless, even though socio-economic factors like these matter, just like Hamid (1993) and Sarker et.al. (2017) argue, the factor influencing educational attainment the most seems to be parental attitudes, particularly for the girls.

The result of favouring girls is the opposite of what historically has been observed in many other countries, where generally boys have been prioritized. However, similar finding has been discovered in Bangladesh, Egypt, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand and Turkey (Knodel, 1997; Smith, 2001; Hallman and Grant, 2004; Tfaily, 2006; Mercan, 2010; Chisamya, 2011). Perhaps this is the beginning of an era where girls finally get the opportunity to access education as a result of years of efforts deriving from the global agenda on gender equality.
There are interesting speculations of what social and demographic implications that might arise in countries from the emerging favouring of girls’ education. Through closing the gender gap in education, an increase in the female labour force participation with better salaries could arise. Moreover, reduced fertility might arise from women marrying later and a shift in the power balance in households and at political levels.

The result from this thesis also intended to contribute to a greater understanding of the qualitative development of gender equality in Uganda in line with the SDG number 5. Unfortunately, many of the reasons to why girls were favoured in terms of access to primary school were in fact rooted in issues of gender inequality. As a confirmation of this inequality, the majority of the respondents stated that it is better to be born as a boy in terms of a chance to access primary school. The contribution from this thesis is therefore that the qualitative development so far has progressed in terms of the value of the girls’ education, but not regarding the underlying societal problems of gender inequality. This is the very core that was observed in Bangladesh and Malawi by Chisamya et.al. (2011) as well. Having more girls accessing school does not necessarily generate gender equality and efforts must be appointed to the fundamental causes for gender inequality to achieve SDG 5.

Further, the development of gender equality does not seem to be heading towards balance due to the favouring of girls. This in turn, constitutes an issue of reversed gender inequality which also has been found in many countries in less developed regions (Grant and Behrman, 2010). In summary, while fighting for girls’ and women’s rights worldwide through empowering them with for example education, it is essential to not forget the boys. The result in this thesis is a vibrant example of the interaction between a theoretical structural approach and the actual reality. Structures in the society aimed at bringing more girls to school, but appeared to have resulted in the opposite dilemma of neglecting boys’ education in some areas. This raises a dilemma for the government to address. Otherwise, we could face a new trend of gender inequality becoming stronger, where males are discriminated and deprived their rights. This is a delicate balance that cannot be overseen but taken seriously. The consequences from a continued gender inequality, but on the behalf of males being victimized, can result in resistance towards gender equality policies, an uneducated generation, more violence and crimes. This in turn, will affect the economy, institutions and well-being of entire nations.
6.2. Further studies

There is a great potential for continued research on the subject of the development of gender equality since it is a topic that is on the agenda worldwide today, especially within the UN. The importance and interest of the issue is merely increasing and evaluation of the process and efforts is becoming more essential. This in order to know if we are on a positive path towards reaching SDG 5 before the year of 2030. One suggestion for further studies is to develop this study by applying a wider selection with more respondents from a larger geographic area and to include the aspect of access to secondary school. Then the study can contribute to a transferability with a stronger assumption of the qualitative development of gender equality in the relation to school attendance. An additional exciting aspect is to compare the perceptions between different regions and in urban areas versus rural areas to detect possible differences or similarities. Studying the same phenomena between different countries could also be relevant.

Another interesting opportunity is to conduct semi-structured interviews with the youths to get their perspective on the phenomenon as they are affected by the reasoning of the topic. The trend deriving from this study is that there seems to be a difference between accessing and finishing school among girls and boys. Girls might be more likely to access school but boys are more likely to finish school. Hence, this constitutes an interesting ground for further studies of different factors within gender equality. A further investigation focusing on the qualitative development of gender equality in relation to for example inheritance, governance or business is also relevant and significant.
7.0. REFERENCES


8.0. APPENDICES

8.1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

1. How do you perceive gender equality?
2. How do you value having a girl respectively a boy at birth? Why?
3. At what age would you take a girl respectively a boy child to school? Why?
4. How do you value attendance in primary school for a girl respectively a boy? Why?
5. On what grounds do you choose to send a girl respectively a boy to primary school? Why?
6. What implications do you see from school/no school attendance for a girl respectively a boy? Why?
7. Given these conditions, would you say it is better to be born as a girl or a boy in Lukonko in terms of access to attendance in primary school? Why?
8. Is there anything you wish to add to the subject? Any questions?

8.2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are your major reasons to take a girl respectively a boy to primary school? Why?
2. How is it benefitting you to take a girl respectively a boy to primary school? Why?
3. What factors are influencing you in sending a girl respectively a boy to primary school? Why?
4. What any other issue would you like to share on the topic of attendance in primary school for girls and boys?

8.3. DISCUSSIONS WITH CHILDREN

1. Are you currently attending school?
2. What necessities do you need in order to attend school? E.g. uniforms, books, pens.
3. Who supports you in providing these necessities? Why?
4. Who among your siblings are favoured/prioritized in terms of school attendance? Why?
5. Who will you return the support to when graduating and earning an income? Why?