

The Impact of Socio-Cultural Factors on Mothers' Economic Empowerment and Children's Education: A Case Study of Otjiwarongo District, Namibia

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ABSTRACT

This Study examines the influence of socio-cultural factors on mothers' economic empowerment (MEE) and children's educational outcomes in the Otjiwarongo District of Namibia. Drawing on a mixed-methods study of 159 mothers, complemented by semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the research reveals that socio-cultural norms function as structural moderators of economic empowerment, with single mothers bearing a disproportionate burden. While quantitative findings demonstrate a significant positive correlation between MEE and children's grade progression ($p = 0.32$, $p = 0.002$), qualitative analysis illuminates how cultural expectations, gender roles, and community norms alternately enable or constrain mothers' economic participation and, consequently, their children's educational advancement. The article contributes empirical evidence from an under-researched context and argues that addressing educational outcomes requires confronting the socio-cultural barriers that perpetuate maternal economic disempowerment.

Keywords: Mothers' economic empowerment, socio-cultural factors, children's education, grade progression, Namibia, Otjiwarongo District.

INTRODUCTION

Since independence in 1990, Namibia has made substantial progress in promoting gender equality and expanding educational access. Yet socio-economic disparities persist, particularly in districts such as Otjiwarongo in the Otjozondjupa Region, where many families face economic challenges that impede children's progression through the school system. While primary school enrolment in Otjiwarongo stands at approximately 91%, secondary enrolment drops sharply to 60%, with completion rates at only 38% (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2019; UNICEF, 2020). These statistics point to a critical gap in understanding the factors that sustain educational disadvantage.

Mothers' economic empowerment (MEE) defined as the ability of women to access economic resources and exercise control over their lives (Golla et al., 2011) has been identified as a significant determinant of children's educational outcomes globally. Research consistently demonstrates that economically empowered mothers allocate greater resources to their children's education, resulting in improved school access, attendance, and academic performance (Duflo, 2012; Kabeer, 2016; Malapit et al., 2019). However, the majority of existing studies examine empowerment in broad terms, encompassing economic, social, political, and psychological dimensions, with less attention directed specifically toward the correlation between maternal economic empowerment and children's educational achievements in distinct cultural contexts.

Crucially, the socio-cultural environment within which economic empowerment occurs remains under theorised and empirically underexplored. Cultural factors including gender norms, parenting expectations, community values, and household decision-making structures do not merely contextualise economic empowerment; they actively shape its expression and outcomes (Hofstede, 2001; Kabeer, 1999). In the Namibian context, where traditional gender roles intersect with modern economic aspirations, understanding these socio-cultural dynamics is essential for designing effective interventions.

This article addresses this gap by examining how socio-cultural factors influence the relationship between mothers' economic empowerment and children's educational progression in the Otjiwarongo District. Drawing on a mixed-methods study, it seeks to answer three interconnected questions: How do socio-cultural norms affect mothers' economic participation and decision-making? In what ways do these norms moderate the translation of economic resources into educational investments? And how do single mothers, who constitute a majority in the study sample, experience these socio-cultural constraints differently?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks provide the analytical foundation for this study. First, Kabeer's (1999) tripartite framework conceptualises empowerment as the interaction between resources (material, human, and social), agency (the ability to define goals and act upon them), and achievements (outcomes resulting from resources and agency). This framework is particularly valuable because it explicitly recognises that resources alone are insufficient for empowerment; agency which is profoundly shaped by socio-cultural norms mediates the translation of resources into achievements such as children's educational outcomes.

Second, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory situates individual development within nested environmental systems. The microsystem encompasses immediate family and school environments; the mesosystem involves interactions between these settings; the exosystem includes broader social structures that indirectly affect the individual; and the macro system comprises cultural values, beliefs, and norms. This framework illuminates how socio-cultural factors at multiple levels collectively shape mothers' economic empowerment and children's educational trajectories.

Socio-Cultural Factors and Women's Economic Empowerment

Socio-cultural factors have long been recognised as critical determinants of women's economic participation. Gender norms the shared expectations and rules governing male and female behaviour allocate differential responsibilities, rights, and resources to women and men (Ridgeway, 2011). In many Sub-Saharan African contexts, patriarchal norms position men as primary breadwinners and decision-makers, while women's economic activities are framed as supplementary and subject to male oversight (Kabeer, 2012). These norms constrain women's access to employment, credit, markets, and productive assets, thereby limiting their economic empowerment.

Marital status intersects with gender norms in significant ways. Single mothers, who head approximately 30-40% of households in Southern Africa (UN Women, 2021), face distinctive challenges. While they may exercise greater decision-making autonomy in the absence of male partners, they simultaneously bear sole responsibility for household livelihoods and caregiving, often without the social and economic support that marriage can provide (Chant, 2008). The compounded burden of economic provision and childcare renders single mothers particularly vulnerable to poverty and limits their capacity for economic advancement.

Community-level norms and institutions further shape women's economic opportunities. In many settings, women's participation in formal employment or business is discouraged, and their access to community networks, information, and resources is restricted (World Bank, 2019). Traditional leaders and community elders may reinforce these norms, creating structural barriers that operate independently of individual motivation or capability.

Mothers' Economic Empowerment and Children's Education

The relationship between maternal economic empowerment and children's educational outcomes operates through multiple pathways. The income effect suggests that higher maternal earnings directly enhance households' capacity to finance school fees, uniforms, books, and other educational resources (Duflo, 2012). Empowered mothers also have greater control over their time, facilitating increased involvement in their children's schooling (Smith-Greenaway, 2013). Economic empowerment can improve children's health and

nutrition, which are essential prerequisites for cognitive development and academic achievement (Kabeer, 1999). Moreover, mothers with greater decision-making authority and financial autonomy can advocate more effectively for the quality of schooling their children receive (Kabeer, 2016).

However, evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa suggests that these pathways are not automatic; they are moderated by socio-cultural factors. Hindin (2005) found that in Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, the effect of women's economic autonomy on children's education varied according to prevailing gender norms and household structures. Gichuru and Mumbi (2015) documented that in Kenya, cultural expectations regarding women's domestic responsibilities limited the time economically empowered mothers could devote to their children's education. Smith-Greenaway (2013) demonstrated that in Nigeria, maternal education a form of human capital closely related to empowerment had stronger effects on child outcomes in communities with more egalitarian gender norms.

The Namibian Context

Namibia's socio-cultural landscape is characterised by diversity and change. The country is home to multiple ethnic groups with distinct traditions, including the Ovambo, Kavango, Herero, Damara, Nama, and San peoples. While urbanisation and modernisation have transformed many communities, traditional gender roles remain influential, particularly in rural areas and among older generations (LeBeau et al., 2004). Women continue to bear primary responsibility for childcare, household maintenance, and food production, even when engaged in formal employment.

The Otjiwarongo District, located in the Otjozondjupa Region, reflects these national dynamics. The district's economy is based on agriculture, trade, and services, with many women employed in low-paying informal sector jobs (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2021). Single motherhood is prevalent, with approximately 62% of households headed by single mothers in the study sample. Educational indicators reveal significant challenges: while primary enrolment is high, secondary completion rates lag considerably, particularly among girls affected by early pregnancy and cultural expectations to contribute to household labour (UNICEF, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative survey methods with qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The mixed-methods approach was selected to capture both the breadth of patterns across the population and the depth of individual experiences and meanings (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Sample and Sampling Procedures

The quantitative sample comprised 159 mothers with at least one school-age child (grades 1-12) residing in the Otjiwarongo District. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation across school types (primary and secondary) and locations (central and peri-urban). For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was employed to select 20 mothers for semi-structured interviews, ensuring diversity in economic profiles, marital status, and educational backgrounds. Three focus group discussions were conducted with community leaders, educators, and policymakers ($n = 22$).

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising four sections: demographic information; economic empowerment indicators (including eight Likert-scale items for the MEE Composite Index); children's grade progression; and perceptions of policy support. The MEE Index demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.73$).

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interview guides exploring mothers' experiences of economic empowerment, the specific ways in which socio-cultural factors affected their economic participation, the challenges they faced in supporting their children's education, and their perceptions of community norms and policy support.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics, Spearman's correlation analysis, and ordinal logistic regression to examine associations between mothers' economic empowerment (MEE) and children's grade progression. The quantitative analysis also explored the influence of household income, maternal education, marital status, and household size on educational outcomes.

Qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were analysed using inductive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Interview transcripts were coded iteratively to identify recurring themes related to socio-cultural norms, gender dynamics, caregiving responsibilities, and community support structures.

Integration of the quantitative and qualitative components occurred through a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analysed separately, and integrated during the interpretation stage through triangulation and thematic comparison. Quantitative findings provided statistical patterns and associations, while qualitative findings were used to contextualise and explain the mechanisms underlying these relationships. For example, the statistically lower MEE scores among single mothers were interpreted alongside qualitative accounts describing caregiving burdens, social stigma, and limited community support. Similarly, the moderate positive correlation between MEE and grade progression was contextualised by qualitative evidence demonstrating that socio-cultural conditions, household decision-making autonomy, and community inclusion significantly influence how economic resources are translated into children's educational support. This integration enhanced methodological transparency and strengthened the interpretation of findings by linking numerical trends with lived experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from Rusangu University and the Directorate of Education, Otjozondjupa Regional Council. All participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was assured through the use of participant codes. Participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time.

FINDINGS

Demographic Profile

The study sample (N = 159) comprised predominantly single mothers (62.9%), with married participants constituting 29.6%. The majority of respondents were aged 26-45 years (70.4%) and had attained secondary or tertiary education (86.1%). Family sizes were substantial, with 71.1% having four or more children and 48.0% having two or more children in school simultaneously. This demographic profile reveals a population under significant and competing financial pressures.

Quantitative Findings: MEE and Grade Progression

The MEE Composite Index (range: 0–100) revealed significant disparities across demographic groups. Low-income mothers scored lowest (mean = 52.1, SD = 15.3), followed by single mothers (mean = 56.8, SD = 17.2). Married mothers scored higher (mean = 65.2, SD = 14.8), and tertiary-educated mothers scored highest (mean = 68.9, SD = 15.2). These differences were statistically significant (Kruskal-Wallis tests: income $H = 24.3$, $p < .001$; marital status $H = 8.7$, $p < .05$; education $H = 18.2$, $p < .001$).

Spearman's correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between MEE Index scores and children's grade progression ($\rho = 0.32$, $p = 0.002$). While this relationship indicates that greater

economic empowerment is associated with improved educational progression, the strength of the association is moderate rather than strong, suggesting that additional contextual and structural factors also influence children's educational outcomes. Household income level ($p = 0.48$, $p < .001$) and maternal education ($p = 0.35$, $p < .01$) demonstrated stronger associations with the MEE Index, highlighting the multidimensional nature of educational progression. The number of school-age children was negatively correlated with grade progression ($p = -0.21$, $p < .05$), supporting the resource dilution hypothesis.

Ordinal logistic regression confirmed that household income was the strongest predictor of grade progression: children from high-income households were more than three times more likely to be in advanced grades compared to those from low-income households (OR = 3.12, $p = 0.008$). Maternal tertiary education nearly doubled the odds of children being in higher grades (OR = 2.12, $p = 0.029$), while each additional school-age child reduced the odds by approximately 26% (OR = 0.74, $p = 0.044$). Critically, the MEE Index demonstrated an independent positive effect on grade progression even after controlling for income and education: every ten-point increase in MEE scores raised the odds of higher grade placement by 42% (OR = 1.42, $p = 0.040$). However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously, as children's educational outcomes are also shaped by broader household and contextual factors that were not fully captured in the present study.

Qualitative Findings: Socio-Cultural Themes

Thematic analysis of interview and focus group data yielded four themes directly relevant to socio-cultural influences on MEE and children's education.

Theme 1: Socio-Cultural Norms as Enablers and Barriers

Participants' experiences of socio-cultural norms were mixed and context-specific. Some mothers, particularly those in urban settings or communities with more progressive gender attitudes, reported that cultural expectations did not impede their economic participation. A married mother of three explained:

"In our community now, things have changed. Women can work, can have businesses. My husband supports me. The old ways where women must stay at home that is for the old people, not for us." (Participant 47, married, employed)

However, other mothers described restrictive norms that prioritised women's domestic roles and limited their economic agency. A single mother running a small informal business recounted:

"Some people, they look at me and say I am neglecting my children because I am selling at the market. They say a mother must be at home, cooking, cleaning, waiting for the children. But if I stay at home, who will pay for their school? Their father is gone. I must choose be a 'good mother' in their eyes, or feed my children and send them to school." (Participant 23, single, informal trader)

Focus group discussions with community leaders revealed that traditional norms remained influential, particularly in peri-urban areas. One community leader noted:

"In our culture, the man is the head of the house. He makes the big decisions. The woman can earn money, yes, but she must consult her husband. If she is single, then she must consult the elders. That is our way." (Focus Group 2, male community leader)

These findings suggest that socio-cultural norms function as structural moderators of economic empowerment. Where norms are restrictive, even motivated and capable mothers face systemic barriers that limit both their economic agency and their children's educational outcomes.

Theme 2: Single Motherhood and the Weight of Care Responsibilities

Single motherhood emerged as a significant contextual factor that compounds economic vulnerability and intersects with socio-cultural expectations. Single mothers reported bearing sole responsibility for school expenses, food provision, and household maintenance, typically without financial or emotional support from

partners or extended family. This compounded responsibility constrained their ability to pursue income-generating opportunities or participate in skills training.

A single mother of four articulated the challenge:

"I wake up at 4 am to prepare food for the children, then I go to work. After work, I must fetch water, cook, help with homework. There is no time for anything else. I heard about a training for small business, but it was in the afternoon. Who will watch my children? Who will cook? I cannot go." (Participant 81, single, domestic worker)

Another single mother described the emotional toll:

"Sometimes I lie awake at night thinking, what if I cannot pay the fees next term? What if they send my child home? The stress is too much. I want to do more for them, but I am only one person." (Participant 112, single, unemployed)

Mothers described difficulties balancing work, household duties, and supporting children with homework. These time constraints directly affected participation in empowerment programmes and reduced financial decision-making autonomy, weakening several components of the MEE Index simultaneously. Educational support in households managed by overwhelmed single mothers tended to be reactive rather than proactive, focused on managing immediate crises rather than long-term educational planning.

Notably, single mothers also reported experiencing social stigma. A young single mother explained:

"In the community, they look down on single mothers. They say we are loose women, that we made bad choices. When I try to join a savings group, some women don't want me because I am single. They think I will bring problems." (Participant 34, single, informal trader)

This stigma further constrained single mothers' access to community-based support networks and economic opportunities, reinforcing their vulnerability.

Theme 3: Gender Dynamics in Household Decision-Making

Household decision-making patterns revealed the operation of gender norms at the microsystem level. While some mothers reported equal participation in financial decisions, others described male dominance that limited their ability to direct resources toward children's education.

A married mother explained her constrained agency:

"I work, I earn money, but my husband decides how it is used. He says the money must go into his account, and he will pay the bills. But sometimes the school fees are late, and the children suffer. I cannot say anything because he is the husband." (Participant 56, married, employed)

In contrast, mothers who exercised greater decision-making autonomy described more consistent educational investment:

"My husband and I, we decide together. We sit down at the beginning of the term and list everything fees, uniform, books, transport. Then we plan how to pay. The children know that education is important to both of us." (Participant 103, married, teacher)

These contrasting experiences illustrate that household-level gender dynamics significantly moderate the translation of economic resources into educational investments. Mothers with greater decision-making power are better positioned to prioritise children's education, regardless of their absolute income level.

Theme 4: Community Support and Exclusion

Community institutions and networks emerged as important mediators of socio-cultural influences. Some mothers described supportive community structures that facilitated both economic empowerment and educational support. A participant in a community savings group explained:

"We have a stokvel community savings group. We contribute every month, and we help each other. If someone's child needs fees and she is short, we loan her. We also encourage each other to send our children to school, to help with homework. It is like a family." (Participant 78, married, stokvel member)

However, other mothers reported exclusion from community networks based on marital status, ethnicity, or economic standing. A marginalised mother described:

"I am not from here originally. I came here after my husband died. The women in this community, they do not accept me. They do not invite me to their groups. I am alone." (Participant 129, widowed, informal trader)

This exclusion deprived vulnerable mothers of critical social capital information, resources, emotional support that could enhance both economic empowerment and children's educational outcomes. The finding underscores that socio-cultural inclusion is not merely a matter of individual experience but a structural determinant of access to community-based resources.

4.4 Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings reveals the complex and multidimensional relationship between mothers' economic empowerment, socio-cultural factors, and children's educational outcomes. Quantitative findings demonstrated a statistically significant but moderate association between MEE and grade progression, indicating that empowerment contributes to educational advancement but does not operate in isolation. Qualitative findings helped explain this moderate relationship by revealing how socio-cultural norms, caregiving burdens, household decision-making dynamics, and community inclusion either facilitate or constrain the effective use of economic resources for educational purposes.

For example, the lower MEE scores observed among single mothers in the quantitative analysis were illuminated by qualitative narratives describing time poverty, social stigma, and limited support networks. Likewise, qualitative accounts showed that mothers with decision-making autonomy and supportive household relationships were often better able to translate modest economic resources into consistent educational support for their children.

The triangulation process therefore demonstrated convergence between statistical patterns and lived experiences while also revealing the presence of additional influencing variables beyond economic empowerment alone. Factors such as household income stability, paternal involvement, access to educational resources, and community support structures emerged as important contextual determinants that may strengthen or weaken the relationship between MEE and grade progression. This integrated interpretation reinforces the conclusion that children's educational outcomes are shaped by interconnected economic, social, and cultural processes rather than by maternal economic empowerment alone.

DISCUSSION

Socio-Cultural Factors as Structural Moderators

The findings of this study demonstrate that socio-cultural factors function as structural moderators of mothers' economic empowerment and its translation into children's educational outcomes. This conceptualisation extends Kabeer's (1999) framework by specifying that agency the capacity to define and act upon goals is not simply an individual attribute but is distributed according to socially defined positions and norms. Gender norms, marital status hierarchies, and community inclusion practices collectively shape the agency that mothers can exercise, regardless of their individual capabilities or resources.

This finding aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective, revealing that factors at multiple system levels interact to produce outcomes. At the microsystem level, household decision-making dynamics determine whether maternal income translates into educational investment. At the mesosystem level, interactions between mothers and schools, community groups, and extended family mediate access to information and support. At the

exosystemic level, community norms and institutional practices shape the opportunities available to mothers. And at the macro system level, cultural values regarding gender, family, and education frame the entire system.

The Compounded Vulnerability of Single Mothers

The study reveals that single mothers in Otjiwarongo experience a distinctive and particularly severe form of disempowerment. They face not only the economic challenges of sole household provision but also socio-cultural barriers including stigmatisation, exclusion from community networks, and the absence of male partners who might share caregiving responsibilities. This compounded vulnerability is not adequately captured by standard economic empowerment indices, which typically measure resources and agency without accounting for the socio-cultural context in which these are exercised.

This finding contributes to the literature on single motherhood in Sub-Saharan Africa (Chant, 2008; UN Women, 2021) by demonstrating that the intersection of economic vulnerability and socio-cultural marginalisation creates barriers that are qualitatively different from those faced by married mothers with similar income levels. Interventions designed for "women in general" may systematically miss the specific needs of single mothers, who constitute a substantial proportion of households in the region.

The Importance of Decision-Making Autonomy

The independent effect of the MEE Index on grade progression, controlling for income and education, underscores the importance of decision-making autonomy a dimension of empowerment that is profoundly shaped by socio-cultural norms. Mothers who participate in household financial decisions and exercise control over their income are better positioned to direct resources toward children's education, even when their absolute income is modest. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that women's control over resources, rather than resources per se, drives developmental outcomes (Kabeer, 2016; Malapit et al., 2019).

However, decision-making autonomy is not simply an individual achievement; it is negotiated within culturally defined relationships. The qualitative findings reveal that even employed, income-earning mothers may lack autonomy if gender norms position husbands as ultimate decision-makers. This suggests that interventions seeking to enhance maternal empowerment must address household-level gender dynamics, not merely individual economic capabilities.

Policy Implications

The findings carry several implications for policy and practice. First, policies aimed at improving children's educational outcomes must extend beyond the school gate to address the socio-cultural barriers that constrain mothers' economic empowerment. School-based interventions alone cannot compensate for household-level constraints on maternal agency or community-level exclusion from support networks.

Second, interventions should be differentiated according to marital status and household structure. Single mothers require targeted support that addresses both economic vulnerability and socio-cultural marginalisation, including access to childcare that enables participation in employment and training, community-based support groups that counter stigma and exclusion, and flexible financial services that accommodate irregular income.

Third, community engagement strategies should address restrictive gender norms through facilitated dialogues that include both men and women. Changing norms requires sustained, participatory processes that enable communities to examine and challenge assumptions about gender roles, decision-making, and the value of girls' education. Schools and community leaders have important roles in facilitating such dialogues.

Fourth, the measurement of maternal empowerment for policy purposes should incorporate socio-cultural dimensions, including decision-making autonomy, community inclusion, and freedom from restrictive norms. Composite indices that focus narrowly on income and assets may miss critical determinants of mothers' ability to translate resources into children's educational outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference, and the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of social desirability bias. The sample was drawn exclusively from the Otjiwarongo District, and findings may not be directly transferable to rural areas or other urban centres with different socio-cultural profiles. Furthermore, although the study employed a mixed-methods design, greater integration between qualitative and quantitative components could further enhance interpretive depth and methodological transparency. The MEE Index, while demonstrating acceptable internal consistency, was developed specifically for this study and has not been validated against external criterion measures.

The moderate correlation between MEE and children's grade progression also indicates that educational outcomes are influenced by multiple interconnected factors beyond maternal economic empowerment alone. Variables such as household income stability, paternal involvement, access to educational infrastructure, school quality, and community support systems may significantly shape educational progression and warrant further investigation.

Future research should therefore employ longitudinal and comparative designs to examine how changes in socio-cultural conditions influence educational outcomes over time. Expanding analytical models to include paternal engagement, household resource allocation patterns, educational infrastructure, and school accessibility would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of children's educational progression. Additionally, intervention-based studies assessing programmes that simultaneously address economic empowerment and socio-cultural barriers would contribute valuable evidence for policy and practice.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that socio-cultural factors are not merely background variables but active moderators of the relationship between mothers' economic empowerment and children's educational progression in the Otjiwarongo District of Namibia. Gender norms, marital status hierarchies, household decision-making dynamics, and community inclusion practices collectively shape the agency that mothers can exercise, the resources they can access, and the outcomes they can achieve for their children.

The compounded vulnerability of single mothers who constitute nearly two-thirds of the study sample reveals that standard economic empowerment frameworks may systematically underestimate the barriers faced by this population. Addressing these barriers requires interventions that simultaneously tackle economic constraints and socio-cultural marginalisation, recognising that these dimensions of disempowerment are mutually reinforcing.

The independent effect of the MEE Index on grade progression, controlling for income and education, underscores that decision-making autonomy a dimension of empowerment profoundly shaped by socio-cultural norms is a critical determinant of children's educational outcomes. Enhancing mothers' economic capabilities without addressing the socio-cultural constraints on their agency is unlikely to achieve the full potential of empowerment for children's education.

Ultimately, this study affirms that investing in mothers' economic empowerment is essential for children's educational advancement, but that such investment must be accompanied by sustained efforts to transform the socio-cultural norms and structures that constrain women's agency. In the Otjiwarongo District, as elsewhere in Namibia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the educational futures of children are inseparable from the socio-cultural conditions that shape their mothers' lives.

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