



TEACHERS' GENDER INFLUENCING BOY-CHILD EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS: A STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

Educational aspiration is one of the crucial determinants of a person's success in life. It is influenced by a number of factors. The present study was an attempt to explore the influence of teachers' gender on boy-child educational aspirations in secondary school in Nakuru County, Kenya. The question of educational aspirations among Kenyan boys has become the subject of concern. It is against this background that the need for this study was envisaged. The researcher employed a causal comparative (*ex-post facto*) design in the study. The study involved a sample of 420 Form three boys in secondary schools. Research instruments used in collecting data were questionnaire and interview schedule. A pilot study was carried out to ensure reliability of the instrument. Internal consistency was determined through the use of Cronchbach's alpha formula and a coefficient of 0.867 was obtained. Expert judgment was employed to establish the validity of the research instrument. The finding from this study revealed that teachers' gender significantly influenced boys' educational aspirations. It is anticipated that the study will aid to develop greater insights into the above factor influencing the boy-child educational aspirations in public secondary schools for the purpose of improving the quality of education in Kenya. Knowledge of such factors would be useful to government, parents and teachers since it may guide in formulating strategies that may improve boys' educational aspirations.

Keywords: gender roles, boy-child and educational aspirations, secondary school

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1. Introduction

Educational aspiration is an important variable in predicting academic achievement and may be seen as an element in academic achievement motivation, focusing on the desire for success and the development of goals to succeed in particular educational fields or to gain a particular degree. Educational aspirations play important roles in education attainment, and, in turn, status attainment processes. Students' educational aspirations have strong positive effects on their educational achievement and attainment (Kao & Tienda 1995; Marjoribanks, 2005; Mau 1995; Wilson & Wilson 1992), which, in turn, have strong effects on their earnings (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005; Perna 2003).

Students with high educational aspirations are more likely than students with low educational aspirations. Students' educational aspirations also mediate the effects of their socioeconomic origin (parents' socioeconomic status) on their achievement and attainment (Garg, Kauppi, Leuko, & Urajnik, 2002; Marjoribanks, 1995; Mau & Bikos 2000; Seginer & Vermulst, 2002). In other words, students' educational aspirations can strengthen or diminish the effects of where they come from on how well they do and how far they go in school. Researchers have thoroughly studied students' educational aspirations and identified a number of factors that affect variation in these aspirations. Among the strongest predictors of students' educational aspirations are the educational aspirations students' parents have for them (Okagaki & Frensch, 1998; Qian & Sampson Lee 1999; Teachman & Paasch, 1998; Trusty, 1998).

Educational aspirations are influenced by multiple intrapersonal and systemic factors (Gottfredson, 2002). Some individual factors related to students' aspiration include their level of intrapersonal skills, self-reliance, self-control, self-concept (Marjoribanks, 2002). Systematic variables related to educational aspirations include students' socio-economic status (SES), the level of family's involvement in their children's education, ethnicity, race, familial aspiration and level of parental education (Suh & Suh, 2006). As one aspect of educational engagement, educational aspirations have been found to be one of the most significant predictors of actual educational and career educational attainment for young people (Garg, Melanson, & Levin, 2007; Mau & Bikos, 2000). This current study looked at gender roles, illegal sect, school type, teachers' gender, teachers' expectations, and paternal socialization on boys' educational aspirations.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of teachers' factors on boy-child educational aspirations in secondary schools. It was hoped that the study will provide information that helped in developing policies so as to adequately respond to continuously changing trends of the boys in school.

3. Literature Review

The experience of students at school has the ability to promote both academic achievement and future aspirations (Uwah et al. 2008). School climate, including relationships with teachers, contributes to global life satisfaction (Suldo, Shaffer, & Riley 2008), lower rates of depression (Eamon, 2002) and fewer behavior problems (DeSantis King, Hueber, Suldo & Valois, 2006; Gilman & Huebner, 2006). Satisfaction with school is usually higher in children and reaches its lowest levels around eighth grade. Attitudes towards school have been shown to predict aspirations (Geckova, Tavel, VanDijk, Abel, & Reijneveld, 2010), and school bonding has been shown to be greater in students with congruent aspirations and expectations (Boxer, Goldstein, DeLorenzo, Savoy, & Mercado, 2010). Connection to school may become the key in helping students think about attending college, although this may be true of white students than black students (Lowman & Elliott 2009).

Another influence on the achievement of boys may be the lack of male teachers. The majority of primary school teachers in the Asia-Pacific region are women. This was perceived as a factor contributing to boys' underachievement in the report from Malaysia (Goolamally & Ahmad, 2010), where the majority of teachers are female and are seen to favour girls. It is widely recognized that the fewer the female teachers, the wider the enrolment, retention and promotion gaps are between female and male students. The link between female teachers and girls' educational achievement has been clearly charted (UNESCO, 2006). There is a common perception in Mongolia that boys are likely to be more severely punished by teachers than girls. Boys reported that they prefer dealing with female teachers and are in fact afraid of male teachers as they beat them painfully (Undarya & Enkhjargal, 2011). According to McLeod (2011), children pay attention to some of these people (models) and encode the behaviour they have observed regardless of whether it is appropriate or inappropriate. Neuert (2007) and Mbevi (2010) found male role models to have more influence on a boy-child's character. This may therefore be suggesting that the boy-child educational aspirations has been imitated from the males he interacted with particularly. It is therefore important for

male teachers in the school to understand the role they play in determining the educational aspirations of boys.

A phenomenon in the school system that has been rather disturbing is the fact that despite the clamour for gender equality treatment, boys and girls do not seem to exhibit the same level of academic achievement. Ammermueller and Dolton (2006) drew attention to the fact that large literature existed on the difference between the academic achievement of boys and girls. They reported that historically, there had always been a gap favouring girls in reading, English and the Arts and languages. According to them, the pattern had been changing in recent times with girls improving in Mathematics and the Sciences, and even outperforming boys in many countries. They further reported that there was in the United Kingdom, widespread evidence of girls outperforming boys at most levels in school and specifically, there was a gap between boys and girls by the age of 14-16 in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) public examination results.

Smith (2004) observed that the diminishing presence of male teachers was a global issue and that the proportion of men within teaching ranks was declining significantly. He cited many studies whose findings demonstrated the continual decline of males in the teaching profession. He quoted figures from Commonwealth of Australia (CA) (2002), Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) (2002), National Education Association (NEA) (2003), and Nelson (2003) to illustrate the situation of gender imbalance among primary school teachers, especially within Australia. Nelson (2003), for instance, was cited to have claimed that in 2002, the proportion of male primary teachers (within Australia) was only 20.9% and NEA (2003) was said to have indicated that only nine percent of American elementary school teachers are men. It has also been speculated in some quarters that teacher's gender affected the performance of the child. Dee (2006) described two theories which suggested that the performance of the child depended on the gender of the teacher.

According to Dee, (2006), one theory asserts that the teacher's gender shapes communications between teacher and pupil, while another says the teacher acts as a gender-specific role model, regardless of what he or she says or does. Dee further explained that the second theory stipulated that students were more engaged, behaved more appropriately, and performed at a higher level when taught by one who shared their gender. Studies by Dee (2005) found that the sex of the teacher has a large influence on a student's test performance and engagement with academic material, as well as the teacher's perception of students. *"Simply put, girls have better educational outcomes when taught by women and boys are better off when taught by men"* (Dee, 2005).

It is clear that the preponderance of female teachers at lower education levels has left few male role models for boys in their early years in school (UNICEF, 2004). It is noteworthy that at secondary and tertiary levels, where the 'dropout rate' for boys seems to be at its highest, the majority of teachers are male. One area in which male teachers may play a particularly significant role is as informal counselors and mentors for male students. They may encourage boys to stay at school or guide them to alternative learning pathways. However, such informal mentoring systems should be supplemented with formal guidance and counseling systems within schools, including good training for the informal mentoring process. Such systems can advocate for meaningful, personal career choices for boys, and serve to bridge the gap between the academic curriculum in post-primary education and labour market needs. School career guidance can help students to prepare for market-oriented employment. Counselling and guidance services that are gender-responsive redress gender inequalities by promoting attitudinal and behavioural changes (Raghavan, 2009). The absence of male role models is a factor that comes up regularly within the literature on boys' underachievement, and it assumes the stance that boys' needs within both school and the broader society are different from those of girls.

In the Caribbean context, where the number of women-dominated and single parent households has been on the rise, the literature reviewed presents strong concerns about the lack of male presence within the home as well as the school. Hunte (2002), in the context of Guyana, argues that boys will seek out negative role models to fill the gaps at home or school, and that the resultant anti schooling attitudes will leave an emotional deficit that inhibits their progress. Figueroa (2000) takes this further and suggests that the absence of discipline meted out to boys in Jamaica by women - who believe this to be the preserve of a father or other male figure - disadvantages boys by permitting their exploration of negative masculine identity to be played out unchecked.

West (2002) analyses the problem of an imbalance of male and female teachers, which potentially disadvantages boys by giving messages that 'only women teach' and 'only women read'. His paper further outlines studies that have been conducted in Australia showing that boys value male teachers as role models to get them through the difficulties of the classroom. West quotes a paper by Bress (2000), who argues that males and females have a different language - 'genderlects'. This theory arguably takes the issue of role models out of purely socialization discourses and into the more contentious area of gendered heredity. One of the few findings that addressed the issue of boys' educational underachievement and under-participation in Lesotho also stressed the lack of male teachers in the educational system. However, the MUSTER project conducted in that country showed that the cause of boys' dropping out was

more often in order to fulfill work obligations due to hard economic circumstances (Jobo, 2001). Researchers have identified school factors such as the availability of male teachers, teacher quality, pupil-teacher-ratio, and school infrastructure as affecting boys' academic achievement (Koutros, 2010). Teachers play a significant role in providing students with opportunities to discover and reach their full potential, thereby ensuring that societies progress. Yet teacher shortages have long been a concern in many parts of the world. According to UNESCO (2006), it was estimated that achieving the educational millennium development goal of universal primary education by the year 2015 was dependent upon recruiting million new teachers around the world. The proportion of men within teaching ranks is declining significantly. Moreover, Koutros (2010) indicated that the lack of male teachers, particularly at the elementary level, has become epidemic throughout the world. A recent survey, conducted by the National Education Association (NEA), revealed that men accounted for less than one-fourth of all teachers (Koutros, 2010). Countries with the greatest shortfall in teachers tend to have low secondary enrollment ratios, thus resulting in a small pool of educated adults from which to recruit teachers (UNESCO, 2006).

According to Chege (2001), the contemporary family was characterized by parents, mainly mothers, who made explicit efforts not only to keep their daughters in school but also motivate them and support them to attain educational success both in the process of the school cycle and in the benefits or outcomes. It was argued that many parents apparently constructed their daughters as worthwhile investments whose economic and material returns to the parents were guaranteed. Boys were constructed as self-centred and less likely to support their parents after completing school. The researcher pointed out that schooling culture had increasingly made girls more confident both socially and in academic performance. In addition, the school workforce which was, in most cases, predominantly female portrayed an explicit enthusiasm of empowering girls through education and documentary evidence supported the fact that overall, there were more women teachers in the schools than men. There was little doubt that schools were becoming progressively more feminized with women teachers being the majority overall.

According, Chege, (2007), the female head teachers and their deputies raised concerns that while the men teachers were relatively few, they also portrayed themselves 'laid back' and were apparently not interested in connecting with the boys and the boys' interests as men-to-be. In addition, the dearth of available school-based mentors also played havoc in the construction of masculinities through schooling. It was also revealed that boys lacked male figures that could guide and counsel them in the same way as the girls in the schools, thus resulting in frustration with the schooling

career and eventually apathy when the girls outdo them in school work. Therefore, there was need to investigate the influence of teachers' gender on boy-child educational aspirations.

4. Research Design

This study employed an *ex-post facto* research design. This design was a definite plan determined before data was actually collected. The design was useful in the study because the researcher did not have direct control of independent variables. This design was suitable for the study because the researcher could not manipulate the variables (Kothari & Garg 2014). The boy-child educational aspirations were taken as the dependent variable while teachers' gender was the independent variables. Thus, the researcher was able to relate an after-the-fact analysis to an outcome or the dependent variable. In order to eliminate confounding variables in the study, techniques such as matching and random selection of respondents from appropriate population was done. The researcher investigated the influence of teachers' gender on boy-child educational aspirations.

4.1 Population of the study

The population of this study was all the teachers, and students (boys) in public secondary schools in Nakuru County of Kenya. The accessible population was all the male and female teachers and Form three boys in the selected schools within the county. All the time of this research there were 9,715 Form three male students in Nakuru County. Form three boys were chosen because they had stayed for long time in the school and had selected the subjects they were examined at the end of the Form four in line with their aspirations. There were 950 male and female teachers during the study. The teachers gave their views concerning the influence of teachers' gender on boys' educational aspirations.

4.2 Instrumentation

In this study, two research instruments were used to collect data; questionnaire for students (boys) and interview schedule for male and female teachers. Most research work uses methods that provide high accuracy, generalizability, and explanatory power, with low cost, rapid speed and maximum management demands and administrative convenience. Questionnaires are commonly used to obtain important information about the population. Each item in the questionnaire is developed to address a specific objective of the study. Questionnaire was appropriate with the large

number of respondents from whom a lot of information was required and for the purpose of easy coding. The interview schedule was used to obtain information from the male and female teachers to obtain in depth information about the influence of teachers' gender on boy-child educational aspirations.

4.3 Procedure

Pre-field work activities such as identifying and training research assistant were performed. The researcher also sought an introductory letter from the office of the Dean, School of Education, Moi University (Appendix III) and a permit from National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) was sought before carrying out the research. Permission was also sought from the County Commissioner Nakuru and County Director of Education Nakuru. The researcher visited the selected schools after seeking an appointment with the school administration and explained the purpose of the study to the head teachers.

5. Results and Discussion

The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of teachers' gender on boy-child educational aspirations. This was established using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics involved the use of frequencies and percentages. The inferential statistics involved the use of Pearson correlation coefficient, linear regression, t-test and Anova. The respondents were required to rate the statements relating to the gender roles of boy-child using a five point Likert scale. Computation was done on each statement on teachers' gender using frequencies and percentages as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' gender influence on boys' educational aspirations

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
There are few male teachers in School	44	12.0	49	13.3	104	28.3	79	21.5	92	25.0
Male Teachers are role models	93	25.3	78	21.2	45	12.2	76	20.7	76	20.7
Enjoy being taught by male teachers	76	20.7	80	21.7	62	16.8	54	14.7	96	26.1
Motivated by male teachers	121	32.9	90	24.5	43	11.7	41	11.1	73	19.8

Source: Survey Data, 2016

Teachers' gender influence on boys' educational aspirations index was 12.5 which was ambivalent. At least 92 (25%) of students strongly disagreed that there are few male teachers in school, with 21.5% disagreed, while 28.3% were undecided, 12% strongly agreed and 13.3% agreed. This showed that 46.5% of the students perceived that male teachers were not few in their school. Also 93 (25.3%) of students perceived that male teachers were role models, 21.2% agreed, while 12.2% were undecided, 20.7% strongly disagreed as well as disagreed. This indicated that 46.5% of students enjoy being taught by male teachers.

Also 76 (20.7%) of students strongly agreed that they enjoy being taught by male teachers, with 80 (21.7%) agreed, while 16.8% were undecided, 26.7% strongly disagreed and 14.7% disagreed. This indicated that 42.4% of students enjoy being taught by male teachers. At least 121 (32.9%) of students strongly agreed that they are motivated by male teachers, with 90(24.5%) agreed, while 11.7% were undecided, 19.8% strongly disagreed and 11.1% agreed. This indicated that 57.4% of students were motivated by male teachers. The teacher's gender influence on education aspiration index was 12.5 which was ambivalent.

5.1 Correlation of teachers' gender on boys' educational aspirations

Pearson moment correlation was used to describe the linear relationship between teacher's gender and boy-child educational aspirations as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlations of teachers' gender on boys' educational aspirations

		Aspiration	Teachers gender
Aspiration	Pearson Correlation	1	.544**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Teachers gender	Pearson Correlation	.544**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

b. Listwise N=368

Source: Research Data, 2016

There was a positive influence of teacher's gender on boy-child educational aspirations [$r = .544, n = 368, p < .05$]. This indicated that teacher's gender positively influenced the boy-child educational aspirations. This may be attributed to the influence of teacher's gender on attitude and motivation of students with respect to their aspirations.

5.2 Linear Regression on teachers' gender and boys' educational aspirations

A linear regression model was used to explore the relationship between teacher's gender and boy-child educational aspirations. The prediction was carried out based on the effect of teacher's gender as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Model summary on teachers' gender on boys' educational aspirations

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.544 ^a	.296	.294	.43039	.296	153.77	1	366	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Teachers gender

b. Dependent Variable: Aspiration

Source: Research Data, 2016

The R^2 represented the measure of variability in educational aspirations among public secondary schools in Nakuru County that is accounted for by the predictor. From the model, ($R^2 = .296$) indicating that the predictor account for 29.6% variation in boy-child educational aspirations predictors used in the model captured the variation in boy-child educational aspirations. The teachers' gender contributes 29.6% of boy-child educational aspirations through their motivation and positive attitude.

5.3 Analysis of variance on teachers' gender on boys' educational aspirations

The analysis of variance was used to test whether the model could significantly fit in predicting the outcome than using the mean as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of variance on teachers' gender on boys' educational aspiration

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	28.485	1	28.485	153.77	.000 ^b
	Residual	67.797	366	.185		
	Total	96.282	367			

a. Dependent Variable: Aspiration

b. Predictors: (Constant), Teachers gender

Source: Research Data, 2016

The regression model significantly improved the ability to predict the boy-child educational aspirations. The F- ratio was 153.77 and significant ($P < .05$) and thus the model was significant leading to rejection of the null hypotheses, that there is no significant relationship between teachers' gender and boy-child educational aspirations.

5.4 Coefficients of teachers' gender on boys' educational aspirations

The β coefficients for independent variable was generated from the model and subjected to a *t*-test, in order to test each of the hypotheses under study. The *t*-test was used to identify whether the predictors were making a significant contribution to the model. Table 5 shows the estimates of β -value and gives contribution of the predictor to the model.

Table 5: Coefficients of teachers' gender on boys' educational aspirations

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part
1 (Constant)	2.423	.107		22.55	.000			
Teachers gender	.354	.029	.544	12.40	.000	.544	.544	.544

a. Dependent Variable: Aspiration

Source: Researcher Data, 2016

The β -value for teacher's gender had positive coefficient, depicting positive relationship with boy-child educational aspirations as summarized in the model as:

$$\text{Educational aspirations} = 2.42 + 0.354 \text{ teacher's gender} + \epsilon \dots \dots \dots \text{Equation 4.3}$$

The coefficients results showed that the predicted parameter in relation to the independent factor was significant; $\beta_4 = 0.354$ ($P < 0.05$), which implies the null hypothesis is rejected that there is no significant relationship between teachers' gender and boy-child educational aspirations. This indicates that for each unit change in the teacher's gender, there is 0.354 units increase in boy-child educational aspirations. Furthermore, the influence of perceived teachers gender was stated by the *t*-test value = 12.40 which implies that the standard error associated with the parameter is less 12.4 times that of the error associated with it.

From the interview schedule most of the teachers agreed that the gender of a teacher affects boys' educational aspirations. This is what one teacher had to say:

"Boys tend to be closer to male teachers and due to lack of male teachers they lack motivation. There are many female teachers in this area are I think most boys think that teaching and learning is a female thing. You see some boys are very shy to get advice from female teachers because the lack of someone to share their feelings with especially issues that they cannot share with female teachers". (One male teacher from Naivasha)

From the interview, one teacher had to say this: *"The perception of boys regarding the gender of the teacher affecting their educational aspirations is critical. For instance, I have*

talked to many boys and approximately 70% of them said that female teachers are encouraging girls in class, compared with 30% of them who said that male teachers encouraged boys in class in mixed school."(A teacher from Nakuru Sub-County)

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The teachers' gender significantly influence boys' educational aspirations in secondary schools. Most teachers did not appear to consider boys' socialization needs; it is not surprising that boys seemed to take the "back stage" in many of the schools activities where teachers also treated boys differently from the girls and this may have affected the boys. In addition, the availability of school-based mentors also played havoc in educational aspirations through schooling. It was also revealed that boys lacked male figures that could guide and counsel them in the same way as the girls in the schools, thus resulting in frustration with the educational aspirations and eventually apathy when the girls outdo them in school work. Boys tend to be closer to male teachers and due to lack of male teachers, they lack motivation. There are many female teachers in Nakuru County and most of the boys perceive teaching and learning to belong to girls. Also, boys were found to be very shy in getting advice from female teachers. The researcher recommends that teachers especially male teachers should be encouraged to act as role models to the boys and should treat all students in school equally irrespective of their gender. Teachers should also motivate and rate students equally without bias in term of social behavior. It is necessary for teachers and school administrators to be empowered with the relevant knowledge and skills that would enhance their capacities to respond to the gender issues in their schools. Such capacities would ensure gender friendly and that gender relations were equitable between teachers and students at various levels. It is therefore important that issues of gender should be made compulsory to the teacher training institutions.

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