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INFLUENCE OF HEADTEACHERS' INVOLVEMENT OF FEMALE TEACHERS ON GIRLS' ACCESS TO PUBLIC PRIMARY EDUCATION IN GARISSA SUB-COUNTY, GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA

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INFLUENCE OF HEADTEACHERS' INVOLVEMENT OF FEMALE TEACHERS ON GIRLS' ACCESS TO PUBLIC PRIMARY EDUCATION IN GARISSA SUB-COUNTY, GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of headteachers' involvement of female teachers on girls' access to primary education in Garissa Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya. The study was guided by the Management Practices and Pearson's Gender Relations Theories.

Methodology: The study adopted mixed methodology and descriptive survey research design. Data analysis began by identifying common themes. The target population comprised of 28 headteachers, 302 teachers, 873 girls in classes VII & VIII and three (3) Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs) totaling to 1206 from which 300 respondents were determined using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create three strata based on the number of zones in Garissa Sub-County. From each zone, four headteachers and 56 teachers were selected using simple random sampling to avoid bias. The procedures adopted enabled the researcher to sample 12 headteachers, 168 teachers, 117 girls in classes VII & VIII and three (3) CSOs. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23) and presented using tables.

Findings: The study established that headteachers' management practices such as involvement of female teachers influence the number of girls who are enrolled into primary schools.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: Thus, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education should recruit and work with female teachers to enhance girls' access to primary education and to inform future policy development.

Keywords: *Headteachers, Involvement of female teachers, girls' access to public primary education*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Female teachers play an important role in the academic life of female learners and have immense contributions in encouraging more girls to enrol in school and in improving learning outcomes. To corroborate these assertions, Stacki (2012), in a study conducted in the United States, found that teachers' gender had affected other measures of learner involvement, such as teacher perceptions of learner ability and learner involvement with the teacher's subject, which were even greater than the effect on achievement. Female learners were more likely to look forward to a subject, feel more comfortable asking questions and think that a subject was useful for their future if that subject was taught by a female teacher.

In India, Unterhalter and Dutt's examined the relationship between teacher gender and learner achievement in five Indian states and also found differences between male and female school and classroom management practices and attitudes toward learner ability, with female teachers less likely to emphasize the need for strict discipline and to use fear to maintain discipline; female teachers were also far more likely to agree that all children are capable of learning (Unterhalter & Dutt, 2011). It should be noted, however, that none of these variables were significant enough to be linked to enrolment of girl in most schools. According to Rajagopal (2014), female representation in teaching decreases significantly the higher the level of education. For example, in South and West Asia, the proportion of teachers who are female decreases from 46 per cent in primary schools to 35 per cent in secondary schools. Pointing to the role-model effect, the authors suggest that the mutual understanding and identification between teachers and learners that arises from sharing certain demographic characteristics encourages learners to be more engaged, behave more appropriately, make more effort and perform better in school. With regards to gender, Rajagopal (2014) avers that learners who are taught by teachers of the same gender as themselves perform better than those taught by the opposite gender.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the decrease in female representation in secondary schools is even greater, with 43 per cent of female teachers at primary school level but just 29 per cent at secondary level (Bellamy, 2013). Discussions during a 2012 e-forum on gender equality in education hosted by the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and which involved academics, educators, researchers and development practitioners from around the world, provided anecdotal evidence that the presence of female teachers in a school helps to create a more 'girl-friendly' and supportive learning environment in which girls' needs and perspectives are more likely to be addressed and given value. Some participants in the discussion highlighted the symbolic importance of a school in which the gender balance of the staff reflected the gender balance of the learner population and provided an environment of which girls felt as much a part as boys (Habtamu, 2014). The presence of female teachers in school has not only been positively linked with increased access to education and retention of girls in school: there is also evidence of a link between female teachers and higher test scores (Habtamu, 2014). For example, a study undertaken by Igbuzor (2011) found that female teachers led to a two-three per cent increase in test scores in Nigeria's National Education Assessment tests. In Zimbabwe, a study of female teachers' experiences in poor rural areas showed that low self-esteem among girls was a key factor preventing them from achieving higher levels of education and that the presence of female teachers acting as role models helped to improve this (Hyde & Kadzamira, 2015). It is worth noting that there is

often a considerable shortage of female teachers in disadvantaged rural areas, which, significantly, is also where the largest gender gaps in learning outcomes often occur.

In Kenya, statistical relationship between female teachers and improved female achievement can be further analyzed by examining the ways in which male and female teachers differ in terms of their classroom teaching practices, they have towards girls' learning ability (Chege & Sifuna, 2016). However, there is some difficulty with relying on female teachers to act as role models as a way of motivating girls to enrol and achieve in school when female teachers themselves are often subject to the same prejudices and discrimination as their female learners.

This can often serve to reinforce gender stereotypes rather than enable girls to challenge them. According to Chege and Sifuna (2016), within many schools, it is common for female teachers to be allocated to lower primary grades or 'soft' subjects that carry lower status and can often relate to 'nurturing' abilities that also serve to reinforce gender roles. Female teachers are also often excluded from positions of policy and decision making and marginalized from training and professional development opportunities.

In a study conducted in Kajiado Central District, Ngome (2012) asserts that, with so many teachers assigned to teaching the lowest grade levels, girls in the upper grades of secondary school have few elite role models to help them aspire to academic achievement thus lower desire for girls to enrol to schools. Ngome (2012) further assert that a female head teacher, for example, can represent an inspiring and motivating role model for girls and can demonstrate to boys, girls, teachers and the community that women can be equally professional and perform as well as men (Ngome, 2012). Given the shortage of female teachers, it is unsurprising that there is a significant gender imbalance in the distribution of school head teachers, particularly in rural communities such as those in Garissa. In most schools in Garissa, gender inequality in positions of management in schools has had implications that impact on teachers and girls (Njoka, 2015). In other words, female teachers may lose motivation if they see that there are additional barriers to their ability to develop their careers. Such inequality may also send a message to learners and teachers that women are not capable of holding positions of leadership. UNICEF (2014) indicate that female teachers help to encourage girls to enrol in school in a number of ways. Given the not infrequent occurrence of the sexualization of adolescent girls by male teachers and learners, the presence of female teachers can aid in counteracting the over-masculinization of the school environment and, especially in more conservative communities, allow parents to feel more comfortable about sending their teenage daughters to school. However, UNICEF (2014) has failed to articulate specific characteristics which female need to have in order to encourage enrolment of girls and whether mere presence of female teachers in positions of school management guarantees girls' access to primary education.

Statement of the Problem

Female teachers play an important in the education of girls and, in schools where headteachers involve female teachers, girls' access to education has improved. However, this has not been the case in Garissa Sub-county where girls' access to primary education has been low. Statistics has shown that girls' access to primary education in Garissa Sub-County is lower than that of boys with ratio of boys to girls being 71.4% for boys compared to 28.6% for girls in public primary schools (UNICEF, 2014). Ministry of Education (2019) on the

other hand found out that although Free Primary Education (FPE) introduced in 2003 arguably raised the gender enrolment rate in public primary schools in Garissa Sub-county from 68.2% in 2002 to 88.2% (63.0% for boys and 37% for girls), the regional disparities are evident in enrolment and performance in KCPE. However, MoE (2019) noted that, despite the effort being put by the government such as introduction of 100.0% transition and compulsory secondary school attendance, the realization of girls' access to public primary education is still low and has been impeded by a number of factors. Despite these observations, empirical studies are yet to interrogate how headteachers' involvement of female teachers influences girls' access to primary education.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Management Practices Theory which as postulated by Kuo (2009). This theory addresses how managers and supervisors relate to their organizations in the knowledge of its goals, the implementation of effective means to get the goals accomplished and how to motivate employees to perform to the highest standard. The rationale of using management practices theory in this study is that to enhance girls' access to primary education, school managers ought to appreciate the important role they play in their respective organizations if they are to achieve improved enrolment of girls. The school managers need to adopt practices geared towards increasing enrolment of girls into such schools and to promote excellence among all learners in such schools.

This study was also based on Pearson's gender relations theory which was postulated by Pearson (1995). One of the premises of this theory is that society views all activities that are carried out to be based on social roles and interactions of men and women. In the same token, the relevance of Pearson's gender relations theory in this study is that it underscores the fact that school practices and norms, just like in any other society, affect girl's enrolment and participation in school activities.

Objective of the Study

The study sought to assess the influence of headteachers' involvement of female teachers on girls' access to public primary education in Garissa Sub-county, Garissa County, Kenya

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted mixed methodology and descriptive survey research design. The target population comprised of 28 headteachers, 302 teachers, 873 girls in classes VII & VIII and three (3) Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs) totaling to 1206 from which 300 respondents were determined using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create three strata based on the number of zones in Garissa Sub-County. From each zone, four headteachers and 56 teachers were selected using simple random sampling to avoid bias. The procedures adopted enabled the researcher to sample 12 headteachers, 168 teachers, 117 girls in classes VII & VIII and three (3) CSOs. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers, interview guide was used to gather qualitative data from headteachers and CSOs whereas Focus Group Discussion Guide to collect data from girls in classes VII & VIII. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment

Correlation with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23) and presented using tables.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the objective. It also outlines the methods of presentation of the study findings and discussions.

3.1 Questionnaire Return Rate

In this study, 168 questionnaires were administered to teachers out of which 160 questionnaires were filled and returned. This yielded response rates shown in Table 1;

Table 1: Questionnaire Return Rate

Respondents	Sampled Respondents	Those Who Returned Questionnaires	Achieved Questionnaire Return Rate (%)
Teachers	168	160	95.2
Total	168	160	95.2

Table 1 shows that teachers registered a response rate of 95.2%. At the same time, ten headteachers, three Curriculum Support officers and conducted focus group discussion among 108 girls in classes VII & VIII. They registered response rates of 83.3%, 100.0% and 92.3% respectively. This confirmed the findings of Creswell (2014) that a response rate above 75.0% is adequate and of suitable levels to allow for generalization of the outcomes to the target population.

3.2 Involvement of Female Teachers and Girls' Access to Primary Education

The study sought to examine the influence of headteachers' involvement of female teachers on girls' access to primary education. The findings are presented in Table 2;

Table 2: How Often Headteachers Involve Female Teachers in Girls' Access to Primary Education

Activities where Female Teachers are Involved	Very Often		Rarely		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Providing girls with information on how to handle menstruation challenges	34	21.3	68	42.5	58	36.2
Advising girls on how to conduct themselves towards members of the opposite sex	59	36.9	83	51.9	18	11.2
Guiding girls on the dangers of FGM, teenage pregnancy and early marriage	54	33.8	74	46.3	32	19.9
Conducting career guidance to girls	55	34.4	85	53.1	20	12.5

Source: Field Data (2020)

Table 2 shows that 34(21.3%) of the teachers indicated that primary school headteachers very often involve female teachers to provide with information on how to handle menstruation

challenges, 68(42.5%) indicated that headteachers rarely involve female teachers whereas 58(36.2%) noted that they never do. Slightly more than a third, 59(36.9%) of the teachers noted that headteachers very often involve female teachers in advising girls on how to conduct themselves towards members of the opposite sex, 83(51.9%) indicated rarely while 18(11.2%) noted they never do. Table 2 further shows that 54(33.8%) of the teachers noted that headteachers very often involve female teachers in guiding girls on the dangers of FGM, teenage pregnancy and early marriage, 74(46.3%) indicated rarely while 32(19.9%) indicated never. Slightly more than a third, 55(34.4%) of the teachers indicated that headteachers very often involve female teachers in conducting career guidance to girls, 85(53.1%) indicated that they rarely do whilst 20(12.5%) indicated never. These views were supported by girls in classes VII & VIII during focus group discussions. Girls observed:

Female teachers in our primary school are very few and those who are available are rarely get involved in our private issues such as discussing menstruation challenges, FGM, teenage pregnancies and early marriage

During the interviews, headteachers refuted such claims that female teachers are not involved in handling issues pertaining to the girlchild. Headteacher, H2, noted:

Despite the challenge of having few female teachers, the available ones are often tasked to share a lot of experiences with girls on issues that might derail their academic studies such as FGM, teenage pregnancies and early marriages

The views of headteachers were echoed by the CSOs who indicated that there are very few female teachers to act as role models to girls in primary schools. CSO3, noted:

In my zone, I only have six female teachers in all the public primary schools. this makes it difficult to balance between classroom instruction and creating time for advising girls on lifeskills and career choices

Despite these contradicting respondents' views, involvement of female teachers plays a key role in encouraging girls to access primary education. These findings corroborate the findings of a study carried out in Zimbabwe in which Hyde and Kadzamira (2015) revealed that female teachers play a key role in boosting self-esteem of girls, which a major factor in their pursuit of education.

This implies that a common motif that emerges from the literature on girls' education is the significant influence that female teachers can have both in encouraging more girls to enrol in school and in improving learning outcomes.

Table 3: Influence of Headteachers' Involvement of Female Teachers on Girls' Access to Primary Education

Test Items	Ratings						Mean	Std. Dev.
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %			
Involving female teachers in creating awareness about girls' education influence the number of girls enrolled in schools	80.5	8.5	1.5	5.5	4.0	4.863	0.395	
Involving female teachers in creating awareness about girls' education influence the number of girls who drop out of schools	78.5	14.5	2.5	3.0	1.5	4.742	0.385	
Involving female teachers as role models influence the number of girls who are enrolled in schools	69.5	12.0	2.0	10.0	6.5	4.199	0.341	
Involving female teachers as role models and for gender appeal influence the number of girls who drop out of schools	74.5	17.0	2.5	3.5	2.5	4.501	0.366	

Source: Field Data (2020)

Table 3 reveals that 129(80.5%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that involving female teachers in creating awareness about girls' education influence the number of girls enrolled in schools as did 14(8.5%) who agreed. However, only a paltry 3(1.5%) of the teachers were undecided, 9(5.5%) of the teachers disagreed whereas 7(4.0%) of the teachers strongly disagreed. The study further found out that 126(78.5%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that involving female teachers in creating awareness about girls' education influence the number of girls who drop out of schools. At the same time, 24(14.5%) of the teachers agreed. However, 4(2.5%) of the teachers were undecided, 5(3.0%) of the teachers disagreed whereas 3(1.5%) of the teachers strongly disagreed. These findings lend credence to the findings of a study conducted in the United States in which Stacki (2012) found that teachers' gender had affected other measures of learner involvement, such as teacher perceptions of learner ability and learner involvement with the teacher's subject, which were even greater than the effect on achievement. Female learners were more likely to look forward to a subject, feel more comfortable asking questions and think that a subject was useful for their future if that subject was taught by a female teacher. The findings also corroborate the assertions of Habtamu (2014) that the presence of female teachers in school has not only been positively linked with increased access and retention of girls in school: there is also evidence of a link between female teachers and higher test scores. The study revealed that 112(69.5%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that involving female teachers as role models influence the number of girls who are enrolled in schools. On the same breath, 20(12.0%) of the teachers agreed. However, 4(2.0%) of the teachers were undecided, 16(10.0%) of the teachers disagreed whereas 11(6.5%) of the teachers strongly disagreed.

Majority, 120(74.5%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that involving female teachers as role models and for gender appeal influence the number of girls who drop out of schools whereas 28(17.0%) agreed. At the same time, 4(2.5%) of the teachers were undecided, 6(3.5%) of the teachers disagreed whereas 4(2.5%) of the teachers strongly disagreed. These findings corroborate the findings of a study conducted in Kenya in which Chege and Sifuna (2016) asserted that female teachers act as role models as a way of motivating girls to enroll and achieve in school. These findings attest to the fact that female teachers possess specific characteristics which enable them to encourage access of girls. Table 9 shows that the mean ranged between, $\bar{x} = 4.0$ and 4.9 whereas the standard deviation ranged between, $\sigma = 0.35$ and 0.40. This further affirms the fact that it is strongly agreeable that female teachers play a key role in girls' access to primary education with little variations (standard deviation < 1).

To verify the relationship between headteachers' involvement of female teachers and girls' access to primary education, data were collected from headteachers on the number of female teachers in primary schools and the number of girls in the sampled primary schools. The results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Results of the Number of Female Teachers and the Number of Girls in Public Primary Schools

Number of Female Teachers	No. of Girls in Public Primary Schools
4	124
4	134
4	177
5	178
5	234
5	239
5	245
6	267
6	341
7	359

Table 4 shows that headteachers who have many female teachers to be engaged as role models for girls have attracted many girls in their primary schools. These findings further lend credence to the assertions of Habtamu (2014) that the presence of female teachers in school has not only been positively linked with increased access and retention of girls in school: there is also evidence of a link between female teachers and higher test scores. That is, female teachers act as role models as a way of motivating girls to enroll and achieve in school which further points to the fact that female teachers possess specific characteristics which enable them to encourage girls' access to primary education. These results were subjected to Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis and the results are shown in Table 5:

Table 5: Relationship between the Number of Female Teachers and the Number of Girls Enrolled in Public Primary Schools

		No. of Female Teachers in Primary Schools	No. of Girls Enrolled in Primary Schools
No. of Female Teachers in Primary Schools	Pearson Correlation	1	.931*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
	N	10	10
Number of Girls Enrolled in Primary Schools	Pearson Correlation	.931*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
	N	10	10

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

Table 5 shows that there is a strong positive correlation between the number of female teachers and the number of girls enrolled in public primary schools ($r(10) = 0.931$, $p = 0.027$ at $\alpha = 0.05$). These findings thus attest to the fact that there is significant relationship between involvement of female teachers in girls' access to primary education. These results are consistent with the findings of a study conducted in Kenya by Chege and Sifuna (2016) which generated a p-value of $0.033 < 0.05$. These findings hence point to the fact that female teachers act as role models as a way of motivating girls to enroll and achieve in school and also possess specific characteristics which enable them to encourage girls' access to primary education. The researcher also conducted interviews among headteachers and CSOs and undertook focus group discussions among girls in classes VII & VIII to establish the influence of their involvement of female teachers on girls' access to primary education. The interviewees also responded in favor of the view that involving female teachers influence the number of girls enrolled in schools and determine the number of girls who drop out of schools after enrollment.

Just like in quantitative findings, these views lend credence to the views expressed in the United States by Stacki (2012) that teachers' gender had affected other measures of learner involvement such as teacher perceptions of learner ability and learner involvement with the teacher's subject, which were even greater than the effect on achievement. Headteacher, H3, noted;

Female learners are more likely to look forward to a subject, feel more comfortable asking questions and think that a subject was useful for their future if that subject was taught by a female teacher in my primary school

These views were shared by CSOs as well as the girls during FGDs. These views further corroborate the views expressed by Habtamu (2014) that the presence of female teachers in school has not only been positively linked with increased access and retention of girls in school: there is also evidence of a link between female teachers and higher test scores. The interviewees also noted that involving female teachers as role models influence the number of girls who are enrolled in schools and the number of girls who drop out of schools. This further corroborates the qualitative views expressed in Kenya by Chege and Sifuna (2016) asserted that female teachers act as role models as a way of motivating girls to enroll and achieve in school. These findings attest to the fact that female teachers possess specific

characteristics which enable them to encourage access of girls. Besides, it is evident that female teachers act as role models as a way of motivating girls to enroll and achieve in school and also possess specific characteristics which enable them to encourage girls' access to primary education.

4.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study has established that involvement of female teachers influences girls' access to primary education. That is, involving female teachers influence the number of girls enrolled in schools and the number of girls who drop out of schools. This lends credence to the fact that teachers' gender affects other measures of learner involvement, such as teacher perceptions of learner ability and learner involvement with the teacher's subject, which were even greater than the effect on achievement. In other words, female learners were more likely to look forward to a subject, feel more comfortable asking questions and think that a subject was useful for their future if that subject was taught by a female teacher. Besides, the presence of female teachers in school has not only been positively linked with increased access and retention of girls in school: there is also evidence of a link between female teachers and higher test scores. This implies that involving female teachers as role models influence the number of girls who are enrolled in schools and those who drop out. Therefore, it is evident that female teachers act as role models as a way of motivating girls to enroll and achieve in school since they possess specific characteristics which enable them to encourage access of girls. However, from the study findings, it is evident that headteachers of public primary schools rarely involve female teachers in enhancing girls' access to primary education.

Recommendations

As a management practice, the study recommends that headteachers should involve female teachers in facets of school management with regard to enrollment of girls into primary schools considering their role as motivators and role models to girls and bearing in mind that they fully understand first-hand the challenges which girls face on their daily activities and which may hinder their desire to pursue education. On policy, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education should recruit and work with female teachers are greatly needed to inform future policy development. It would seem, however, that all may contribute to increased recruitment of women teachers, but they do not work alone. They have to be developed and implemented within a gender equality framework which is also attentive, for example, to gender-responsive teacher training for men and women, to ensuring that schools are women-teacher friendly and to challenging family and community attitudes about women's roles and activities. Such processes have to be mirrored at the highest levels of policy-making in order to ensure that teachers male and female are accorded status and that adequate resources are allocated to provide decent salaries, as well as appropriate training and professional opportunities.

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