

**FACTORS AFFECTING THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF
STUDENTS IN MIXED PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
NAIROBI COUNTY**

BY

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF
ANTHROPOLOGY, GENDER AND AFRICAN STUDIES IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN GENDER AND
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

NOVEMBER 2012

DECLARATION

I declare that this project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

Signature.....

Date.....29/11/2012

Agnes M. Owuor
N69/64370/2010

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university supervisor.

Signature.....

Date.....29/11/12

Supervisor: Dr. Stevie M. Nangendo

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this research to the Almighty God for the life, strength and courage He gave me while conducting the study.

My dedication also goes to my family for their encouragement and support throughout the period of my studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all who contributed to the success of my project. My gratitude goes to University of Nairobi for giving me a chance to pursue this course. I am immensely grateful to my supervisor Dr. Stevie M. Nangendo for his tireless, critical and intellectual supervision and guidance that rendered the successful completion of this study.

Worth mentioning are also the contributions of Mr. Kiragu Kibe, Dr. C. O. Olungah, Mr. Isaac Were, Dr. W. Onyango-Ouma and Dr. W. Subbo that led to the success of this study.

Finally, my sincere appreciations also goes to all the headteachers and the informants of mixed public secondary schools in Nairobi County who volunteered and sacrificed their time to provide valuable information that enabled this study fulfill its objectives.

May God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine factors affecting the academic performance of students in mixed public secondary schools in Nairobi County. The study was carried out in Nairobi County between August and October 2012. This study was guided by the empowerment theory propounded by Robins et al (1998). The main method of data collection was a semi-structured questionnaire administered to 60 respondents that comprised of the headteachers, deputy headteachers and teachers in charge of guiding and counseling departments. Data were also gathered through direct observations and reviewing of documentaries. The specific objectives of the study were the attitudes of students and teachers on some subjects, gender issues, teaching environments and the involvement of parents in the learning of students in mixed public secondary schools. The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The study concluded that teachers should introduce subjects in a simpler manner so that students develop interest in most subjects. Discrimination of students should be eliminated and role models be availed to motivate students. There is a need for a learning environment that is free from pollution and noise. Similarly, parents need to be actively involved in the learning and performance of their children in schools. The government also needs to provide modern facilities such as computers and laboratories in mixed public secondary schools. There is also a need for a diversification of extra-curricular activities to improve the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
HIV	<i>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</i>
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KNEC	Kenya National Examination Council
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNESCO	United Nations Economic Social and Cultural Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Education in Kenya is widely recognized as key to national development. An increase in access and quality of education, relative to the national population, is critical to socio-economic growth and productivity. It also leads to increased individual earnings and, subsequently, a reduction in income inequality and of poverty. It also contributes significantly to improved health, enhanced democracy, good governance and effective leadership (Ministry of Education 2007a).

Since the attainment of independence in 1963, the Government of Kenya has placed great emphasis on the role of education in socio-economic and political development. As a result, it has considerably expanded access to education through opening of more schools from the initial 6,058 primary schools with an enrollment of 891,553 and 151 secondary schools 30,121 with pupils, respectively, in 1963 (Ministry of Education 2007a). By 2004 there were 17,804 public and 1,839 private primary schools with a total enrollment of 7,394,763 pupils (3,818,836 boys and 3,575,927 girls). There were also 3,621 public and 490 private secondary schools with a total enrollment of 923,134 students (489,006 boys and 434,128 girls). This expansion has not been without major challenges, one of which is equity (Ministry of Education 2007a).

Enrolment at the secondary school education level has grown by 18.3 per cent from 882,390 students in 2003 to 1,043,467 in 2006 (Ministry of Education 2007a). The number of secondary schools has increased from 4,071 in 2003 to 4,506 in 2006 (Ministry of Education 2007a). The gross enrollment rate (GER) in secondary schools has remained low at less than 30 per cent throughout the 1990s and in the early part of 2000. On the other hand, the net enrollment ratio (NER) was less than 20 per cent between 1999 and 2004. In 2004, the national GER was 31.7 per cent for boys and 27.3 per cent for girls. However, regional differences persisted, for instance, in 2004 the GER gender disparity was 0.4 per cent in favour of girls in Central Province, while Nairobi Province recorded a gender disparity of 11.2 per cent in favour of boys (Ministry of Education 2007a).

Considering that male students accounted for approximately 52 per cent of students in secondary schools in 2003, the 2007 figures show an increase in disparity with male students accounting for 54 per cent. Although female numbers in secondary schools increased by 117,673 students in the 2003-2007 periods, the overall disparity between male and female students increased from 34,926 students in 2003 to 98,519 in 2007 (Ministry of Education 2007a).

These disparities are reflected in the performance of girls as witnessed during the 2011 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination results. The number of boys were more than that of girls in all counties except in Kirinyaga while Mandera County recorded the highest ratio of gender disparity at 27.73 per cent of girls to 72.27 percent of boys (Ministry of Education 2012).

School performance reflects the effectiveness and efficiency of the schooling processes. Effectiveness, in a general sense, refers to the accomplishment of the objectives of a school, while efficiency indicates whether these objectives were accomplished in a timely and costly manner. School performance research focuses solely on objectives that schools, or distinct types of schools, have in common. Despite this specific focus, a number of foundational studies have indicated that in several aspects measuring performance is multidimensional (Scheerens, 1992). Within the field of school effectiveness research it is commonly agreed that studies should employ 'value added' performance measures, instead of unadjusted output criteria. Value added in this respect can be defined as "an indication of the extent to which any given school has fostered the progress of all students in a range of subjects during a particular time period" (Sammons, et al 1997).

The cause of poor performance in public secondary schools can be attributed to a number of factors some of which include lack of morale and dedication on the part of the teachers, insufficient facilities and the high number of students leading to a high teacher-student ratio (Gómez-Pena, 2005). To improve the performance of public secondary schools, the government needs to first identify these and the various other factors. Starting with the teachers, the government needs to motivate them to increase the quality of their output by, for example, offering incentives and paying them well for overtime as it is done in private schools. It should

as well consider hiring more teachers to reduce the high teacher-student ratio because many students under one teacher do not learn as efficiently as a few students under one teacher. The government also needs to invest in providing modern facilities for public schools such as computers and laboratories. It should also encourage the diversification of extra-curricular activities, (Jones and Adrian 2012).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Performance of mixed public secondary schools may be put into question, especially with low and middle income earners in developing countries where the average citizen lives on less than one dollar a day. Equally, the rates of failing are generally greater than those in developed countries, therefore, better school performance should usually be a priority in developing countries (Mwangi, 2008). According to Munge (2005), the public secondary schools sector in Kenya has been facing many problems. The sector has been inadequately prepared and ill-equipped to effectively deal with problems such as poor scores and resource endowment.

Secondary education in Kenya caters for primary school leavers in the 15-18 years age group. Performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), which marks the termination of the four year secondary education, is used as a criterion for selection into university education and training in the middle level trades and professions. While the secondary school education opportunities continue to expand, a large number of female students who enroll in Form One do not complete the secondary education cycle of four years (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2003).

With public secondary schools increasingly becoming an important infrastructure in economic development, the instability of services provided by them may compromise the quality of life and life span to average income groups in Kenya. This in the long run will affect the income generation potential and the overall economic growth of the country. This growth can only be realized when there is a sufficient number of well-trained teachers, professionals and management human power. Therefore, this study will explore ways of improving the performance of students so as to maintain sustainability of mixed public secondary schools with

or without government support (Mwangi, 2008). In order to address the study objectives, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. To what extent do the attitudes of students and teachers affect the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools?
- ii. Do gender issues affect the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools?
- iii. To what extent does teaching environments affect the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools?
- iv. How does the involvement of parents in students learning affect the performance in mixed public secondary schools?

1.3 Research objectives

1.3.1 General objective

To identify the factors that affects the performance of students in public secondary schools in Nairobi County.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- i. To find out the extent to which the attitudes of students and teachers affect the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools.
- ii. To examine the extent to which gender issues affect the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools.
- iii. To establish the extent to which teaching environments affect the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools.
- iv. To assess if the involvement of parents in students learning affect the performance of mixed public secondary schools

1.4 Justification of the study

This study helped public secondary schools to understand better the factors that affect the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools in Nairobi County. The findings of the study were used by the sector to serve as a benchmark in setting certain standards for performance in schools.

The research enlightened policy-makers and other stakeholders on the factors that affect the performance of students in schools. This created awareness and interests of ensuring a stability of their respective institutions. The study stands to benefit future researchers who may wish to study such factors as school performance in other parts of the country. Other public secondary schools were similarly found this study useful whereby the identified factors was applied. This made a difference on the level of performance of students in public secondary schools.

1.5 Scope and limitations of the study

The study focused mainly on the headteachers, deputy head teachers and those teachers in charge of guiding and counseling. The study narrowed down to systematic sampling technique to select the sites and simple random sampling technique to sample out the respondents. The study was limited to public secondary schools in Nairobi County because of budget and time limitations. Some questionnaires were not duly completed while others were not returned.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the review of literature on the factors that affect performance of students in mixed public secondary schools in Nairobi County. It comprises an overview of the performance of students, theoretical framework, assumptions of the study and definition of terms.

2.1.1 Overview of the performance of students

Performance during the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education has improved steadily. For instance, 1,265 (0.48%) candidates obtained Grade A in 2006 as compared to 611 (0.24%) in 2005 (Ministry of Education 2007a). According to KNEC, in 2009 boys dominated the top 10 positions in the KCSE results with the first girl coming in the 11th position nationally (Ministry of Education 2011). In 2010, among the top scoring 100 students, 22% were girls and 78% boys. A total of 36,000 females scored the minimum university entry mark of C+, representing just 23.17% of the total number of candidates. Boys, on the other hand, nearly doubled this with 60,000 scoring C+. Therefore, the gender parity ratio of boys to girls stood at 53:47 in 2010 (Ministry of Education 2011)

In 2011, a total of 411,783 candidates sat for the KCSE examinations marking a 15.19 percent increase in the number of candidates. The number of girls who sat the examination increased to 182,612 from 159,388 in 2010 while that of boys also rose to 229,171 from 198,100 in 2010.

Maranda High School was the top school in the nation followed by Alliance High School and Alliance Girls High School in the second and third positions, respectively (Ministry of Education 2011b). The number of candidates attaining the minimum university entry qualifications of C+ and above rose to 119,658 (29.12 percent) compared to 97,134 in 2010. Candidates who scored an overall Mean Grade A also increased from 1,566 in 2010 to 1,930 in 2011. From the 2011 results 118,265 candidates obtained the mean grade of D and below (Ministry of Education 2012). According to the Minister for Education, there was improvement in the performance of

16 subjects including Mathematics, Physics, Biology and Kiswahili, and a drop in performance in 13 subjects among them English, History and Chemistry (Ministry of Education 2012).

When it comes to performance, the results buck the trend of unfavorable statistics of female students. Of the top 100 students nationally, 34 were female compared to 66 male students. At the county level, only in three counties did girls outnumber boys in the top 10 position. Similarly, only three of the top 10 students nationally were girls (Ministry of Education 2012).

To address the lower participation of girls in schools, the government has provided grants to some girls' schools and is currently implementing an affirmative component in the award of bursaries to female students. In spite of the above efforts, the participation, retention, transition and completion of girls at the secondary school levels are low (Ministry of Education 2007a).

2.1.2 Attitudes of teachers and students

The attitudes of teachers towards their work and students, their classroom management and interaction with students, have a great impact on the academic achievement and retention of students particularly in girl's schools (Abagi and Odipo, 1997). A survey has shown that many teachers do not feel responsible in any way for the performance of their students (UNESCO, 1998). Instead, teachers believe that learning abilities are innate so they tend to ascribe failure primarily to the low intelligence of students or their family backgrounds. These teachers regard their task as merely transmitting knowledge rather than guiding pupils through the learning process (UNESCO, 1998). Such attitudes among teachers are intensified by poor working conditions as well as lack of professional frameworks through which they could achieve experiences and learn from peers.

Other studies have looked at the attitudes of boys and girls as a factor that impact on the differences in mathematics performance. For example, a study carried out by Vallance (1977) found that for all the attitudinal variables such as anxiety, confidence and motivation, males had higher mean scores than females. In fact, it was argued that the idea that mathematics is for boys may result in low motivation among girls and it could widen the gender gap in mathematics achievement in favour of boys.

According to Marshall and Reihartz (1997), gender differences in mathematics teaching, learning and achievement have been explained on the basis of gender differences in cognition and brain lateralization. It is argued that male and female students do experience the world in different ways. Firstly, because they are differently positioned in society, and secondly, because of their different learning styles and how they perceive and process reality. These researchers emphasize that most mathematics classroom discourses are organized in such a way as to accommodate male learning patterns, hence, their high achievements in mathematics. These differences have implications for the kind of instructional procedures that are to be adopted for setting up an appropriate teaching and learning environment for mathematics instruction that is suitable to both genders (Sadker and Sadker 1994)

Classroom interaction in mixed schools has also emerged as a factor in explaining the gender gap in mathematics. For example, the use of verbal and non-verbal languages by boys in mixed schools tends to command more of the time of teachers in both attention and classroom control. However, this issue may not be a factor in same sex school. Furthermore, boys are more mobile in the classroom than girls, and this tends to influence some beliefs of the teachers that boys are more competent than girls (Anyon 1979).

An interesting body of international literature suggests that the gender gap in mathematics achievement needs to be re-examined as female students perform better than male students in primary schools. For instance, Apple (1971) noted that in London the achievement of female students in mathematics increasingly showed that the gender gap was closing. This is because female students were viewed as doing very well in mathematics classes. Furthermore, girls were doing better than boys even for tasks that require complex problem-solving (Ehman 1980).

2.1.3 Gender issues

Research on gender and education has focused on unearthing the underlying causes of gender disparities, and the factors that hinder attempts to reduce and eventually eliminate disparities. Studies reveal that key factors on gender disparities include social, cultural and religious beliefs, attitudes and practices, poverty, child labour, poor learning environment, lack of role models,

HIV/AIDS, curriculum, as well as pedagogy and learners' attitudes (Ministry of Education 2007b).

Despite the fact that girls have significant roles in societies, few studies have investigated the role gender issues play in the performance of students in schools. This information is important to quantify the need for performance, design of innovative public schools education and screening programs that are targeted towards being competitive within the industry (Kim et al 2004).

In many African countries, there has been a general belief that education is a better investment in boys than girls (Mbilinyi, 1970). African cultures have overburdened girl-children such that they lack enough time to read at home as a result of the duties expected of them such as taking care of the home and younger siblings. This results into frequent absenteeism by girls from school that eventually culminates into poor performances by girls (Mbilinyi, 1970).

On the other hand, some studies have indicated that most parents would rather educate boys than girls if they were asked to prioritize on the utilization of scarce resources for educational purposes (UNICEF, 2008). This is because parents perceive the education of boys as having higher returns to the family in comparison with that of girls. In such cases, therefore, girls have sometimes found it difficult to pursue education to its logical conclusion (UNICEF, 2008).

A gender insensitive school environment includes the attitudes of the key stakeholders in the school, such as administrators, teachers and students. Many incidents of sexual harassment and gender-based violence (GBV) have been reported. Other aspects of the school environment that can be gender insensitive include poor school infrastructure and amenities such as water and sanitation as well as unavailability of sanitary towels. Others include curriculum and teaching, learning-materials such as text books, pedagogy, school management as well as guidance and counseling (Ministry of Education 2007b).

Lack of adequate training hinders the abilities of teachers to detect all types of abuses, but it may especially impair their abilities to recognize sexual abuse, since most victims manifest no obvious external signs. Even when sexual abuse is suspected, it is not always reported to child protective services. Apple (1971) noted that the reporting philosophy of the school principal has

been found to exert an important influence on teachers reporting sexual abuses. Where a principal encourages it, teachers are more likely to report, however when principals are reluctant to report, teachers report even less often.

A school is a social institution outside the family in which nearly all children have consistent and ongoing contacts. Therefore, it is particularly well suited for identifying endangered children, including those who are being sexually maltreated. Today, many schools are striving to become more effective participants in prevention and intervention efforts designed to reduce the complex problem of child abuse (Reay, 2001). Teachers are empathetic towards abused children, but fear and lack of knowledge may make them hesitant about reporting abuses. Although teachers are required by law to report suspected child abuse cases, most training colleges allow teachers to become certified without exposure to child abuse curricula (Reay, 2001).

2.1.4 Teaching environment

Learning is a complex activity that supremely tests the motivations and physical conditions of students. Teaching resources, the skills of teachers, and curricula all play a vital role in the education of a student. But what about the physical condition and design of the actual school facility itself? How do they shape the learning experience of a child? Today's busy parents may never know. With most of them working, parents generally find little time to experience, much less evaluate, the physical conditions of the schools of their children. When they do visit, often during /parent teacher's night, discussions will mostly focus on their child's learning, achievement, and progress, not on school maintenance or design issues. There are few opportunities for parents to observe a classroom or school during the school day. But it is just during this time that a significant number of students and teachers struggle with such things as noise, glare, mildew, lack of fresh air and hot or cold temperatures (Tobias, 1993).

Most learning institutions lack such facilities as supplies, classrooms, as well as learning materials. In many countries, teachers are paid relatively low salaries compared with other sectors or they are not paid regularly. This leads to teacher absenteeism, lack of motivation and/or attrition There are also conditions where schools and teachers are forced to search for alternative incomes from parents or use student labour. This situation has had a negative impact

on the education of girls because it discourages parents from sending girls to schools or it shortens the time spent on teaching and learning (Odaga and Heneveld, 1995).

In terms of educational development, the uncertain state of the economy and high population growth rate has implications on education. The poor performance of the economic sector in Kenya has in the past imposed severe constraints on the resources for educational growth (World Bank, 2009). Equally, population growth reduces per capita incomes and puts pressure on scarce resources. It is not possible for the government of Kenya to provide educational facilities to match the rapid rise in population. Parents and local communities are, therefore, expected to play an equally active role in the provision of educational facilities in the future (Omiti, 2002).

This poses a major threat to the education of boys and girls. Without much motivation and education, the schooling of their children is likely to be discontinued. Public policy makers can reduce the direct costs that families must bear through such means as subsidizing text books and transportation, providing essential school supplies and waiving fees to students from very poor families (USAID, 2011).

Schools in the rural and other marginalized areas experience difficulties. Many students learn in classrooms which are ill-equipped and dilapidated, some have no roofs, doors and even walls. Learning under trees is not uncommon and many of those privileged to have exercise books write on their laps (Vallance, 1977). Children cover long distances going from home to school and back, often times on empty stomachs. Such conditions obviously do not facilitate easy learning environments.

2.1.5 Involvement of Parents

Parent involvement is a valuable component of the education of a student. It is a well established fact that parental involvement is linked to the success of children at school. When parents are involved in education of their children at home, they do better in school (Gadner, 1983). The level of parent school involvement is a better predictor of grades than are standardized test scores. The 12 years of 180 six-hour days spent in school add up to only 13 % of a student's waking, learning time during the first 18 years of life. The rest, 87% is spent out of school,

primarily at home. What is important is not the type of school, or who goes there, but the quality of its relationship with the families (Gadner, 1983).

According to Taylor and Galligan (2006), the alliance between the home and school has dramatically changed throughout the history of formal education, as have the roles and functions that parents and teachers are expected to fulfil. Throughout time, parents have been portrayed as both friends and foes in the course of educational reform. Historically, parental involvement was not always a welcomed addition to the school community, and even today some view parent-school relations as a power struggle. Tobias (1993) reported that some research found little to no effect of parental involvement on school achievement for middle age students. For the most part, however, teachers and administrators welcome a helping hand in the overcrowded classrooms of the public schools and agree that parental involvement is one way to bridge reading comprehension gaps. Today, it is widely recognized that parents play an essential role in their children's school life. Numerous types of parental involvement have been shown to develop cognitive growth and success in school (Tobias, 1993).

Parent involvement in learning activity is a strategy that was found by Goldberg (2001) to increase the educational effectiveness of the time that parents and children spend together at home. Teachers and parents agree on the involvement of parents. Seventy one percent of principals and fifty nine percent of teachers called it a priority based on research conducted by Goldberg (2001). Those schools whose parental involvement is strong provide a lot of benefit to the students. Parent and family involvement shows that improved parental involvement not only leads to higher academic achievement, but to better attendance and improved behavior at home and school as well. When school and home work together collaboratively, and using a competent approach to education, it can make a huge difference in student achievement (Benford et. al. 2006). The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) suggests that a formal policy be created. Lack of planning was seen as one of the most challenging aspects to more involvement of parents in students learning (Benford and Gess-Newsome 2006).

The quality of parental involvement makes all the difference according to Depaolo and McLaren (2006). We need to understand the underlying relationship between a parent and child that

supports children's achievement and positive educational outcomes overall. A parent's enthusiasm about education is, in most instances the underlying factor that contributes to the child's academic success.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Empowerment theory

Zimmerman (1993) defines empowerment as the process by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources and control over their own lives. The empowerment theory is premised on the concept of capacity building, which means that individuals and groups have access to means and resources that play a part in enabling them to achieve sustainable human development. In doing so, they gain the ability to achieve their highest personal and collective aspirations and goals (Robins et al 1998).

The theory addresses oppression, stratification and inequality as social barriers and focuses on bringing all people to the same level ground so as to be able to develop sustainably. The theory also emphasizes the ability of both men and women to participate in the development process and to the necessary capacities and conducive enabling environments in order to participate in development activities. Inequalities in education as well as employment opportunities are additionally addressed by the theory.

2.2.2 Relevance of the theory

The relevance of this theory is the need to determine how students in public secondary schools are empowered through education. Both boys and girls should be given an opportunity to acquire formal education that will enhance their chances of competing equally with each other in the schools and in the larger society outside the schools.

2.3 Assumptions of the Study

- i. Attitudes of teachers and students affect the performance of students in public secondary Schools.
- ii. Gender issues affect the performance of students in public secondary schools.
- iii. Teaching environments affect performance in public secondary schools.
- iv. Parents involvement in students learning affects performance in public secondary school

2.4 Definition of terms

Achievement: This is the actual accomplishment in academic performance by boys and girls in schools.

Completion rate: This is the ratio of the total number of students who successfully complete and graduate from a cycle in a given year in schools.

Gender: This refers to prescribed power relations, roles, responsibilities and entitlements for men, women, girls and boys.

Gender bias: This refers to unequal treatment in opportunities and expectations due to attitudes based on the sex of individuals.

Gender equality: This refers to equal treatment of boys and girls including equal access to and control of education opportunities and resources.

Gender parity: This is a numerical concept referring to an equal number of girls and boys relative to their respective numbers in the school system.

Gender issues: This refers to any perceived and/or real effects and implications arising from differences between and among groups of boys and girls in access to and control over resources and benefits in a school system.

Gender roles: These are socially assigned roles and responsibilities as opposed to biologically determined functions.

Gender stereotyping: The assigning of roles, tasks and responsibilities to men, women, boys and girls on the basis of pre-conceived prejudices

Gross enrollment rate: This refers to an enrollment of an official age group of a given level of education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population

Gross enrollment ratio: This is the number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for the same level of education.

Net enrollment ratio: This is the number of students in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level expressed as a percentage of the total population.

Participation: This means involving boys in school governance by valuing their opinions and ideas and giving them control of their learning.

Retention rate: This is the proportion of students who join the school and go on to the next year(s) at the same school.

School curriculum: This refers to a defined and prescribed course of studies to the content of an education programme.

Sexual harassment: These refer to unwelcome acts of a sexual nature that cause discomfort to students. These include words, persistent request for sexual favours, gestures and touches.

Transition rate: This is the proportion of new students admitted into a year of a given educational stage in comparison with the number of pupils in the last year of the preceding stage.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the research site, sampling techniques, methods of data collection and analysis as well as ethical considerations.

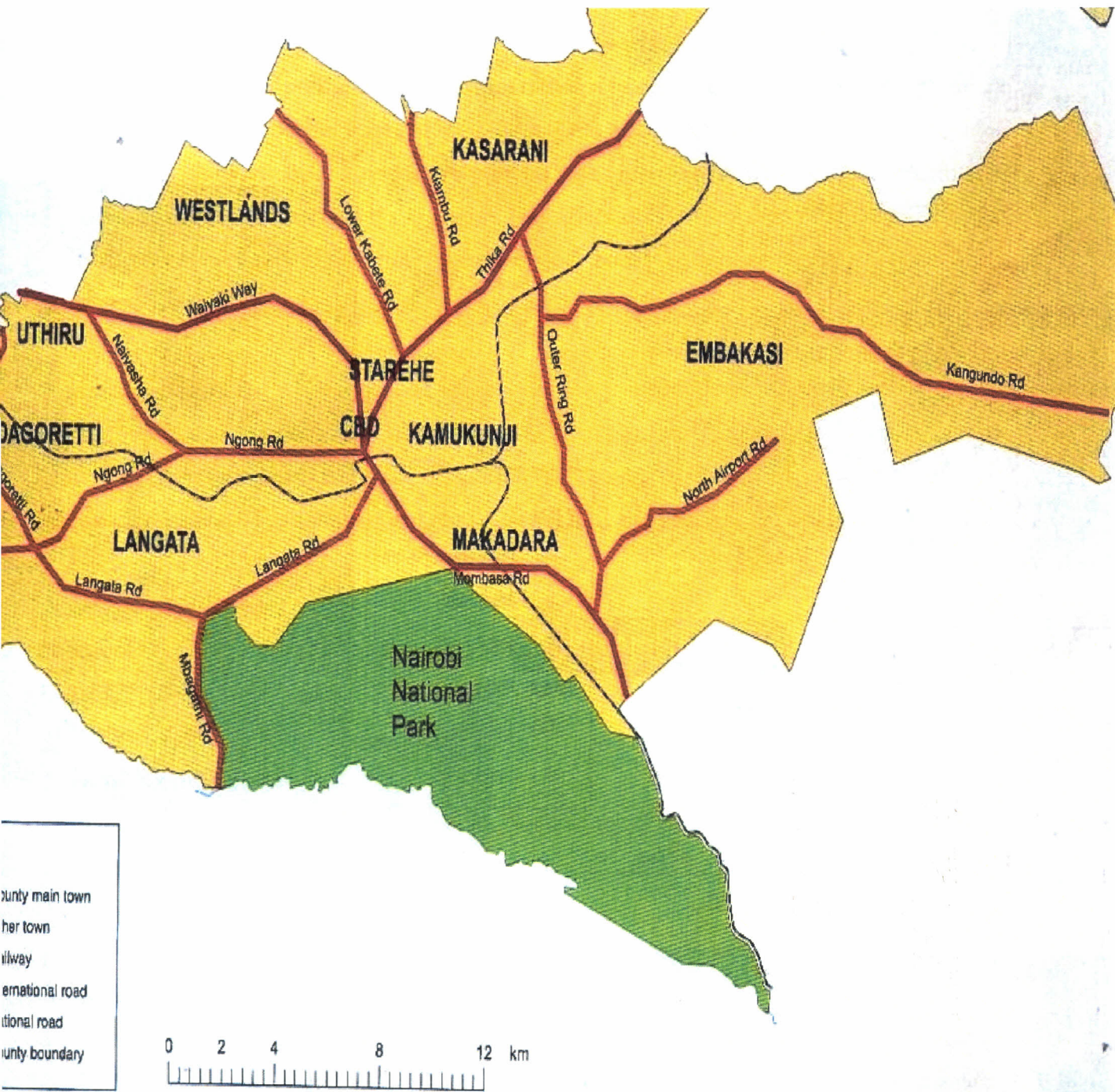
3.1 Research site

The study was carried out in Nairobi County, the capital and largest city of Kenya. This county is served by 41 public secondary schools with Nairobi West District leading with twenty three of such schools (Government of Kenya, 2009). Nairobi County has eight constituencies. These are Starehe, Langata, Kamukunji, Embakasi, Makadara, Dagoretti, Westlands and Kasarani. More than 90% of Nairobi residents work within the Nairobi Metropolitan area, in the formal and informal sectors particularly known in Kiswahili as jua kali. Most of the public secondary schools are located in the regions heavily populated by those in the informal employment sectors. The transition rate of the public secondary schools averagely rates at 47% as compared to the private secondary schools with an average transition rate of 82% within the secondary school going age of 14-17 years. The overall literacy levels of the entire residents of Nairobi county stands at 95.3% (Government of Kenya, 2009). Nairobi County differs in several ways from other Kenyan counties since it is entirely urban. It has only one local authority, Nairobi City Council. The population of Nairobi county is currently 3,138,369 with males being approximated to be 1,605,219 and the female population being 1,533,150 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

Nairobi is home to several universities where grandaunts of secondary schools pursue further education. These universities include the University of Nairobi which is the largest and oldest university in Kenya. Others are Kenyatta University, Strathmore University and Daystar University. Public secondary schools in Nairobi County have always performed better than those in the rural regions. For instance, in the 2011 national examinations, in the top ten positons, Alliance High School and Alliance Girls High School were in the second and third positions, respectively, while Starehe Boys came in the fourth position. Pangani Girls High

School, Precious Blood Riruta and Starehe Girls Centre were also among the top ten positions. Kenya National Bureau of Standards (2011).

Map 3.1: Site map of Nairobi County



Source: Electoral Commission of Kenya 2012

3.2 Research design

This study utilized a descriptive cross-sectional design where both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were utilized. Quantitative data were collected by the use of a semi-structured questionnaire and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively by the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the results presented in form of diagrams, charts and descriptive accounts respectively. The data collected revolved around the attitudes and opinions of respondents about the factors that affect the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools and various measures that could be put in place to address these challenges.

3.3 Study population

The study population comprised all teachers in mixed public secondary schools in Nairobi County. The respondents were the headteachers, deputy headteachers as well as teachers heading guiding and counseling departments. The unit of analysis was the teachers.

3.4 Sample population

The sample population for the study was 60 respondents and it comprised of three respondents per school.

3.5 Sampling procedure

A systematic random sampling technique was applied to all public secondary schools in every constituency.

3.6 Data collection methods and tools

3.6.1 Secondary sources of data

Secondary data were collected from relevant books, reports, journal articles, internet, theses, dissertations and local newspapers on factors affecting the performance of students in secondary schools. These sources were used throughout the study.

3.6.2 Primary sources of data

3.6.2.1 Survey technique

This was the main data collection method where a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix II) was self-administered to 60 respondents. This technique yielded both quantitative and qualitative data on socio-demographic profiles, attitudes of students and teachers, gender issues, teaching environments as well as the involvement of parents in the academic performance of students in mixed public secondary schools.

3.6.2.2 Case narratives

In this study, 60 teachers were requested to narrate their relevant experiences with regard to attitudes, gender issues, teaching environments and the involvement of parents in the performance of students in secondary schools in Nairobi County.

3.7 Data processing and analysis

The data obtained were edited and coded for analysis using quantitative methods by first editing for accuracy, consistency and completeness and then categorizing them systematically.

Qualitative data were thematically analyzed by the use of Windows Excel. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

3.8 Ethical considerations

Consent for inclusion of informants in this study was sought through a consent form which was read and/or presented to the informants for their approval or disapproval. Informants were furnished with the purpose of the study and confidentiality of the information to be provided as well as any foreseen and unforeseen risks, voluntary participation and withdrawal from the study at any stage without victimization were ensured. Anonymity of the informants were also assured where the identities of the individuals were protected by using numbers. The study was approved by the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi, and the National Council for Science and Technology in the Ministry of Higher Education. The study results will be made available to the world of academia in the university libraries.

CHAPTER FOUR

FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN MIXED PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NAIROBI COUNTY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings, analysis and discussion of the findings so as to determine the factors that affect the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools in Nairobi County.

4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Out of the 60 respondents sampled, 57 % were men while the remaining 43% were women. The distribution of respondents by age reveals that a majority (38%) were between 41-50 years, 31% between 31-40 years, 21% between 20-30 years while 10% were between 51-60 years. The study showed that 21 % of the informants were college graduates and 79% were university graduates. The study also indicated that a majority (74%) of the respondents were Christians, 14% were Muslims while 12% did not specify their religion. The findings similarly indicate that 29% of the respondents had a teaching experience of one year, 38% 1-5 years, 21% 6-10 years, while 12% had a teaching experience of 11-15 years. On the other hand, a majority of the informants stated that their schools had performed at below average in the last five years.

4.2 Attitudes of students and teachers

The results from the study indicated that that 71% of the respondents were of the opinion that the negative attitudes of students in certain subjects affect school performance while 29% did not support such an opinion.

According to a majority of the respondents, the negative attitudes of students on certain subjects were as a result of a teacher handling a particular subject poorly. Other students were influence by peers who told them that particular subjects were difficult and poor basic foundation in subjects at the primary level. Some respondents attributed the negative attitudes to lack of role models and motivation as well as the school culture where some teachers tell students that a

particular subject is very hard to pass or is not meant for female students. Other factors cited included an unsimplified teaching methodology and parents who decide for their children the subjects to be studied. The perceptions and behaviours of the teachers towards students also lead to negative attitudes of students towards certain subjects.

4.3 Gender issues

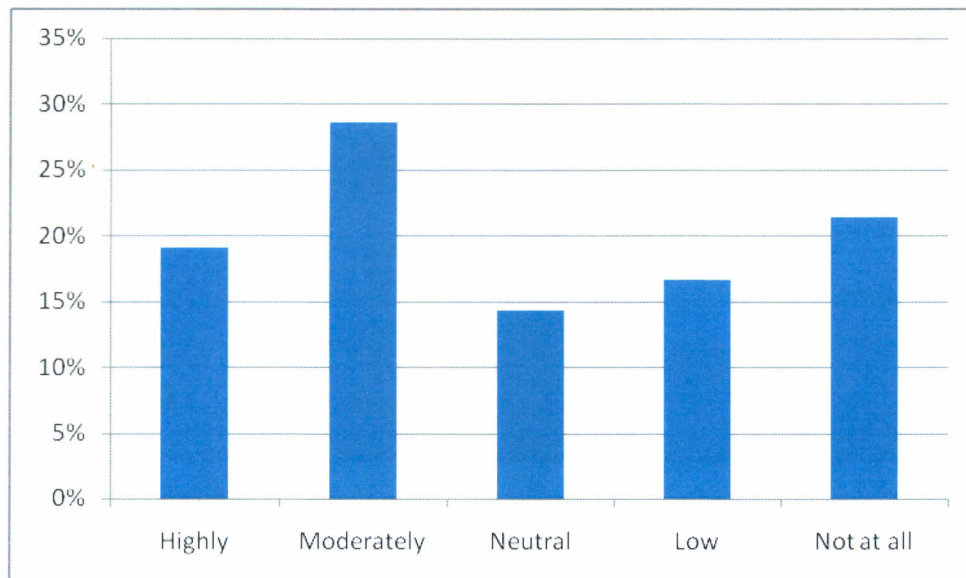
The respondents were asked whether they have undertaken training on gender awareness. The findings show that 69% had not been trained in gender awareness while 31% had. The training undertaken was in gender units in postgraduate degrees while others were in seminars on community gender awareness.

When asked whether students suffer any form of discrimination, the study shows that 55% of the respondents indicated that there is discrimination while 45% respondents said there is none. It was stated that weak students are discriminated by some teachers as well as the other students. It was also claimed that traditional attitudes and beliefs as well as societal expectations contributed to some forms of discrimination in schools.

It was also reported that female students are accorded numerous household chores at the expense of male students and this contributes to poor academic performance of most girls.

The study sought to establish the extent to which discrimination affects the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools in Nairobi County. The study found that 19% reported highly, 29% moderately, 14% neutral, 17% low and 21% not at all (Figure 4.3.1).

Figure 4.3.1: Effects of discrimination on performance

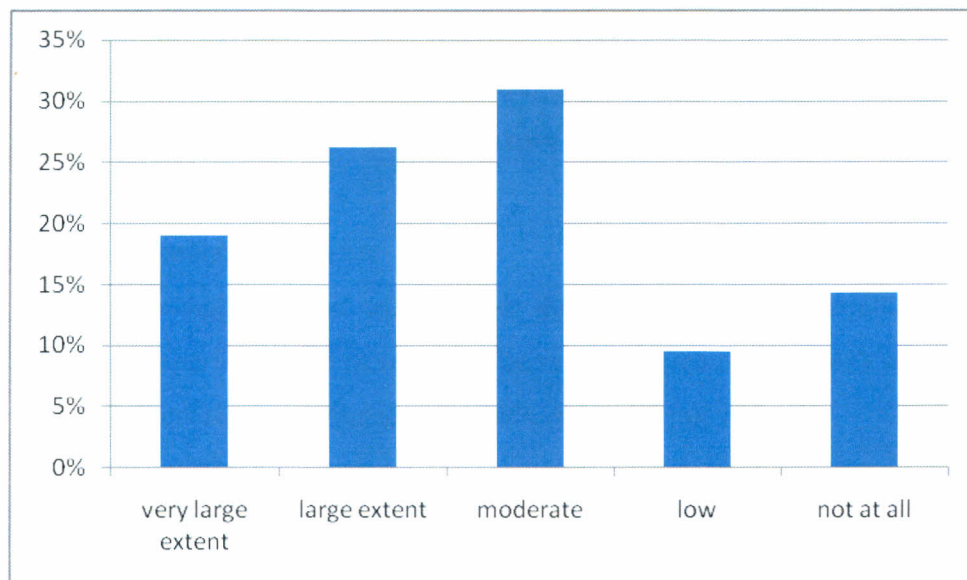


4.4 Teaching environment and learning facilities

The study sought to find out whether the teaching environment affects the performance of students. Based on the findings, 64% of the respondents indicated that a noisy environment affects performance while 36% of the respondents did not agree.

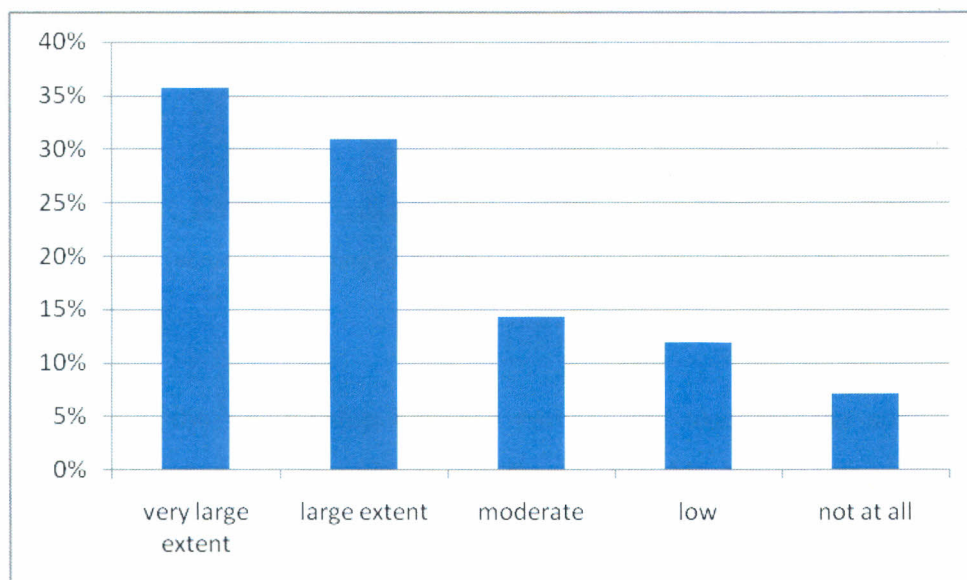
On the extent to which the teaching environment affects the performance of students in mixed public secondary schools in the study region, 19% of the respondents reported that it affects the performance of students to a very large extent, 26% a large extent, 31% moderately, 10% low and 14% not at all (Figure 4.4.1).

Figure 4.4.1: Effects of teaching environment on performance



The study shows that 38% of the respondents indicated that inadequate learning facilities affect the performance of students while 62% stated that it did not. On the other hand, the study results indicated that 36% of the respondents claimed that inadequate learning facilities affect the performance to very large extent, 31% large extent, 14% moderately, 12% low while 7% not at all (Figure 4.4.2).

Figure 4.4.2: Effects of learning facilities on performance



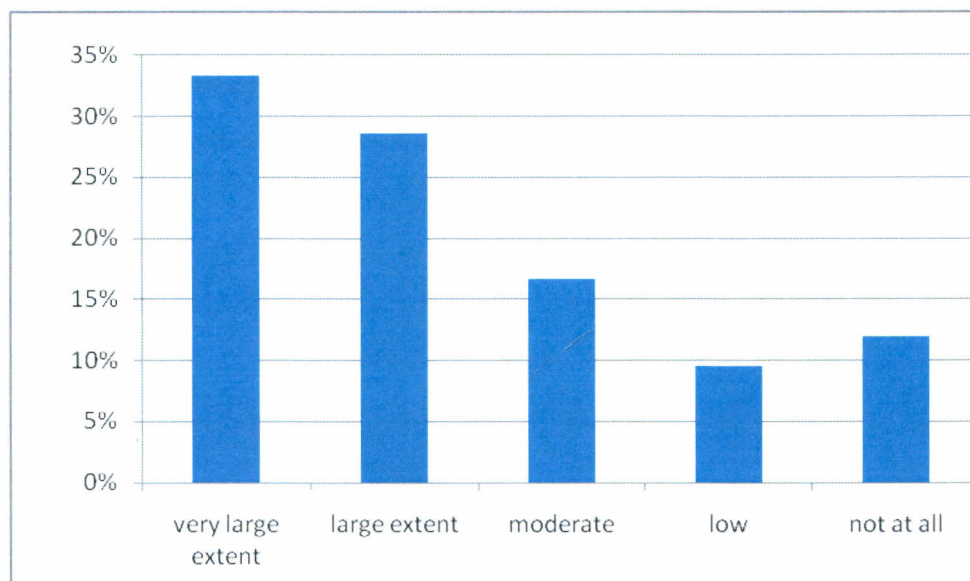
Also a majority of teachers in our sample indicated that most mixed public secondary schools lack learning facilities such as libraries, equipped laboratories, text books and computers. The study also indicated that less practical lessons were carried out in small laboratories with inadequate equipment. The study also revealed that there was a shortage of in Nairobi County.

4.5 Involvement of Parents

The study sought to find out whether the involvement of parents in the learning of students affects their performance in school. The results indicated that 74% stated that the involvement of parents affects the performance and 26% did not think so.

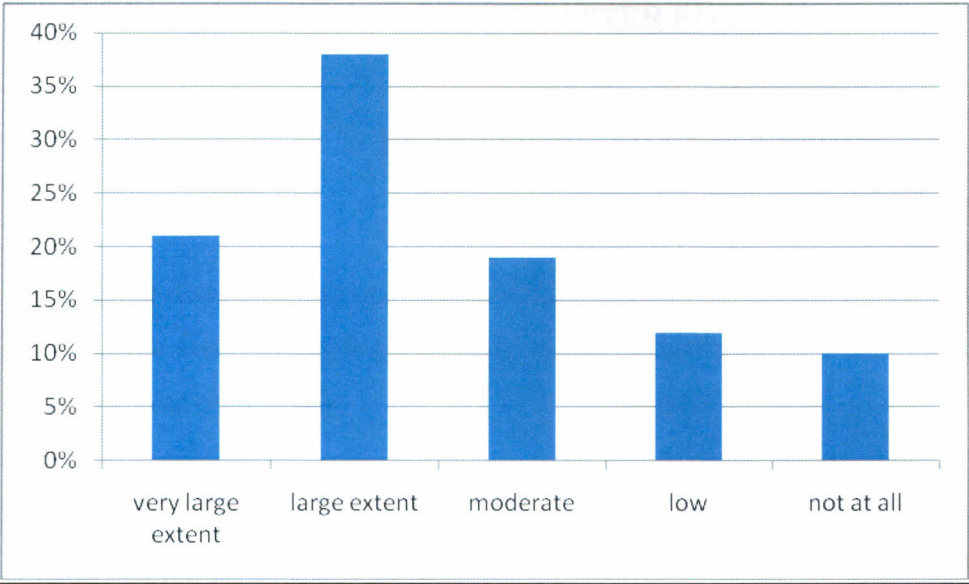
Based on the findings, 33% of the respondents were of the opinion that the involvement of parents at home affected performance to a very large extent, 29% to a large extent, 16% moderately, 10% to a low extent while 12% said that it does not affect at all (Figure 4.5.1).

Figure 4.5.1: Effects of involvement of parents on performance



As regards the relationship between parents and teachers, the study shows that 21% of the respondents were of the opinion that the relationship affected the performance of students to a very large extent, 38% to a large extent, 19% moderately, 12% low while 10% not affect at all (Figure 4.5.2).

Figure 4.5.2: Effects of relationship between parents and teachers on performance



The respondents stated that if they team up with parents, they are likely to resolve issues affectively and follow-up on students both at home and at school. This is a prerequisite for guidance and disciplinary direction and career planning for the students. The study also indicated that some parents support the mistakes made by their children at school.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses and provides conclusions and recommendations. The study aimed at assessing the factors affecting the academic performance of students in mixed public secondary schools in Nairobi County.

5.1 Attitudes of students and teachers

A previous survey has shown that many teachers do not feel responsible in any way for the performance of their students. Instead, teachers believe that learning abilities are innate so they tend to ascribe failure primarily to the low intelligence of students or their family backgrounds. These teachers regard their task as merely transmitting knowledge rather than guiding pupils through the learning process (UNESCO, 1998). The findings of this study points out that the negative attitudes by students on certain subjects were caused by some teachers handling particular subjects poorly. Similarly, a school culture where some teachers inform students that particular subjects were hard to pass or were not meant for female students contributed to the negative attitudes of students towards certain subjects. The influence by peers that particular subjects were difficult as well as poor basic foundation in some subject at the primary level also led to negative attitudes among students. Other factors included lack of role models at home and in school, unsimplified teaching methodology and the perceptions and behaviours of the teachers towards students. However, Marshall and Reihartz (1997) observe that gender differences in mathematics teaching, learning and achievement have been explained on the basis of gender differences in cognition and brain lateralization.

Teachers should undertake refresher courses to enable them handle life skills where topics such as self awareness is taught. Such courses can in the long-term improve their interactions with students who have negative attitudes towards certain subjects. Teachers should also introduce subjects in a more simpler manner. Schools should similarly avail role models and sensitize

students on the importance of good performance in all subjects. On the other hand, parents should be good role models to their children by promptly paying school fees. Conversely, teachers should regard students as customers and motivate them to work hard in all subjects. Finally, the frequent transfers of teachers should be stopped. In fact, teachers should be deployed in a school for at least five years before they are transferred.

5.2 Gender issues

According to UNICEF (2008), most parents would rather educate boys than girls if they were asked to prioritize on the utilization of scarce resources for educational purposes. This is because parents perceive the education of boys as having higher returns to the family in comparison with that of girls. In such cases, therefore, girls have sometimes found it difficult to pursue education to its logical conclusion. The findings of this study showed that traditional attitudes and beliefs as well as societal expectations contributed to some form of discrimination in schools. This is because boys are given preferences as opposed to girls at home and in school. It was also reported that female students are accorded numerous household chores at the expense of male students and this contributed to the poor academic performance of most girls.

The study also indicated that weak students are discriminated against by some teachers as well as some students. Some girls feel shy about expressing themselves before others and this can be dealt with through encouraging group work and debates. These findings are also supported by Mbilinyi (1970) who states that in many African countries, there has been a general belief that education is a better investment in boys than girls. African cultures have overburdened girl-children such that they lack enough time to read at home as a result of the duties expected of them such as taking care of the home and younger siblings. This results into frequent school absenteeism by girls that eventually culminates into poor performance. Teachers should undertake training in gender awareness in order to enable them deal effectively with gender issues that affects the academic performance of students. Increased group work and debates would enhance friendly interactions among students as well as improvement in the academic performance of students in mixed public schools in Nairobi County.

5.3 Teaching environment and learning facilities

According to Ministry of Education (2007b) aspects of the school environment that can be gender insensitive include poor school infrastructure and amenities such as water and sanitation as well as unavailability of sanitary towels. Others include curriculum and teaching, learning-materials such as text books, pedagogy, school management as well as guidance and counseling. This confirms the findings of this study as most schools were located in residential areas, some next to the busy roads while others were within the business premises, with a poor supply of water and sanitation. Classrooms were congested coupled with lack of libraries and text books, equipped laboratories and computers. Lack of fields for games was detrimental as games enhance performance in schools. Vallance (1977) states that many students learn in classrooms which are ill-equipped and dilapidated and such conditions obviously do not facilitate easy learning environments.

The study also revealed that there was a shortage of teachers in most mixed public secondary schools in Nairobi County. According to World Bank (2009), the poor performance of the economic sector in Kenya has in the past imposed severe constraints on the resources for educational growth. It is not possible for the government of Kenya to provide educational facilities to match the rapid rise in population. This confirms the shortages of equipment and infrastructure in mixed public secondary in Nairobi County.

The government of Kenya should ensure provision of educational facilities in public schools. Parents and communities should also be involved. This is in line with the view of Omiti (2002) that parents and local communities are expected to play an equally active role in the provision of educational facilities in the future.

5.4 Involvement of parents

The involvement of parents is a valuable component of the education of a child. It is a well established fact that parental involvement is linked to the success of children at school. When parents are involved in the education of their children at home, they do better in school (Gadner, 1983). The results from this study indicated that some parents do not pay fees promptly as well

as not providing their children with basic school requirements and leave their responsibilities to the teachers.

There is a need for parents to actively involve themselves in the learning of their children by paying fees in time, buying required text books, ensuring that homework is done and participating in providing discipline to their children.

As regards the relationship between parents and teachers, most of the respondents were of the opinion that there was no good relationship. The respondents stated that if they team up with parents, they are likely to resolve issues effectively and follow-up on students both at home and at school. This makes the students think that they are being forced by the teachers to perform. This confirms the views of Depaolo et al. al. (2006) that the quality of parental involvement makes all the difference. We need to understand the underlying relationship between a parent and child that supports the achievement of a child and its overall positive educational outcomes. The enthusiasm of parents about education is, in most instances, the underlying factor that contributes to the academic success of a child.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and conclusions drawn, this study recommends that teachers should introduce subjects in a simpler manner. They should also consider ways of ensuring that students develop interest in all subjects. Schools should similarly avail role models especially for female students in order to improve their performance in schools. The government and the school management should put in place a conducive learning environment to enhance the performance of students in schools. Parents are also required to be fully involved in the learning of students by constant follow-up with teachers about the progress of students. Parents should also monitor the behaviour of the students while at home and to pay fees in time. The government of Kenya needs to motivate teachers to increase the quality of their output by offering incentives and paying them well. It should as well consider hiring more teachers to reduce the high teacher-student ratio because many students under one teacher do not learn as efficiently. The government also needs to invest in modern facilities such as computers and

laboratories in mixed public secondary schools. It should also encourage a diversification of extra-curricular activities in these schools.

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APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM

I am a final year master's student in Gender and Development studies at the University of Nairobi. I am conducting a research on factors affecting performance of students in public secondary schools in Nairobi County. The research aims at generating information to help improve the academic performance of this community. You are requested to participate in this study and all the information provided shall be used purely for the study and treated with confidentiality. However, you can terminate this interview at any stage without victimization.

Do you agree to participate in this research? Yes [] No []

Signature.....

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Agnes M. Owuor

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire has been designed to collect information on the influence of gender issues on schools performance. Please read carefully and answers them in scale of 5 to 1 as honestly as possible. The information gathered will be used purely for the purpose of academic research and will be treated with utmost confidence.

Instructions

1. Tick appropriately in the box () or fill in the space provided.
2. Feel free to give further relevant information to the research and not in the questionnaire.

PART A: RESPONDENT'S PROFILE (Please tick appropriately)

1. Age
 20-30 31-40 41-50 51-60
2. Gender
 Male Female
3. Religion
 Christian Muslim Others
4. Level of education
 Secondary College University
5. Position in the school
 Head teacher Deputy head teacher
 Head of guidance counseling others, specify.....

6. Name of your school

.....

7. Which subjects do you teach

.....

.....

8. Performance of school during the last five years in KCSE

.....

9. Rank performance with other schools

.....

10. Which subjects do they perform better?

.....

11. How long have you been in this school?

Less than 1 year

11 to 15 years

1 to 5 years

6 to 10 years

12. Have you attended any training in gender awareness?

Yes No

If yes, please explain

.....

PART B: ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS (Tick appropriately)

13. Do you think students' attitudes on subjects affect performance in your school?

Yes No

If yes, explain

.....

15. What do you think are the main causes of these attitudes?

.....

.....

.....

16. What do you think can be put in place to deal with these attitudes? Please explain

.....
.....
.....

PART C: GENDER ISSUES

17. Does your students suffer any form of discrimination?

Yes No

If yes, what kind of discrimination?

.....
.....
.....

18. To what extent do they affect school performance?

Highly Moderately Neutral Low Not at all

Give reasons

.....
.....
.....

19. How do you deal with cases of discrimination in your school?

.....
.....
.....

PART D: TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

20. Do you think that the learning and teaching environment affect performance?

Yes No

If yes, please explain

.....
.....
.....

21. Please indicate the extent to which learning and teaching environment affect performance in your school.

To a very large extent large extent Moderate Low extent Not at all

Please explain.....
.....
.....

22. Does your school have sufficient learning facilities?

- Yes No

Please explain

.....
.....

23. To what extend does learning facilities affect performance in your school?

- To a very large extent large extent Moderate Low extent Not at all

Please explain.....
.....
.....

24. How do you intend to improve on the learning and teaching environment?

.....
.....
.....

PART D: INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS

25. Do you think parents involvement in students learning affect school performance?

- Yes No

If yes, please explain

.....
.....
.....

26. To what extent does parent's involvement at home affect performance in your school?

- To a very large extent large extent Moderate Low extent Not at all

Please explain.....
.....

.....
.....
27. To what extent does parent's relationship with teachers affect performance in your school?

- To a very large extent large extent Moderate Low extent Not at all

Please explain.....
.....
.....

28. Do you think parent's involvement leads to improved behavior at home and in school?

- Yes No

If yes, please explain
.....
.....

Thank you

APPENDIX III: CASE NARRATIVE GUIDE

This questionnaire has been designed to collect information on the participants' profile, attitude of students and teachers, influence of gender issues on schools performance as well as learning and teaching environment.

PART A: RESPONDENT'S PROFILE

1. What is the name of your school.....
2. Level of education: Form.....
3. How long have you been in this school?

PART B: ATTITUDE OF STUDENT AND TEACHERS

4. Do you think students' attitudes on subjects affect performance in your school? If yes, explain
5. What do you think are the main causes to these attitudes?
6. What do you think can be put in place to deal with these attitudes? Please explain

PART C: GENDER ISSUES

7. Do you as a student suffer any form of discrimination in school? If yes, what kind of discriminations?
8. To what extend do these discriminations affect your school performance?
 Highly Moderately Neutral Low Not at all
9. How do you deal with cases of discrimination in your school?

PART D: TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

10. Do you think that the teaching environment affect academic performance? If yes, please explain
11. To what extend does learning facilities affect performance in your school?
 To a very large extent large extent Moderate Low extent Not at all

PART E: PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT

12. Are the parents involved in the academic affairs of the school?
 Yes No

13. Do you think parents involvement in students learning affect school performance?
 Yes No
14. To what extent does parent's involvement at home affect performance in your school?
 To a very large extent large extent Moderate Low extent Not at all
15. To what extend does parent's relationship with teachers affect performance in your school?
 To a very large extent large extent Moderate Low extent Not at all
16. Do you think parent's involvement leads to improved behavior at home and school?
 Yes No

Thank you