

Effect of Socialization with Regard to Gender Roles on Students' Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Kisii Central District, Kenya

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Abstract: This study sought to determine the effect of socialization with specific reference to the allocation of domestic chores on the academic achievement of boys and girls in mixed day secondary schools in Mosocho Division of Kisii Central District, Kenya. The research was ex-post facto with the specific use of the correlational research design. Data was collected in the months of September and October 2007 from 119 boys and 100 girls in Form Three, randomly selected from 14 mixed day secondary schools. In addition, 14 class teachers as well as 14 Parents - Teachers Association (PTA) members were purposively involved in the study. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data whereas end of term exam results provided data to be analyzed. The t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings linked students' participation in domestic chores to low academic achievement. The results also suggested that students' engagement in domestic duties affected both boys' and girls' academic achievement equally. The study concluded that that the students' low academic achievement could be attributed to involvement in domestic chores. The study recommends that the domestic chores assigned to the students be reduced as well as offering guidance and counseling to the affected students with intent to boost academic achievement.

Key words: Academic achievement, domestic chores, gender differences, gender roles, socialization

INTRODUCTION

A myriad of factors have been blamed for both girls' and boys' low academic achievement, especially in mixed day secondary schools in the developing countries. Some of the major factors include domestic chores, biased upbringings that portray boys as superior to girls in all aspects of maturation, poor schools environments and insensitive teaching methods that disregard the students' needs (FAWE, 2003b). Interestingly, a close scrutiny of these four factors reveals that socialization could be playing an important role in their influence on students' academic achievement, especially with regard to the gender roles that a society assigns to its children. Further, a number of studies (Chepchieng and Kiboss, 2004; UNICEF, 2004; World Bank, 1989) point to the view that the engagement of children in domestic chores not only contributes to dismal performance but also leads to the gender differentials in academic achievement.

A survey conducted by Strengthening Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education (SMASSE) implied that students' involvement in domestic chores is associated with low academic achievement in mixed day secondary schools in Mosocho Division (SMASSE, 2000). However, there was no systematic study that had been carried out to establish this. Stakeholders in education had also kept citing domestic

chores as contributing towards poor academic achievement in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination. Against this background, this paper sought to determine the effect of socialization with regard to the assignment of domestic chores on academic achievement among boys and girls in mixed day secondary schools in Mosocho Division of Kisii Central District. According to Republic of Kenya (2007), gender roles refer to those socially assigned duties and responsibilities as opposed to biologically determined functions. This definition was adopted in this study. In this paper, domestic chores are treated as part of the gender roles that children are assigned or involved in.

Purpose and objectives of the study: The study was designed to determine the effect of socialization with special reference to the allocation of domestic chores on the academic achievement of both boys and girls in mixed day secondary schools in Mosocho Division with a view to generating policy recommendations on how to manage their effects.

The study had the following specific objectives:

- To identify the types of domestic chores that students in mixed day secondary schools in Mosocho Division got involved in.

- To establish whether there was a gender difference in the types of domestic chores that students in mixed day secondary schools in Mosocho Division undertook.
- To determine whether there was a gender difference in the way domestic chores affected students' academic achievement in mixed day secondary schools in Mosocho Division.
- To achieve the objectives, the following two research questions and two null hypotheses were used. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Research questions:

- What types of domestic chores are students engaged in?
- Is there a gender difference in the domestic chores that students are involved in?

Hypotheses:

Ho1: There is no statistically significant gender difference in the allocation of domestic chores to students.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference between gender and students' academic achievement.

METHODOLOGY

Research design: The study involved *ex-post facto* research with the specific use of the co-relational study design which is useful in identifying the antecedents of a present condition (Cohen and Manion, 2000). The cause or independent variable in *ex-post facto* research defies manipulation since it already exists. Since this study embarked on determining the effect of socialization with regard to the assignment of domestic chores on students' academic achievement, this research design was considered appropriate. In particular, inferences were made without direct intervention of the independent variable which was domestic chores.

Sampling: Simple random sampling and purposive sampling were used to select the sample size. Simple random sampling ensured that all the Form Three students from the defined population had an equal and independent chance of being selected as a member of the sample. The Form Three students were considered appropriate for this study because they had spent at least two years in secondary school hence the effect of socialization with respect to allocation of domestic chores on their academic achievement could easily be ascertained. A total of 120 boys and 100 girls were selected from the 14 mixed day secondary schools in Mosocho Division. However, one

boy did not fill his questionnaire and therefore 119 boys were involved in the actual study. One Form Three class teacher from each school was purposively included. In addition a total of 14 Parents - Teachers Association (PTA) parents were purposively selected and interviewed by the researcher to gather information relevant to this study. The 14 PTA parents and 14 Form Three class teachers were considered important in providing vital pieces of information pertaining to the assignment and subsequent involvement of both boys and girls in domestic chores as well as their academic achievement.

Instrumentation: Questionnaires and interview schedules were developed and used in this study. Questionnaires for students and teachers sought information on the effect of domestic chores on students' academic achievement. The PTA parents were asked how they allocated various domestic duties to the boys and girls, their perception of boys' and girls' education as well as the privileges enjoyed by both boys and girls. While questionnaires were considered useful in obtaining objective data, interviews were conducted so as to give in depth information relevant to this study. Validation of the instruments was carried out bearing in mind both the objectives and purpose of the study. This was followed by pilot testing of the instruments in one mixed day secondary school in a neighbouring division which had similar characteristics to those of the schools involved in the actual study. The reliability coefficient was calculated using the Cronbach's alpha which was considered appropriate since it can both be administered once as well as assess multiple response items (Kathuri and Pals, 1993). The reliability coefficients for both the students' and teachers' questionnaires were at least 0.77 which was acceptable for this study. The validity and reliability of the exams that were used in this study were assumed to have been established before they were administered by the concerned teachers.

Data collection and analysis: The researcher traveled to each of the schools under study for familiarization purposes as well as requesting for the end of term exam results before the instruments were administered. After administering the instruments, particularly the student questionnaires, the researcher collected them so that students could not discuss and modify their responses. The interviews for the parents were conducted after the questionnaires had been filled. This was done deliberately so as to seek more information or even clarification from the interviewees on the issues not adequately addressed in the questionnaires (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). After receiving the data, it was classified according to their sources; boys, girls and teachers as well as PTA parents. According to Kothari (2004), raw data should necessarily

be condensed into a few manageable groups and tables for further analysis. Thus, the researcher classified the raw data into purposeful and usable categories. The data was analyzed quantitatively using both descriptive and inferential statistics. While the research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the null hypotheses were analyzed using the t-test.

Background information:

Domestic chores, socialization and education: According to the Global Monitoring Report (2002), the critically important locus for decision making as regards participation in schooling is the family, for this is where notions of gender relations are transmitted from generation to generation. Indeed, the family, education, culture, socio-economic status, religion and ethnicity all play an important role in socialization. All societies have implicit conceptions of gender, or stereotypes, which they use to differentiate the treatment of girls and boys (Global Monitoring Report, 2002). Accordingly, while women in most societies take primary responsibility for caring for the family, men tend to be associated with the work outside the home.

Swainson (1995) notes that the assignment of roles and development of skills are defined socially and culturally on the basis of sex. From an early age, children develop behaviour that is appropriate to their sex roles by imitation of parents and other role models. Further, Ayoo (2002), Machyo (1995), Umbima (1993) and Young (1985) observe that learning among children occurs through modeling which is determined by relations in terms of sex as cherished by parents, teachers and fellow children. Swainson (1995) argues that girls, for example, in rural areas possibly experience some kind of alienation in view of the many overlapping relationship within as well as outside the family.

According to Eshiwani (1985) some preference persists for educating boys, reflecting traditional limitations on women's roles, customary patrilineal inheritance systems and perceptions that boys will have greater prospects for modern sector employment. Moreover, in rural areas, the opportunity cost to parents of educating girls seems higher. Consequently, the gender roles that a society assigns to its children will have a determining effect on their future such as schooling, labour force participation and status in relationships. However, in Ethiopia, household duties are a primary reason for keeping boys out of school (King and Hill, 1993) while a higher endowment of livestock showed negative effects on enrolment in Botswana (Chernichovsky, 1985). On the other hand, Walters and Briggs (1993) found a higher probability of school enrolment for children from households who owned land. Ownership of livestock tended to reduce the probability of

school attendance among younger boys because animal herding is regarded as being more important than crop production activities.

As in other developing countries, children in Kenya are engaged in domestic chores, often to the detriment of their education (Kadenyi and Kamuyu, 2006; Chepchieng and Kiboss, 2004; FAWE, 2003a; Ayoo, 2002). In their study on the influence of family socio-economic status and gender on students' academic performance in Baringo district secondary schools, Chepchieng and Kiboss (2004) found that lack of time for study among girls could be attributed to involvement in domestic chores. In contrast, boys were left with a lot of time to study thus were likely to have an edge over girls' school work. In view of this finding, this study was an attempt to establish whether there was any gender difference in the influence of domestic chores on students' academic achievement in mixed day secondary schools in Mosocho Division.

Issues related to the effects of domestic chores on education in mosocho division:

The involvement of children in domestic work within the family setting is both an expected as well as an accepted practice in all African societies and therefore, is a common practice among the Abagusii community (Owiti, 2006). Accordingly, children are expected to help their parents and guardians in some work, as per their ability. This way, such children are expected to acquire skills to become useful in adulthood. However, the noble societal efforts to introduce children to work, thus enabling them to acquire skills for use in adulthood has changed as many parents and guardians now perceive children's work as an economic asset to the family (Owiti, 2006).

Indeed, a survey carried out in 1998 by Kenyan and Japanese researchers in Kisii Central District, including Mosocho Division (SMASSE, 2000), revealed that boys were engaged in such domestic tasks as feeding and milking cows whereas the girls performed such tasks as cooking, collecting of firewood and water. Some students involved in the survey said that engagement in such domestic tasks made them to sleep late and wake up early. Students also lamented that their participation in domestic tasks never left them with enough time for doing school assignments and also conducting private study. But since the survey did not provide empirical data to show the extent to which domestic chores influenced academic performance, this study make an effort to fill this knowledge gap among students in mixed day secondary schools in Mosocho Division.

Similarly, Owiti (2006) asserts that cultural practices, family disintegration, early marriages and discrimination in the allocation of domestic roles, against the girl child among the Abagusii community has continued to disadvantage girls' education compared to that of the

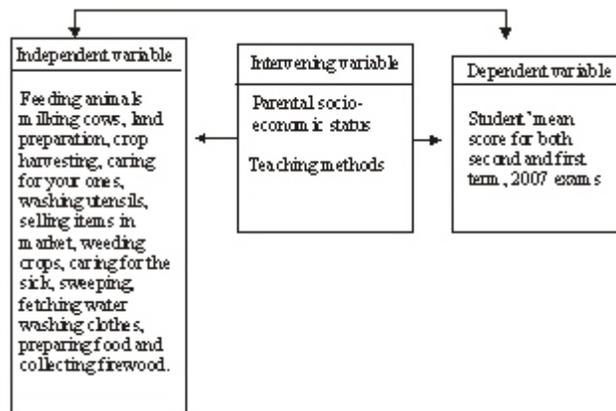


Fig. 1: Conceptual representation of the study

boys. On this basis, this study made an effort to ascertain whether there was any gender difference due to the effect of domestic duties on students' academic achievement in mixed day secondary schools in Mosoch Division.

Theoretical framework: In an attempt to understand the effect of socialization with respect to domestic chores on students' academic achievement, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory was used. The theory lays emphasis on the learning that occurs within a social context. It holds that people can learn the behaviour of others as well their outcomes. It also holds that learning can actually take place without necessarily bringing about change in behaviour. Accordingly, awareness and expectations of future reinforcements or punishments can have a major effect on the behaviour that children exhibit. Although the social learning theory has been criticized for its failure to predict what the learner will regard as positive and yet Bandura argues that theories must demonstrate predictive power (Keith, 2000), it nevertheless demonstrates the effect of the environment on a child's learning, especially in relation to intellectual development and achievement. Thus in regard to this study, the amount and or type of domestic chores undertaken by boys and girls in their respective homes was likely to influence their academic achievement in school.

Conceptual framework: Figure 1 is diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework of the study.

This framework shows that the involvement of students in domestic chores can affect their academic achievement in end of term exams and by extension the KCSE exam. The mean scores obtained by the students in

the examinations measure this achievement. The intervening variables were the parental socio-economic status and teaching methods. These intervening variables

did not seem to affect this study because the boys and girls who were involved came from families with similar socio-economic backgrounds thus neither of the genders had advantage as far as academic achievement was concerned. In addition, the teaching methods used by teachers were considered to be similar and familiar to both genders hence not subjective to influence academic achievement on the basis of gender.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are mainly presented in tabular form followed immediately by an interpretation after every table. A brief discussion of each finding then ensues.

Types of domestic chores students are engaged in": Students were asked to name the domestic chores in which they were engaged during school days. Table 1 presents these data.

From the table it can be observed that of the 219 students who participated in this study 189, 172, 142, 97 and 96 of them got involved in washing utensils, washing clothes, fetching water, harvesting crops and sweeping the house, respectively, during school days. This translated to 86.3, 78.5, 64.8, 44.3 and 43.8% in that order.

An examination of the domestic chores in Table 1 reveals that they fall into two broad categories or types, that is, farm and household chores. The domestic chores identified in the table are also similar to the ones mentioned in a survey conducted in 1998 in secondary schools in Mosoch Division of Kisii District (SMASSE, 2000). Weeding crops, feeding animals, preparing land, milking cows and harvesting crops could be grouped as farm chores while caring for young ones, caring for the sick, sweeping, preparing food, fetching water, collecting firewood, washing clothes and utensils could fall in the category of household chores. Selling

Table 1: Domestic chores students do

Domestic chores	Frequency	Percentage
1. Caring for young ones	6	2.7
2. Weeding crops	70	32.0
3. Feeding animals.	34	15.5
4. Caring for the sick	9	4.1
5. Sweeping	96	43.8
6. Preparing land	67	30.6
7. Milking cows	49	22.4
8. Washing clothes	172	78.5
9. Fetching water	142	64.8
10. Collecting firewood	13	5.9
11. Harvesting crops	97	44.3
12. Preparing food	84	38.4
13. Washing utensils	189	86.3
14. Selling items in market	25	11.4
15. Buying goods from market	31	14.2

items in the market as well as buying goods from the market did not seem to fall directly into either of the two categories. Thus they could be considered to fall into both groups.

Although efforts should be made at family level to have children participate in domestic chores, thus enabling them to acquire skills for use in adulthood (Owiti, 2006), care must be taken so as not to overburden them which could be detrimental to their education. Indeed, when the students who participated in this study were asked to state whether domestic tasks had a negative impact on their academic performance, majority of them agreed that it did. It can be observed from the table that only six or 2.7% of the students involved in this study took care of the young ones while nine or 4.1% of them took care of the sick during school days. Thus the two domestic chores affected students the least.

Gender differences in participation in domestic chores: To determine whether there was a gender difference in the domestic chores that students participated in, the number or frequency as well as percentage of both the boys and girls in every domestic chore identified in the preceding table were first presented. Table 2 displays this data.

Table 2 reveals that of the 189 students who were involved in washing utensils during school days, 92 were boys while 97 were girls. This represented 48.7% and 51.3% respectively. Similarly, of the 172 students who participated in washing clothes during school days, 84 or 48.8% and 88 or 51.2% of them were boys and girls, respectively. None of the 119 boys involved in this study claimed to be involved in caring for the young ones during school days. This finding concurs with World Bank (1989) which holds that custom demands that girls help in caring for the young, find firewood, collect water, cook food and clean the house, but demands less of boys. According to Walby (1990), the fact that women and girls are known to do much of the house work is seen as part of the system of male domination. On the other hand, of the

34 students who were involved in feeding animals during school days, 27 or 79.4% and 7 or 20.6% of them were boys and girls, respectively. Similarly, of the 49 students who were engaged in milking cows during school days, 33 or 67.3% were boys while 16 or 32.7% were girls. This revelation is in agreement with the Global Monitoring Report's (2002) finding that most unrecognized labour, including cooking, laundry, caring for younger siblings and carrying water is performed by women and girls. The findings further reveal that boys were usually involved in outdoor domestic chores, especially those to do with the farm while girls were engaged in the indoor or household ones (Global Monitoring Report, 2002). These findings also concur with Bandura (1977) who argues that children are most likely to be engaged in roles or other social expectations that their role models, including parents are themselves involved in and for which they are positively reinforced.

Effect of domestic chores on boys' and girls' academic achievement: First, students were asked to choose from the four options (Father = 1; Mother = 2; Siblings = 3 or Guardian = 4) whom they considered to assign them most domestic chores at home. To ascertain whether there existed a statistically significant gender difference in the allocation of domestic chores and students' academic achievement, the means and standard deviations for boys and girls were derived as shown in Table 3 so as to facilitate the computation of the t-test.

Table 3 shows that mothers most often assigned domestic duties to both boys and girls compared to the fathers, siblings and guardians. This is indicated by the mean values of 1.9328 and 2.2200 for the boys and girls, respectively. It also reveals that with regard to students' academic achievement, the boys' mean score was slightly higher (39.9471) than that of the girls (37.5880). The information in Table 3 was used to compute t-test values whose results are displayed in Table 4.

The results in Table 4 indicate that there was a statistically significant difference between allocation of domestic chores and gender of students ($p < 0.05$). Thus hypothesis one of this study was rejected at 0.05 significance level. This means that in many instances, the domestic duties that boys and girls undertook were largely dictated by the sex of the person who allocated such tasks. This trend is said to affect students' education (Kadenyi and Kamuyu, 2006; Global Monitoring Report, 2002; Swainson, 1995).

Similarly, it can be noted from Table 4 that at 0.05 significance level, there was no statistically significant difference between gender and academic achievement ($p > 0.05$). Thus hypothesis two was accepted. Although there was a slight difference in the boys' and girls' mean scores, in favour of the former, it was not statistically

Table 2: Gender differences in domestic chores

Domestic chores	Gender of respondents					
	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1. Caring for young ones	0	0.0	6	100.0	6	100.0
2. Weeding crops	41	58.6	29	41.4	70	100.0
3. Feeding animals	27	79.4	7	20.6	34	100.0
4. Caring for the sick	3	33.3	6	66.7	9	100.0
5. Sweeping	27	28.1	69	71.9	96	100.0
6. Preparing land	40	59.7	27	40.3	67	100.0
7. Milking cows	33	67.3	16	32.7	49	100.0
8. Washing clothes	84	48.8	88	51.2	172	100.0
9. Fetching water	62	43.7	80	56.3	142	100.0
10. Collecting firewood	2	28.6	11	71.4	13	100.0
11. Harvesting crops	57	58.8	40	41.2	97	100.0
12. Preparing food	33	39.3	51	60.7	84	100.0
13. Washing utensils	92	48.7	97	51.3	189	100.0
14. Selling items in market	11	44.0	14	56.0	25	100.0
15. Buying goods from market.	17	54.8	14	45.2	31	100.0

Table 3: Allocation of domestic chores and students' academic achievement

Variables	Gender of students	N	Mean	SD	SEMean
Allocation of domestic chores	Boys	100	1.9328	0.96314	0.8829
	Girls	119	2.2200	0.07464	0.7464
Academic achievement	Boys	119	39.9471	9.97141	0.91408
	Girls	100	37.5880	10.87537	1.08754

Table 4: Results of t-test for allocation of domestic chores and students' academic achievement

Variables		Levene's test for equality of variance		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Allocation of domestic chores	Equal variances assumed	3.496	0.063	-2.431	217	0.016
	Equal variances not assumed		-2.484	215.651	0.014	
Academic achievement	Equal variances assumed	0.146	0.703	1.673	217	0.096
	Equal variances not assumed		1.661	203.20	0.098	

significant. This could mean that the boys and girls in this study were equally affected by their participation in domestic chores.

Like students, the 14 class teachers involved in the study were asked to indicate who (among father, mother, siblings and guardians) assigned students most of the domestic duties. Most of the class teachers (85.7%) and 14.3% of them said that fathers often allocated domestic tasks to boys and girls, respectively. On the other hand, 14.3 and 85.7% of the class teachers felt mothers frequently assigned domestic duties to the boys and girls, respectively. These findings support previous studies (Kadenyi and Kamunyu, 2006; Ayoo, 2002; Obote, 1993), which assert that gender stereotypes about abilities and roles are determined by family members and schools. These findings also reinforce Bandura's (1977) social learning theory which holds that learning among children occurs through modeling which is determined by relations in terms of sex as cherished by such role models as parents and teachers.

In the opinions of the 14 PTA parents interviewed, boys are most often engaged in such domestic tasks as

tending livestock (64.3%), digging the shamba (50.0%) and harvesting crops (7.1%). This finding supports other studies (Walters and Briggs, 1993; Chernichovsky, 1985) that more boys than girls looked after cattle. According to the PTA parents, girls are normally involved in such domestic chores as cleaning the house (71.4%), fetching water (64.3%) and preparing meals (57.1%). These results also support those of the Global Monitoring Report (2002) that societies have implicit conceptions of gender, or stereotypes, which are used to differentiate the treatment of boys and girls.

CONCLUSION

Respondents in this study including the students, class teachers and PTA parents agreed that the involvement of students in domestic chores had a negative impact on academic achievement. Thus the low mean score in exams among boys and girls involved in this study could be attributed to the effect of domestic chores. It emerged from this study that domestic chores affected the academic achievement of both boys and girls equally.

Though there was no significant gender difference between boys' and girls' academic achievement, the slightly higher mean score in favour of the boys could be attributed to the girls' frequent engagement in domestic chores compared to the boys. Since mothers were found to most frequently allocate domestic duties to the children compared to the fathers, siblings and guardians, it can be concluded that traditional beliefs and practices have continued to promote stereotyped gender roles as cherished by the Abagusii community. Stakeholders in education, including the government, parents, students and policy makers have an obligation to provide solutions to boost academic achievement. This study recommends that the domestic duties assigned to students be reduced as well as offering guidance and counseling to the affected students.

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