

THE EXTENT TO WHICH COMMUNITY BELIEFS AND PERCEPTIONS AFFECT LEARNER'S ENROLMENT RATES IN HOME SCIENCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF IN POKOT CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Home Science education is an interdisciplinary field of study which applies science and arts towards achieving better, healthier and happy homes. This study sought to establish the extent to which socio-cultural practices affect learners' enrolment rates in home science education using a case of public secondary schools in Pokot Central Sub-County. Specifically, the study assessed the extent to which community beliefs and perceptions affect learner's enrolment rates in home science in public secondary schools of in Pokot Central Sub-County. The researcher utilized socio-cultural theories which suggest that social norms and interactions of people living in a given area affect those peoples' individual behavior and choices. The study adopted descriptive survey design which was used to answer the research questions. The target population for this study comprised of 5079 respondents consisting of 24 public secondary schools, 1 Sub-County Director of Education, 72 local leaders and 4,982 secondary school learners. Stratified, simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used in the selection of the respondents. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from teachers and learners, focused group discussions for local administrators and document analysis for enrolment rates in 24 secondary schools. The researcher used interview schedule for Pokot Central Sub- Director of Education. The collected data was analysed using SPSS computer program version 22 and presented as frequency. The study revealed that gender roles are a major contributor to low enrolment rates in home science in public secondary schools in Pokot Central. The researcher recommended that concerted efforts by local leaders, Ministry of Education, parents and other stakeholders of education should make efforts to stamp out retrogressive socio-cultural practices to boost enrolments in not only home science but also other subjects in schools. The results of this study should be beneficial to education policy formulators, managers and planners in coming up with policies and management strategies that can boost enrolment rates in Home Science.

Key Words: Community Beliefs, Enrolment Rates, Home Science, Pokot Central.

1. INTRODUCTION

Increasing the educational level of girls and boys in home science education (HSE) has had an encouraging influence on economic growth of developed and developing countries since 2003 (UNESCO, 2004). In African countries, girls seem to be doing better at key competency tests and participate better in HSE than boys especially in secondary schools (UNESCO 2013). Plan international (2012) reported that, 33% of the children in Senegal and 30% of the respondent children in Mali identified lack of HSE as a key factor in early pregnancy- a determinant of high drop out in schools. In Tanzania, child bearing for adolescence is very high in Mtwara as statistics

show that 35.5% of adolescence are affected (Tanzania National Bureau of statistics 2014). Home Science as an applied and integrated subject aims at improving the quality of life for an individual, a family and the community through application of the skill, knowledge and attitudes in everyday life (Sempele, 2019). Despite its relevancy as a learning area that handles more efficiently adolescent personal life, family and community resources as well as interpersonal relationships, there has been continued low enrolments in this learning area.

In the last five years there has been a decrease in the learners' enrolment in Home Science subject in secondary schools of Pokot Central Sub County public secondary schools. The number of learners enrolled for all the subjects and the number of girls and boys who enrolled for Home Science KCSE examination in the last five years were as follows; out of 1246 total number of candidates, only 11 girls and 0 boys in 2016 enrolled for home science. Out of 1329 candidates only, 17 girls and 0 boys in 2017 registered for the subject. 23 girls and 0 boys chose the subject in 2018. Out of 1457 candidates only 12 girls 0 boys enrolled in 2019. And out of 1485 candidates 9 girls and 0 boys took the subject in 2020 as compared to the overall KCSE national figure of approximately 15,000 students who did Home Science in the year 2020 (Sub County Director of Education Pokot Central, 2020). The purpose of this study was to establish the extent to which gender roles had affected learners' enrolment rate in Home Science in Secondary schools of in Pokot Central Sub-County, Kenya.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher used social cognitive and social constructivism theories of learning to support her argument that a peoples' social norms and interactions affect individuals future behavior. Cislighi & Heilse, (2014) agree that social norms are a society's expectations in socio-cultural set ups. the scholars explain that norms consists of rules that affect a child's behavior in his or her achieving of outcomes in education. King and Windrop, (2015) report that norms define the roles that girls and boys play in a family and the entire community. research show that expectations in individual preferences and relationships are always closely related to their societal norms (Ndunge, 2013).

According to Musimbi (2018), perceptions are an internal state that influence personal actions of an individual and that can be learnt from other people, be an experience or a creation in one's mind. ordinarily, perceptions feelings about towards something or an individual. Jitumoni et al, (2016) on attitude of students towards Home Science found out that studying Home Science is interesting and useful because whatever students learn from the subect apply in their daily life situations.

Sifuna (2005) observes that the patriarchal attitudes which assigned inferior status and roles to women played a major role in society attitude that education is less important for females in most African countries. As a result, boys and girls grow up as they are socialized differently with girls being taught one set of values and boys another. They are taught skills and assigned duties in accordance with traditional gender specific division of labor (Ndunge, 2013). This agrees with Sempele (2019) who studied challenges affecting home science education in PTTCs. her research established that about 65% of the society considers home science as a feminine subject. She found out that only 35% of students chose to study home science education just because it was classified as one of the core subjects in option A category in the primary teacher education curriculum. this

is compounded by the fact that, the domestic work that includes cooking, cleanliness, care of children is presented as women's work in the traditional set up and inappropriate for men. These ideas of what constitute appropriate gender role explains the patterns of career choices for boys and girls (Ndunge, 2013).

In addition, Chelagat, Kitainge & Were, (2019) argue that any negative attitude towards a subject may lead a student to have no interest in it and when such a subject is made optional many students would then avoid such it totally. In another study by Abwao, (2017) on Influence of Classroom Practice of Home Science Employability among the Youth in Kakamega County, it was observed that, teachers play an active role in influencing student's choice of home science education. They at the same time transmit skills, knowledge, principles, practices and attitudes to students (Maina, et al 2018).

Chelagat et al, (2019) in a study of Determinants of Enrolment in Home Science subject in secondary schools of Elgeyo Marakwet revealed that the level of interest in Home Science subject was high because interest of the students was aroused through practical activities done in the laboratories. However, this contradicts with other findings in a study on factors militating inclusion of Home Science in boys schools that indicated that a good number of male students did not like the idea of studying Home Science at all because they felt it was feminine (Maina et al 2018).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researcher in this study used Descriptive Survey Design to answer the research questions. she targeted a population of 5079 respondents consisting of 24 public secondary schools, 1 Sub-County Director of Education, 72 local leaders and 4,982 secondary school learners. Stratified sampling, simple random and purposive sampling approaches were used in selecting the respondents. questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and learners while focus group discussions were used to collect information from the local administrators. for collection of information from documents, document analysis was applied for enrolment rates in 24 secondary schools. The researcher used interview schedule for Pokot Central Sub- Director of Education. The collected data was analysed using statistical package for social sciences program version 22 and results presented in frequency counts.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher in this study sought to establish the extent to which community's beliefs and perceptions affect learner's enrolment rate in Home Science in secondary schools of in Pokot Central Sub-County. The indicators of this variable were beliefs and perceptions of parents, teachers and learners themselves. Teachers were required to respond to the questionnaire on effect of community beliefs and perceptions about on choice of Home Science subject. The opinions of parents and learners were collected using focus group discussions while teachers' opinions were analyzed using a four point likert scale as: - SA (Strongly Agree), A (agree), DA (Disagree). SD (Strongly Disagree). Their responses were recorded in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Perceptions and Enrolment in Home Science Education

Perceptions	Frequency of Responses for Teachers								
	SA	Rate	A	Rate	D	Rate	SD	Rate	Total
Home Science education teaches about home and family this has affected enrolments rates in Home Science education in secondary schools	50	30.5%	61	37.2%	36	22%	17	10.4%	164
The community beliefs that one does not need Home Science education to have a healthy functioning family	50	30.5%	61	37.2%	36	22%	17	10.4%	164
Parents' perceptions s have influenced the choice of Home Science subject in secondary schools.	112	68.3%	23	14%	11	6.7%	18	11%	164
Home Science is a subject suitable for girls in the communities secondary schools	70	42.7%	31	18.9%	30	18.3%	33	20.1%	164
Male guardians in West Pokot County secondary schools perceive Home Science as not important subject for boys.	50	30.5%	50	30.5%	30	18.3%	34	20.7%	164
Teachers from the community usually discourage male students from choosing Home Science in secondary schools	57	34.8%	63	38.4%	22	13.4%	22	13.4%	164
The general views of the community is that Home Science is not a best subject for their sons	55	33.5%	55	33.5%	32	19.5%	22	13.4%	164

Source: Field Data, 2022.

Analysis in table one suggested that 111(67.7%) of the teachers either strongly agreed or just agreed that Pokot Community believe that Home Science teaches about home and family. This belief has affected the subject's enrolment rates in secondary schools. About 53(32.3%) disagreed with this suggestion. A similar 111 (67.7%) number of teachers seemed to suggest that West Pokot

community believe that one does not need Home Science education to have a healthy functioning family although 53(32.3%) of them disagreed.

A majority 100 (61.0%) of the teachers said that Pokot community believe that Home Science education teaches about home and family only. This agrees with Jitumoni et al, (2016) who observed that Home Science is the only subject that prepares one for home, family and career development. This perception has greatly influenced the rate of enrolments in Home Science education in secondary schools. Only 64(39.0%) were in disagreement with this suggestion. Another 135 (82.3%) teachers reported that Parents from the community have advised their children not to choose Home Science subject in secondary schools. About 29(17.7%) were of the contrary opinion. A majority 101(61.6%) of the affirmed that teachers from the community usually discourage male students from choosing Home Science in secondary schools because it is feminine in nature, only 63 (38.4%) resented. This agrees with Serem, (2010) who observed that the society perceives Home Science as a subject for girls and women only and that it does not even require one to study it.

More than 100 (61.0%) teachers suggested that male learners from the community belief that Home Science is not important subject for boys. They report that this believe has grossly affected enrolment rates in the subject in West Pokot County secondary schools. A few 64(39.0%) were in disagreement. 120 (73.2%) said that community belief and perceive that Home Science is a subject suitable for girls. This has affected students' enrolment rates of Home Science in secondary schools. Only 44 (26.8%) teachers did not agree with the suggestion. Over 110(67.1%) were of the general view that Home Science is not a best subject for their sons. Sifuna (2015) observed that many girls are not ambitious or interested in school because of societal and parental expectations that their primary roles are to be wives and mothers they are socialized to believe that formal education is not required to fulfill these roles

In general the teachers agreed that community beliefs and perceptions are a major determinant of choice of Home Science education in West Pokot Public Secondary Schools. From the interactions between the researcher and the students and community leaders carried out during the focus group discussions, it was generally observed that the community perceives home science as a subject to be studied by female students and not males.

From these results, the researcher concluded that community perceptions are a major contributor to low enrolment rates in home science education. This study therefore recommended that the notion that home science is feminine and a science for home managers should be demystified through concerted efforts of local leaders, teachers, parents and other stakeholders of education.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study revealed that gender roles is a major contributors to low enrolment rates in home science in public secondary schools in Pokot Central. The study recommended that concerted efforts by local leaders, Ministry of Education, parents and other stakeholders of education should make efforts to stamp out retrogressive socio-cultural practices to boost enrolments in not only home science but also other subjects in schools. The results of this study can be beneficial to education

policy formulators, managers and planners in coming up with policies and management strategies that can boost enrolment rates in home science education.

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