

An Exploration of Boy Students' Opinion on Girl-Child Empowerment Campaign in Kiambu West District in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Most of the problems that girls encounter are as a result of exploitative and oppressive laws, policies, cultural and religious practices, social-economic structures that undermine the human rights of girls and women. The empowerment of the girl-child in Kenya is the key to transformation from these experiences. In the recent past many organizations both government and non-government have come up with programmes that are tailored to give support to young girls and women towards economic, educational, social and political development. However though the empowerment campaign was necessary for the girl child, too much attention was given to her that resulted to the boy student feeling left out and indeed neglected. This study was conducted in Kiambu West District in Kenya, among boy students to explore their opinion on the girl child empowerment campaign. The study utilized the quantitative methodology with the descriptive survey design. The study was conducted in Kiambu West District which is made up of three Divisions. These are Lari, Limuru and Kikuyu Divisions. The District has nine Boys' Secondary Schools. The target population was form three and four boys' students in these schools. These were about three thousand five hundred in number. The researchers used cluster random sampling in each of the three divisions of Kiambu West District with the study population divided into two clusters; mixed schools and boys' only schools. The study had a sample size of two hundred and forty students. From each division and each cluster one school was selected, this was a total of six schools from which forty students were randomly selected using the class register. Questionnaires were utilized to gather information from the students. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages and later displayed using tables and bar graphs

Keywords: Boy students 'opinion, Girl-child empowerment, Girl-child empowerment campaign

INTRODUCTION

Women across the world suffer many forms of discrimination as a result of oppressive cultural, social, political and religious beliefs. In some continents like India some practices like female feticide, are still prevalent in rural areas. Girls are viewed as inferior to their brother beginning from the time they are born. This makes them suffer feelings of low self esteem. Children and adolescents from philosophic, political, religious, economic societies such as China, Japan and Korea report lower levels of overall self-esteem than their age mates from developed countries like the United States, Canada and Australia (Harter, 1999). In Kenya women and girls have for a long time been fighting for gender equality. Efforts have been made to try and achieve this equality including sending a group of women to attend the Beijing declaration and platform for action in the year 1995 which was a global commitment to achieving equality, development and peace for women in the whole world (Women issues, 1995).

In the era of HIV/AIDs, the girl child finds herself dropping out of school so as to take care of the siblings or the ailing parents who may be in critical condition and not able to support their families for sustenance. Some communities in Kenya still marry off young girls which mean that these girls are not given the opportunity to complete their education. Girls who are married off enter a life of poverty because they lose the chance of ever getting a good job, and therefore not able to support their families, resulting to a vicious cycle of poverty. In the process of maturing, girls experience very many challenges which affect their daily lives; some girls may not afford sanitary towels, causing them to miss out in school as they prefer to remain at home during their menses. Other girls drop out of school altogether. Some girls in some communities are married off at an early age even to very old men. All these challenges leave the woman with no economic empowerment. Some cultural beliefs that a woman should only be seen and not heard leaves the woman oppressed because she has no right to express herself.

The need to empower the girl child was identified so as to help her deal with emotional and social issues adequately. A lady called Esther, who is also the executive director of Balm Touch International (BTI), began working with schools in order to reach the girl child. Other activists include Terry Kunina, who is programme associate for Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW) and Bukeni Wazurisenior manager of the same programme. Esther discovered that the education system mostly emphasized on academic performance and forgot the social and emotional aspect of children. The program targets girls of age eight to eighteen years and also trains primary school teachers on how to work with children, paying attention to their psychological, emotional and social needs. It pays attention to programs in adolescence reproductive health, career guidance, how to avoid rape, HIV/AIDs education, female genital mutilation and civic education among others.

As demonstrated earlier many organizations both government and non-government have come up with programmes that are tailored to give support to young girls and women towards economic, educational, social and political development. However though the empowerment campaign was necessary for the girl child, too much attention was given to her that resulted to the boy student feeling left out and indeed neglected.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Programmes have increasingly focused on eliminating discrimination against the girl child but also effectively neglecting the boy child. Much campaign has been done to empower the girl child until she has successfully overtaken her male counterpart. The main objective for the campaigns was not to push the boy to the out skirts but was to enlighten the girl child on her rights in the society. The campaign was however one sided and did not protect the rights of the male gender. Boys too suffer a similar crisis of low self esteem, role confusion, identity crisis as the girls, only that they do so in silence. This is because society expects men to be masculine and face life challenges without complaining. It is evident that the boy student needed to have a parallel program to addresses his unique needs about what it means to be masculine.

The neglect of the boy child causes emotional and psychological negative effect on him and significant effort has to be put in place to rescue him. It is sad to see boys dropping out of school, boys being lost in drugs and substance abuse, boys engaging in dangerous activities and being involved in crime. It is not known whether this is a reaction towards the much emphasis on the girl child empowerment, which has made the girl become significantly self reliant, self confident and at times despising the boy child.

Women have also developed professionally and are heading big institutions, becoming effective leaders in the society. The problem is that men are not guided on how to handle women's success and they feel threatened and inferior. The society views men to be strong and self sufficient. The major problem that has resulted from the girl child empowerment campaign is that the boy student has changed positions with the girl student, and he is the one now requiring empowerment to bring him back and equip him for leadership. Much is not known about how the boy student opinion impacts on the girl child empowerment campaign in Kiambu West District in Kenya.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to explore the boy student opinion on the girl child empowerment campaign in Kiambu District in Kenya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To ascertain the boy student opinion impact on girl child empowerment campaign in Kiambu West District in Kenya.

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent does the boy students' opinion impact on girl student empowerment campaign in Kiambu West District in Kenya?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Girl Child Empowerment

Kabeer, (2006) defines empowerment as the growth in the people's power to make focused life choices where that power was earlier denied to them. Rathore (2012) says that empowerment should be viewed as marked by several aspects of the social process that helps people take responsibility over their own lives. That is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they view as valued to them. Girl Child Empowerment is a move to inspire girls to be strong, smart and bold in all aspects, including emotionally, spiritually, academically, socially, physically, and psychologically among others.

Empowerment is a social process since it can only be inferred in relationship to others. Research has it that the level of instruction and awareness creation of the school environment influence demand for education for girls even more than it does for the boy child. It has also been documented that girls outperform boys in tertiary enrolment in many regions, suggesting that there may be good value and return to investing in girl's education, educating a girl benefits the whole society. A discrepancy however persists in the some areas of study in higher education with girls in overwhelming numbers in Education and health sectors and insignificant numbers in sciences, manufacturing, construction, and engineering. This has great significance for women's earning ability, since there is a significant relationship between math and science skills and high income (ICRW, 2006).

Empowering girls through education, vocational and technical education and training benefits the person in that they become skilled to do jobs that could help them to become economically empowered. When girls become economically empowered even the deeply entrenched gender discrimination and social norms that put adolescent girls at risk of violence which affects their safe and healthy transition from childhood to adulthood are minimized. The empowerment of girls and women involves the increased ability to make smart decisions for themselves on issues that concern them.

Opinion of Boy Students on Girl Child Empowerment

The confronting challenge is that the girl-child's empowerment seems to rob the boy student some attention. A study by Conlin, 2003 in a school in the United States of America reported boys to be losing ground in school. Some of the study's disturbing statistics show that, boys post three quarters of below average in academic performance and less than half of top performance when compared to the girls. These results indicate that the boy child experiences challenges too. Boys encounter many challenges in silence. This could be because the society has socialized the boy child to demonstrate strength even in the face of adversities. The boy child is vulnerable and they also experience sexual assault such as sodomy and other forms of harassment. The study for international journal of academic research by Koskey Chang'ach (2012) argues that the society has neglected the boy child. The study noted that the boy of the 21st century is faced with tremendous challenges which if not addressed the society will lose him. The boy today is lost into drugs and substance abuse, low self esteem and criminal activities, resulting into many premature deaths.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the quantitative methodology with the descriptive survey design. The study was conducted in Kiambu West District which is made up of three Divisions. These are Lari, Limuru and Kikuyu Divisions. The District has nine Boys' Secondary Schools. The target population was Form three and four boys' students in these schools. These were about three thousand five hundred in number. The researchers used cluster random sampling in each of the three divisions of Kiambu West District with the study population divided into two clusters; mixed schools and boys' only schools. The study had a sample size of two hundred and forty students. From each division and each cluster one school was selected, this was a total of six schools from which forty students were randomly selected using the class register. Questionnaires were utilized to gather information from the students. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistics reported in tables and bar graphs.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Opinion of Boy Students on Girl Child Empowerment Campaign

The students were asked their opinion on girl child empowerment campaign. The following is the presentation of their responses. From table 7.1 below, 78 students was of the opinion that girls need more special treatment than boys. However, the majority at 68% do not agree that girls need more special treatment than boys. Barbara (2002) in the study advocated for equal treatment for girls and boys.

Table 1. Girls need more special treatment than boys

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
True	78	32
False	162	68
Total	240	100

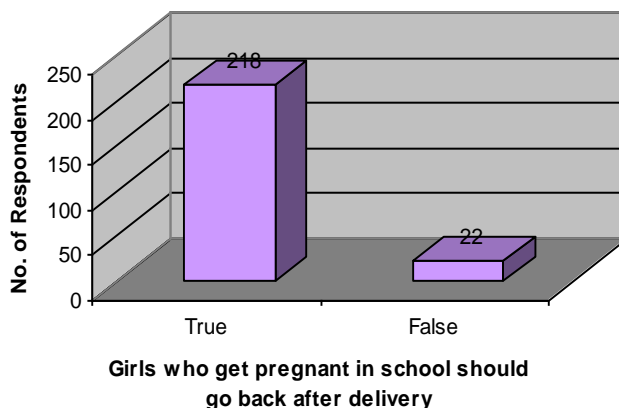


Figure 1. Girls who get pregnant in school should go back after delivery

From figure 1 above, 218 who were the majority of the respondents at 91% were of the opinion that girls who get pregnant in school should go back after delivery. However, 22 respondents did not agree. A study on preparing adolescents for adulthood by Anastasia (1995) held the same opinion

Education for Girls Raises Economic Productivity

From table 2 below, 172 respondents at 72% were of the opinion that education for girls raises economic productivity. The respondents who did not agree were 28%.The study by Kabeer (1999) indicated that empowering the girl child has economic gains.

Table 2. Education for girls raises economic productivity

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
True	172	72
False	68	28
Total	240	100

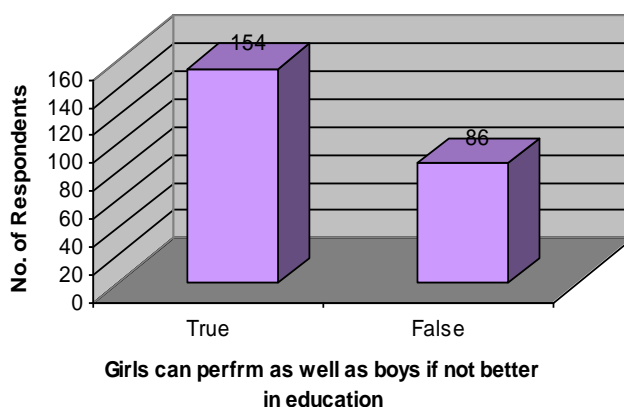


Figure 2. Girls can perform as well as boys if not better in education

From figure 2 above, the respondents who were of the opinion that girls can perform as well as boys if not better in education were 154 or 64%. Those who did not agree were 86 or 36%.This contradicts a study by Ethel (1928) which stated that boys and girls have equal intelligence.

Table 3. Girls need more guidance and counseling sessions than boys

Opinion.	Frequency	Percentage
True	103	43
False	137	57
Total	240	100

Table 3 above show that respondents who were of the opinion that girls need more guidance and counseling sessions than boys were 103 at 43%. Those who did not agree were 137 at 57%. The study by Kaaber (1999) showed that boys too have issues that need counseling.

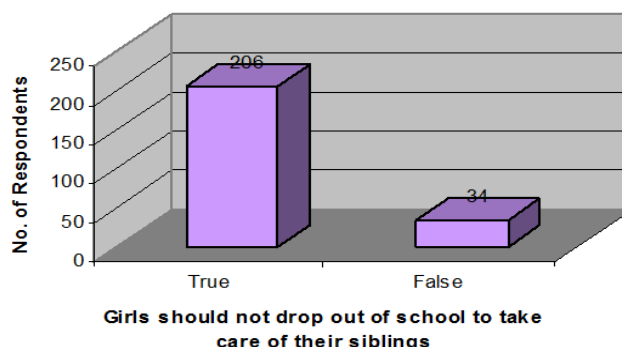


Figure 3. Girls should not discontinue school to take care of their brothers and sisters

From figure 3 respondents who were of the opinion that girls should not discontinue school to take care of their brothers and sisters when their parents or guardian die were the majority at 86%. Those who did not agree were 34 at 14%. The study by Barbara (2002) advocated for equal opportunities for both boys and girls.

Table 4. Girls should not drop out of school to earn a living

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
True	212	88
False	28	12
Total	240	100

From table 4 above, respondents who were of the opinion that girls should not drop out of school to earn a living due to poverty were 212 or 88%. Those who did not agree were 28 or 12%. From the study by Anastasia (1995) on preparing adolescents for adulthood girls should not drop out of school to earn a living.

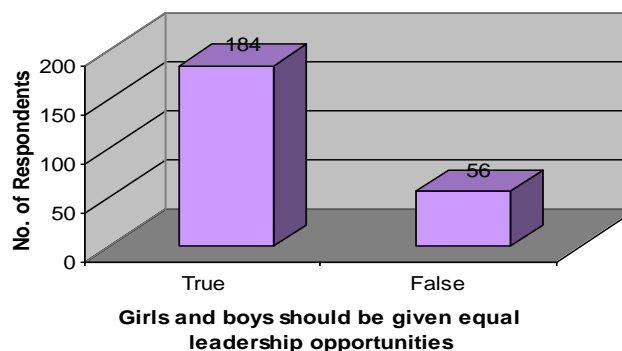


Figure 4. Girls and boys should be given same leadership opportunities

From figure 4 above, 184 respondents or 77% were of the opinion that girls and boys should be given equal opportunities in leadership positions. Those who did not agree were 56 or 23%.Barbara (2002) in a journal agreed that both boys and girls should be given equal opportunities in leadership.

Table 5. The slogan "Everything a boy can do, a girl can do and even better" is true

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
True	116	48
False	124	52
Total	240	100

From table 5 respondents who did not agree with the slogan that “Everything a boy can do, a girl can do and even better” is true were 124, the majority or 52%. However, those who agreed were 116 or 48%. This can also be inferred from Ethel’s study that stated that boys and girls have equal intelligence.

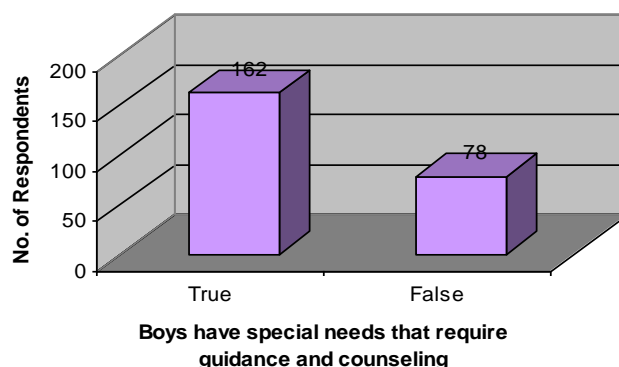


Figure 5. Boys experience unique concerns that demand assistance and counseling

From figure 5 above, the respondents who were of the opinion that boys have special needs that require guidance and counseling were 162, the majority at 68%. Those who did not agree were 78 or 32%.Rathore (2002) suggested that boys too need counseling.

Relationship between the Boy’s Opinion on Girl Child Empowerment and Their Self Esteem

The researchers attempted to find out if there was any relationship between the boy opinion on the girl child empowerment and their self-esteem. The findings are presented in the following table.

Table 6. Relationship between self esteem and opinion

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	0.209983	1	0.209983	0.94677	0.331531
Within Groups	52.78585	238	0.221789		
Total	52.99583	239			

From table 6 above, though there is a relationship between their opinion and self esteem, it is not significant.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Opinion on Girl-Child Empowerment Programs

The boy students were asked their opinion of the girl-child empowerment programs. The results indicated that 68% of the respondents were not of the opinion that girls need more special treatment than boys. In addition, 103 respondents at 43% were not of the opinion that girls need more guidance and counseling than boys. However, the respondent that is 218, at 91% were of the opinion that girls who get pregnant in school should go back after delivery. About 77% of the respondents were of the opinion that girls and boys should be given equal opportunities in leadership positions.

In addition, 88% of the boy students were also of the opinion that girls should not drop out of school to earn a living due to poverty. Similarly, most of them agreed that girls should not drop out of school to take care of their siblings when their parents die. About 48% of the respondents did not agree with the statement that “Everything a boy can do, a girls can do and even better”. The respondents also agreed at 68% that boys have special needs that require guidance and counseling. While most of the respondents at 72% agreed that education for girls raises economic productivity, 64% disagreed that girls can perform as well as boys if not better in education.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, the researchers concluded that it was necessary to empower the girl child in order to create awareness to her concerning her rights and abilities. This was intended to unlock the hidden potential within her. Those that realized the need to empower the girl child wanted her to compete favorably for equal opportunities with the boy child, academically, socially, to have equal access to health facilities and in other areas that there may be. The campaigns were successful with the child girl gaining recognition in almost all aspects.

The researchers however found from the study that the boy’s opinion towards the girl child empowerment was that of neglect. The boy child feels that, though the intention to empower the girl child was positive, it was one sided. It was the feeling of the boy child that they too have issues and challenges that require to be addressed. Boys especially face considerable concerns about their identity during adolescence. They too like the girls are bothered by their physical appearance; they encounter problems in academic performance, lack of competence in tasks that have meaning for them. Boys suffer low self esteem significantly.

The researchers after finding out from the boys, who participated in the study, that they too need empowerment, recommended that programmes to address the issues of the boy child be planned for. In the recent past, incidents of violence against men have been reported. A case in point is that of a man in Nyeri County who was seriously beaten up and burned by his wife, which left him fighting for his life in hospital. This could be a result of a lot of empowerment on the girl child. On the other hand the boy child may be reacting to the feelings that nobody is concerned about his affairs thus engaging in acts of desperation such as; illicit brews, drugs and substance abuse, irresponsible sexual behaviors and engaging in crime. The stakeholders in education and parents need to take immediate action so as to salvage the boy child, and have him restored.

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