



EFFECTS OF GENDER ROLES ON THE EDUCATION OF PUPILS IN EWUASO KEDONG DIVISION OF KAJIADO COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how gender roles impact the education of students in Ewuaso Kedong Division, Kajiado County, using Social Learning Theory as its framework. Through purposive sampling, both boys and girls, alongside key informants and focus group participants, were selected. Data collection involved in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions, with thematic analysis applied to the qualitative data. The findings highlight that entrenched gender roles significantly undermine educational equality. Girls bear the brunt of domestic chores, limiting their study time and school attendance, while boys, with fewer household duties, often perform better academically. These gender disparities are reinforced by traditional socialization and parental attitudes. To mitigate these issues, the study recommends interventions such as community education on the equitable distribution of labor, provision of scholarships, school meals, and learning materials to reduce economic barriers for girls. Policies promoting gender balance in education, coupled with gender equity training and accessible childcare programs, are essential to ensure equal educational opportunities for girls, supporting their academic and future career success.

Key Words: *Gender roles, Household responsibilities, Economic contributions, Time allocated for studying, Social and cultural expectations*

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INTRODUCTION

Gender roles in education reflect societal expectations regarding the behaviors, interests, and responsibilities of students based on their gender. These roles influence the learning experiences, educational choices, and academic achievements of pupils. Gender-based expectations often shape the way students are taught, the subjects they engage with, and how they are treated by peers and educators (Cowan, 2019). In many societies, gender roles continue to perpetuate inequalities in education, leading to disparities in access, opportunities, and outcomes for boys and girls. Such disparities can hinder the full potential of students and affect their future aspirations, especially in regions where traditional gender norms are deeply rooted (Koskei, Itegi, & Muchanje, 2020).

Gender roles in education reflect societal expectations that influence students' behaviors, interests, and responsibilities based on gender. These roles shape learning experiences, educational choices, and academic achievements, affecting how students are taught, the subjects they pursue, and their treatment by peers and educators (Cowan, 2019). In many societies, these roles create educational inequalities, leading to disparities in access, opportunities, and outcomes for boys and girls. Such disparities hinder students' potential and aspirations, especially in regions with strong traditional gender norms, limiting their ability to thrive academically (Koskei, Itegi, & Muchanje, 2020).

UNESCO has been a key advocate for gender equality in education, stressing the need to remove gender barriers for equal educational opportunities. The organization promotes inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all, regardless of gender (UNESCO, 2015). The World Bank (2022) notes that 2.4 billion women globally lack the same economic rights as men, restricting their educational and career opportunities. UNICEF (2015) also underscores the negative impact of gender roles, particularly child labor, which disproportionately

affects girls and limits their access to schooling, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.

Gender roles have significant effects on the educational outcomes of pupils, influencing not only academic performance but also overall well-being. For example, girls are often expected to perform domestic chores, leaving them with less time and energy for schoolwork, while boys may face pressure to excel academically to meet societal expectations of masculinity (Nduagbo, 2020). These traditional roles can limit academic success, with girls frequently being discouraged from pursuing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects, while boys are often steered away from humanities or caregiving roles. (Marcus, 2018).

In England and Thailand, gender roles in education manifest in different ways but have similarly negative effects on pupils' educational experiences. In England, gender stereotypes often dictate the subjects that boys and girls choose, with boys dominating in STEM fields and girls underrepresented in technology and engineering programs (Brussino & McBrien, 2022). In Thailand, gender norms also affect the educational paths of pupils, with girls typically expected to pursue careers in teaching, nursing, or other caregiving professions, while boys are encouraged to pursue more technical or managerial roles (Dickinson, 2021).

Similarly, in Ethiopia and Morocco, gender roles play a significant role in shaping educational outcomes. In Ethiopia, rural girls often face greater challenges due to traditional gender norms that prioritize their role in household chores and early marriage (Boyden et al., 2016). These cultural expectations result in lower school attendance and higher dropout rates for girls. In Morocco, gender stereotypes also impact the educational aspirations of girls, who are often discouraged from pursuing higher education due to societal expectations that prioritize marriage and domestic responsibilities over academic achievement (Wamahiu, 2024).

In Kenya, gender roles continue to shape the education system, particularly in rural areas like Ewuaso Kedong Division in Kajiado County. In this region, girls are often tasked with household responsibilities, limiting their time for schoolwork and participation in extracurricular activities (Koskei, Itegi, & Muchanje, 2020). This results in higher dropout rates among girls and lower academic performance compared to boys. Additionally, the cultural practices, such as early marriage, further exacerbate the challenges girls face in accessing education. Boys, on the other hand, may be pressured to excel academically and pursue careers in fields considered traditionally masculine, often at the expense of their emotional well-being and interests (Mburu & Nyagah, 2012).

The situation in Ewuaso Kedong Division is particularly concerning, as it reflects the broader challenges faced by marginalized communities in Kenya. Gender roles in this area are deeply entrenched, with girls being held back by expectations of domestic work and early marriage. Boys, too, are not immune to the pressure of fulfilling masculine stereotypes, which often results in stress and poor academic performance. The effects of these gender roles are felt across the community, limiting the educational attainment and future opportunities for both boys and girls.

Statement of the Problem

Gender roles significantly impact pupils' education in Ewuaso Kedong, shaping their opportunities, participation, and academic performance. Societal norms often prioritize boys' education over girls', subjecting many girls to early marriage and child labor, which interrupt their schooling (Chebet, 2024; Rakib, 2024). Boys in pastoralist communities are similarly affected, often dropping out to support family livelihoods, limiting their educational attainment (Koriang, 2014).

In Kenya, persistent gender stereotypes continue to influence enrollment and retention rates in schools, with girls disproportionately burdened by household chores such as fetching water, caregiving, and cooking, while boys are expected to

engage in economic activities like herding (Mahamat, 2021; Wamahiu, 2024). These roles exacerbate gender disparities in academic outcomes and prevent pupils from achieving their full potential, particularly in marginalized communities like Ewuaso Kedong, where cultural practices and economic pressures further entrench inequalities (Koriang, 2014; Rakib, 2024).

Despite interventions to address gender-related challenges, limited research has been conducted on the specific impacts of gender roles on pupils' education in Ewuaso Kedong Division. Understanding how traditional roles hinder school attendance, assignment completion, and academic performance is crucial to addressing these challenges. This study aims to fill this gap by providing localized insights that can inform targeted interventions to improve educational outcomes for all pupils.

Objective

This study was carried out to determine the effects of gender roles on the education of pupils in Ewuaso Kedong division of Kajiado County.

Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant effect of gender roles on the education of pupils in Ewuaso Kedong Division, Kajiado County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

Overview of Education and Development

Education is universally recognized as a crucial driver of development. According to the World Bank (2003), education provides individuals with choices and opportunities, thereby reducing poverty and disease. It is also a means of creating a skilled workforce, promoting economic growth, and ensuring social equity. In many parts of the world, including Kenya, education is seen as a tool for advancing human rights, particularly in areas of gender equality. However, despite efforts to improve access to education, gender roles continue to shape educational opportunities for boys and

girls, especially in rural areas like Ewaso Kedong in Kajiado County. These gender-based disparities create obstacles for girls, particularly in rural settings, hindering their participation and academic success (UNICEF, 1992).

Gender Roles and Family Setup

Gender roles, which define the responsibilities and expectations for men and women, are deeply ingrained in society. Traditionally, men were assigned roles such as hunting and providing, while women were responsible for homemaking and childcare (Wood, 2008). These roles have influenced educational choices, where boys are encouraged to pursue formal education while girls are often kept at home to help with domestic duties. This division of labor has contributed to the disparity in education outcomes between genders, with boys receiving more educational opportunities. In Ewaso Kedong, similar patterns persist, with boys often receiving priority when it comes to school enrollment and attendance due to societal expectations (Eagly et al., 2000).

Gender Roles and Family Responsibilities

In many households, especially in rural areas, both parents contribute to the family income, yet the gendered division of labor continues to create conflict. While modern lifestyles encourage both parents to work outside the home, traditional expectations still assign women the role of homemakers. This has implications for the education of children, particularly girls, who are expected to take on domestic chores after school. As Maume (2006) suggests, when both parents are employed, the burden of household responsibilities may fall disproportionately on girls, leaving them with less time for schoolwork. In the context of Ewaso Kedong, girls often face the added pressure of domestic tasks, which negatively impacts their ability to concentrate on education and leads to high dropout rates (Tamale, 2001).

Gender Roles and Children's Education

The education of children is heavily influenced by the gender roles within the family. Traditionally,

girls were socialized to prioritize domestic responsibilities, while boys were encouraged to pursue formal education. In many rural areas, this has led to a significant gender disparity in school attendance and academic performance. According to UNICEF (1996), boys are often valued more for education because they are seen as future providers, while girls are expected to fulfill domestic roles. This belief system, which is prevalent in Ewaso Kedong, has resulted in fewer girls attending school, and when they do, they are more likely to face barriers such as lack of time for study and poor academic performance (Battara, 1992).

Educational Challenges for Girls in Rural Areas

In rural Kenya, including Ewaso Kedong, girls face numerous educational challenges. Long distances to school, inadequate sanitation facilities, and the lack of gender-sensitive curricula contribute to high dropout rates among girls (Tamale, 2001). The difficulty of balancing schoolwork with household chores further discourages girls from continuing their education. Additionally, the prevailing socio-cultural beliefs that prioritize the education of boys over girls result in lower enrollment and attendance rates for girls in rural areas. This inequality in access to education perpetuates the cycle of poverty and limits the future opportunities of girls (David, 1997).

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, developed by Bandura (1977), posits that individuals acquire behaviors and norms through observation and reinforcement within their environment. In Ewaso Kedong Division, pupils internalize gendered roles by observing adults, with girls often assigned domestic chores and caregiving and boys engaged in livestock management. These roles negatively affect their educational participation and performance, underscoring the importance of addressing societal norms to promote gender equity in education (Bandura, 1977).

Conceptual Framework

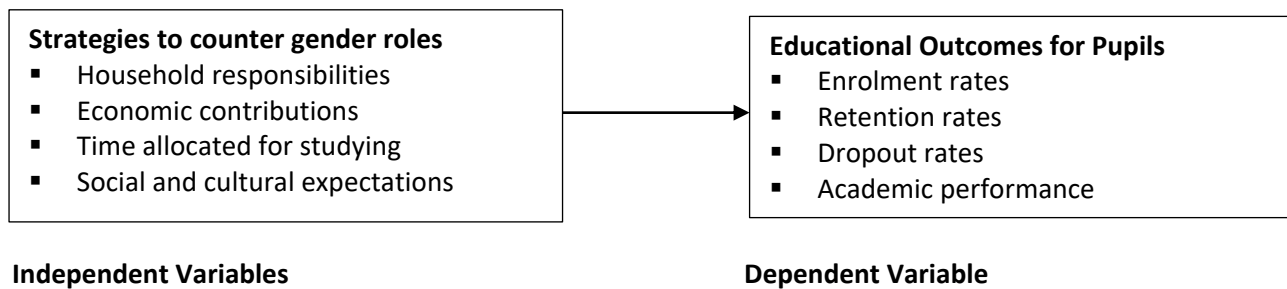


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Ewuaso Kedong Division, Kajiado County, which spans 2,980 square kilometers and has a population of 370,000 people. The division consists of eight locations and 22 government primary schools. The research employed a cross-sectional descriptive design, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews to collect data. The target population comprised pupils in classes 6-8 across six primary schools in the division, with a sample size of 60 pupils selected through random sampling after purposive class selection. Key informants included teachers, the Area Education Officer (AEO), and a District Gender, Social & Development Officer. Focus group discussions were held with PTA members to explore gender roles' impact on education. Data was analyzed thematically, guided by the study's objectives. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and allowing participants to withdraw from the study at any time. The research adhered to ethical guidelines to protect respondents' rights and privacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Age of the Respondents

The study found that 62% of the participants were aged between 11 and 12 years, while 38% were between 13 and 14 years. Age played a significant role in the analysis, especially in cross-tabulations

with class levels, reflecting different age groups across the sample.

Gender of the Respondents

The gender analysis revealed that 58% of the respondents were male, while 42% were female. This suggests that there are more boys enrolled in schools in the Ewuaso Kedong division than girls, highlighting a gender disparity in education within the region.

Educational Level

The educational level analysis showed that 23% of respondents were from class six, 42% from class seven, and 35% from class eight. Class seven pupils represented the majority, though their numbers did not significantly impact the qualitative findings, indicating no bias in the data collection process.

Teachers' Observations on Gender Division of Labour

Teachers noted that boys were more active participants in class than girls, who often arrived at school tired and were more likely to sleep during lessons. This was attributed to girls' heavier domestic workloads, including household chores, which limited their rest and preparation for school. Late arrivals due to household responsibilities also disrupted class activities and affected teaching effectiveness.

Impact of Domestic Responsibilities on Attendance and Performance

Teachers highlighted the negative impact of domestic labor on pupils' attendance and performance. Many children, particularly girls, were

absent during exams or key learning periods due to market-related duties or substituting for parents in domestic or economic activities. Such irregular attendance impeded proper evaluation of pupils' understanding and performance, making it difficult for teachers to assess the effectiveness of teaching methods.

Parents' Role in Education

The findings revealed that many parents in Ewuaso Kedong prioritize household and economic contributions over their children's education. Parents often fail to provide an environment conducive to learning at home and rarely monitor their children's academic progress. Teachers expressed concern that this lack of parental involvement, compounded by the emphasis on child labor, shifts the entire educational responsibility to schools, further undermining pupils' educational outcomes.

Impact on Academic Performance

The teacher discusses how the gender division of labor affects pupils' academic performance. Boys tend to do well in school due to more time available for studying, while girls, burdened with domestic chores, often struggle to focus in class. "The boys have the tendency to do well in school because they have more time to study at home than the girls. And parents motivate boys by words or by giving them time to study. While the girls will not often have enough time as they assist the mothers a lot in cooking and child care." Girls, distracted by domestic responsibilities, lose focus during lessons, negatively affecting their academic progress.

Socialization and Gender Roles

Gendered expectations in the home and school foster differing levels of confidence in boys and girls. Boys are often more confident due to less domestic responsibility and societal preferences, while girls feel inferior and reluctant to engage in subjects perceived as masculine. "The boys tend to score higher in class and participate in class lessons and are able to speak when questions are asked in class...the girls usually do not participate much when a question is asked." This unequal treatment

creates an academic disparity, reinforcing traditional gender roles and undermining girls' participation and self-esteem.

Subject Preference and Gendered Skills

Girls tend to perform better in home economics due to their frequent involvement in household tasks like cooking and sewing. "All the girls liked the course as it deals with cooking and dressmaking and most of them perform well and participate during the lesson." This reinforces the societal expectation that girls should focus on domestic skills, limiting their educational choices and opportunities for broader career development.

Parental Influence on Educational Pursuits

Teachers highlight that parental attitudes toward gender roles influence children's educational choices and performance. Boys are often encouraged to pursue more academic subjects, while girls are expected to take on domestic roles. "Parents' occupational aspirations for their children go to influence the children's education and interest." This bias can limit girls' educational opportunities, as they are steered towards traditional, gendered roles rather than pursuing diverse academic interests.

Gender Roles in School Tasks

In school, the division of labor between boys and girls perpetuates societal gender norms. Boys are typically assigned more challenging tasks, which cultivates their creativity and confidence. Girls are assigned less demanding tasks, which may hinder their intellectual development. "In the distribution of work in school, boys are usually assigned to difficult tasks and girls to less tedious tasks. This has made the boys more creative than the girls which can be seen during hand work presentation in school." This unequal allocation of school tasks further entrenches gender inequalities, reinforcing the notion that boys are suited for more complex work.

Cultural and Societal Influence on Gender Roles

The gender division of labor extends beyond the family and school into the broader societal context,

where children are socialized into specific roles that reflect traditional expectations. As a result, boys and girls internalize societal beliefs about their roles, which affects their educational development. "Gender is everywhere and manifest consciously or unconsciously in our daily language, postal directives and the media." The societal belief that boys should engage in public work and girls in domestic work limits their educational and social development, with girls particularly confined to household roles

Traditional Socialization and Gender Roles in Education

The cultural practices in Ewuaso Kedong emphasize traditional socialization, where boys and girls are assigned distinct roles based on their gender. Boys are expected to focus on "manly" tasks such as herding, taking care of the family inheritance, or pursuing advanced education in "tough courses" like engineering. Girls, on the other hand, are trained in household responsibilities to prepare them for their future roles as mothers and wives. This socialization process prioritizes boys' education while limiting girls' opportunities for formal learning.

Parental Perceptions and Gender-Based Labor Allocation

Parents believe gender division of labor is essential for equipping children with skills needed in their future roles. One parent observed that "gender division of labour makes work easy as girls will be good in housework and child care," while boys are taught to work hard and become breadwinners. This entrenched belief system discourages equitable educational opportunities and reinforces stereotypes that boys' roles are more financially significant than girls'.

Education Versus Domestic Labor

Gender roles significantly affect pupils' educational attainment as girls are overburdened with domestic responsibilities, leaving them with less time for study. Boys, although involved in activities like herding or splitting wood, have more time to focus on education. Parents in Ewuaso Kedong view girls'

domestic contributions as critical, which often results in absenteeism and lower academic performance among female pupils.

Economic Constraints and Labor Exploitation

Poverty in the region exacerbates the reliance on children's labor. As one parent explained, "children are considered as part of their household labour force." Girls perform household chores like fetching water, cleaning, and taking care of siblings, while boys help with herding or farming. These tasks are prioritized over academic pursuits, especially for girls, due to the economic necessity of maximizing household productivity.

Disparity in Academic Performance and Gender Bias

Parents' expectations perpetuate academic disparities, with boys often encouraged to pursue education while girls are relegated to domestic roles. The male child is seen as a family successor and future leader, a belief that justifies allocating fewer academic resources to girls. As noted, "boys were to attend school to be teachers and the few girls...were those who were to be wives of teachers."

Influence of Traditional Education

Informal learning through observation and participation in gendered tasks limits girls' formal education. This traditional model views household responsibilities as a vital training ground for girls. Parents believe that "children grow and develop more skills and creative knowledge that continue to place them into different gender roles," further hindering the push for equal educational opportunities.

Effects of Gender Roles on School Attendance and Performance

Girls' domestic responsibilities often lead to irregular school attendance, lateness, and poorer academic outcomes. This imbalance is not addressed by educators, and the additional responsibilities limit girls' ability to compete academically with boys. Rural parents' skepticism about the value of girls' education, coupled with

their focus on immediate labor needs, further perpetuates the issue.

Gender Roles and Career Prospects

The emphasis on gender roles directly impacts children's future career aspirations. Girls are steered toward domestic or care-based roles, while boys are encouraged to pursue financially rewarding professions. This disparity reflects deeply ingrained societal norms that prioritize boys' career development over girls'.

Potential Solutions and Parental Awareness

The findings suggest that increasing parental awareness of the value of girls' education and reducing the reliance on child labor are critical steps. Investment in accessible and affordable education, alongside advocacy for gender equality in household responsibilities, could help bridge the gap. As one parent noted, "there is western education, but it is also necessary for us to teach our children informally the basic activities," indicating a need to balance traditional values with modern educational practices.

SUMMARY

Gender roles in Ewaso Kedong Division significantly influence the education of pupils, particularly girls, who face heavier domestic responsibilities that limit their time for study and attendance. Boys, with fewer household duties, often excel academically, while girls struggle due to the prioritization of domestic labor over education. Traditional socialization reinforces these gendered divisions, perpetuating disparities in academic performance and narrowing future career opportunities for girls. The impact of these roles extends beyond the household, influencing parental expectations and limiting educational opportunities for girls..

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals that entrenched gender roles significantly influence the education of pupils in Ewaso Kedong Division of Kajiado County. These roles perpetuate unequal distribution of labor, with girls predominantly burdened with household

responsibilities while boys engage in less time-intensive, yet valued, tasks. Cultural expectations, economic constraints, and parental attitudes reinforce this division, often at the expense of girls' educational engagement and outcomes. This division limits girls' time for study, reinforces societal biases, and reduces their future opportunities compared to boys. Addressing these disparities is critical for achieving gender equity in education and enhancing social and economic development in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Educate parents and community members about the importance of equitable distribution of labor and equal educational opportunities for boys and girls. Awareness programs should target traditional beliefs, emphasizing how equitable labor distribution improves children's academic performance and fosters balanced societal roles for long-term community development.

Provide scholarships, school meals, and learning materials to reduce economic barriers that disproportionately affect girls. These interventions should target marginalized families, ensuring consistent school attendance by alleviating the economic pressures that often force girls to stay home for domestic chores.

Implement and enforce policies that promote equal participation and retention of boys and girls in schools. Governments and local authorities should monitor gender disparities and create penalties or incentives that encourage households to support gender-balanced access to education.

Teach students about gender equity, fostering attitudes that challenge traditional stereotypes. Gender equity lessons should integrate practical, relatable examples, preparing students to challenge societal norms that perpetuate inequality and advocate for equitable opportunities in their communities.

Introduce community childcare programs to alleviate the burden on older children, especially girls, to care for siblings. Accessible childcare

initiatives should be implemented, enabling older girls to focus on their studies rather than managing household and sibling caregiving responsibilities.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research should explore how gendered household responsibilities affect the educational outcomes of girls compared to boys in the region. Conduct a longitudinal study to examine how the unequal labor division between girls and boys impacts their academic progression and career opportunities over time. Further research is needed

to assess how parental attitudes and economic factors influence the educational choices and aspirations of boys and girls in the region. Future studies should investigate how economic challenges contribute to gender disparities in education, particularly in how they affect girls' educational participation. Research should focus on the effectiveness of community and school-based programs designed to reduce gender disparities in education and promote equal educational opportunities.

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