

FACTORS AFFECTING MOTIVATION AND ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS, ASPIRATIONS OF STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: LAIKIPIA – WEST DISTRICT, LAIKIPIA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The gap in gender enrolment and academic performance between boys and girls in secondary schools has been widening in the society. Girls and boys face challenges in their academic work which affects their self esteem, academic self concept and motivation. This study sought to find out the effects of motivation in girls' and boys' academic performance at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination in Laikipia- West district in Laikipia County. The study adopted a survey research design. The population included 5206 students in the 18 public secondary schools. A random sample of 349 students (including 194 boys and 155 girls) and 18 school principals was drawn from 18 schools. Data was collected using two sets of self-structured questionnaires (one for students and another for school principals). The questionnaires were pilot-tested to validate and determine their reliability. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 for Windows. The study findings indicate that there was a difference in motivation among students across the age categories, order of birth and gender of the student. The study recommends that there is a need to include more student factors beyond what was included in this study so as to identify other factors that may have more influence on student motivation.

Keyword: Motivation, Academic Expectations, Academic Aspirations and Students.

INTRODUCTION

The policy of the government of Kenya on education has always been to provide education to all children at all levels of the education system. This is in agreement education. This is in line with the United Nations Universal Declaration on Education (1985) states that education is one of the basic human rights irrespective of an individual's socio –economic and political background, gender, religion, race and tribe.

According to the Government of Kenya (2005) in 2002, primary school enrolment for boys and girls was 78.5 percent and 76.5 percent respectively but after the introduction of free primary education in 2003, it has been rising steadily. In 2008 the national enrolment for boys was 94.5 percent and 90.5 percent for girls. At secondary school level, the national enrolment rate in 2002 was 29.8 percent for boys and 26.4 percent for girls. After the introduction of subsidized secondary education it rose to 46.3 percent for boys and 38.8 percent for girls. According to the Society for International

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Development (SID, 2010), in the academic year 2006/2007 the percentage of male to female students was 62 per cent and 38 per cent respectively in public universities. In 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 academic years the enrollment for both gender did not change as it remained at 62 per cent for boys and 38 per cent for girls.

The low number of female students in our public universities reflects the poor performance that is associated with girls in national examination at both primary and secondary levels. For example, in 2004 Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination, while girls had a mean score of 53 per cent, boys had a mean score of 54 per cent (MOEST, 2009).

According to the Society for International Development (SID, 2010), despite an increment in secondary school enrolment, performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education has been wanting. In 2009 and 2010 examinations, only 27 per cent of the registered candidates in each year attained the minimum aggregate grade for university qualification (C Plus) and above. According to Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC, 2009) report, the Kenya Certificate Secondary Education results show a lot of disparity. For example: from grade A plain to B plain in 2008, girls accounted for 32 per cent and boys accounted for 68 percent. In 2009, girls constituted 34 per cent and boys 66 percent while in the year 2010 girls accounted for 27 per cent and boys accounted for 73 percent.

Student's poor performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education nationally is reflected in the results of Laikipia -West District in Laikipia County. According to the District Education Officer report (2012), out of the total 784 registered students, girls were 44 per cent and boys constituted 56 percent. Concerning their performance, boys had a better performance than girls. For instance, in terms of quality grades, that is, A plain, A minus, B plus and B plain, boys accounted for 86 percent and girls accounted for 14 percent. In the same district majority of the students who missed Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination in 2010, girls accounted for 83 percent and boys accounted for 17 percent. The reasons for high percentage of girls scoring poorly while others could not sit for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination could have been: early marriages, teenage pregnancies, involvement in menial jobs and domestic chores and also absenteeism due to lack of school fees. Poor academic performance in Laikipia- West District of Laikipia County in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination may also be attributed to low motivation of students in their academic work. According to Beihler and Snowman (2002), motivation to perform academically can result from being stimulated to achieve better grades. Students are said to be internally motivated to learn when they attribute their academic results to factors that are under their control, such as being interested in mastering a topic rather than rote learning for the sake of better results and a belief that they have the skills that can help them attain grades they aspire to achieve. On the other hand, students are extrinsically motivated to learn if their drive to learn is as a result of motivating factors from their learning environment.

According to Kibera and Kimokoti (2007) students' academic performance can be affected by characteristics such as gender, age, and socio-economic and political background, and birth order. Chege and Sifuna (2006) further stated that school factors such as the type of school attended, teachers' attitude, availability of learning resources, provision of guidance as well as involvement in co-curricular activities have an influence on students' academic performance.

Richard and Deci (1985) observed that students are motivated to learn if they are physically comfortable, feel safe and relaxed, and have a sense of belonging and a strong feeling of self-esteem. Given that a number of factors influence motivation to learn and academic performance, it was important to establish the grades students expected to attain at the end of secondary level of education as well as the academic aspirations of secondary school students in Laikipia-West District of Laikipia County.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study sought to:

1. assess the academic expectations of students at the end of secondary level of education by gender.
2. determine academic aspirations of students after secondary level of education by gender.
3. establish academic aspirations of secondary school students by school category.

Research Design

This study adopted a survey research design. In a survey design, information is collected from respondents about their experiences and opinions about a particular topic under study in order to generalize the findings to the population represented by the sample (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). This design was the most appropriate for obtaining factual and attitudinal information for research questions with regards to self-reported beliefs, opinions, and present or past behaviors (David & Sutton, 2004). The study assumed that all the respondents had/or information or experience that bore on the problem of investigation.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

In this research, stratified random sampling was applied to select 341 girls and 419 boys respectively in Laikipia-West District from Form Four class for this study. Also purposive sampling was applied to include all the 18 secondary principals.

Data was collected using both closed and open- ended questions items. The instruments were piloted on a population that was similar to the target population. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha in order to determine the internal consistency of the items in questionnaire (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996). A reliability coefficient of 0.8345 was established and assumed to reflect the internal reliability of the instruments.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data was processed, coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0. The descriptive statistics: percentages, frequencies and means which were presented in Tables, Pie Charts and Cross-tabulations. With regard to gender 155 (44.4) and 194 (55.6) females and males respectively responded to the questionnaires. The gender variation of students conformed to the general enrollment of male and female students in secondary schools in the country and study area. In general, there were more boys than girls in the sampled secondary schools due partly to cultural beliefs that education of girls is not as important as that of boys since girl's education is perceived to benefit families where they get married to compare to their biological families. The analysis of the age of students by gender is presented in Table 1.

Table1: Age Distribution of the Sample by Gender

Age	Boys		Girls	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
≤ 14	4	2.1	4	2.6
15	27	13.9	40	25.8
16	43	22.2	33	21.3
17	60	30.9	45	29.0
18	28	14.4	21	13.5
>18	32	16.5	12	7.8
Total	194	100.0	155	100.0

The findings in Table1 indicate that 81.4 percent of boys and 89.6 percent of girls were aged between 15 and 18 years. This conforms to the standard age of secondary school students in the

country. This also shows that majority of the respondents were in their adolescent stage as expected. In general, it is in this stage that majority of the students develop a sense of independence and identity. This is supported by Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory which postulates that in the adolescent stage, the adolescents face the dilemma of identity versus role confusion. Therefore, failure to have a fully developed sense of independence and self identity may lead to role confusion and poor academic performance. This in turn influences their development of self-concept (Erikson, 1950).

The order of birth is also said to influence the level of motivation. The tapped information from respondents about order of their birth is captured in Table 2.

Table 2: Order of Birth of the Sampled Students by gender

Order	Boys		Girls	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	71	36.6	43	27.8
2	63	32.5	52	33.5
3	27	13.9	26	16.8
4	24	12.4	27	17.4
>4	9	4.6	7	4.5
Total	194	100.0	155	100.0

The analysis in Table 2 shows that the 36.6 percent and 27.8 percent of boys and girls, respectively, were firstborns. The rest of the respondents occupied second and third position of birth.

After capturing the profile of students by gender, age and order of birth, analysis of students' level of motivation was assessed based on their *level of agreement or disagreement with statements on a point likert scale ranging from 1 to 4 (where, 1= Strongly disagree - SD, 2 = Disagree - D, 3 = Agree - A and 4 = Strongly Agree - SA)*. The higher the score, the higher was the level of influence of that aspect on the motivation of the learners, and vice versa. The results of their responses are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Student's Perception about their performance and liking of their school by gender

Statement	SA			A		D		SD		TOTAL	
	Gender	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
I feel satisfied with my last term examination results	Boys	11	5.7	17	8.8	73	37.6	93	47.9	194	100
	Girls	8	5.2	15	9.7	83	53.5	49	31.6	155	100
If I perform the way I perform in KCSE I will qualify for my dream course	Boys	3	1.5	11	5.7	77	39.7	103	53.1	194	100
	Girls	4	2.6	5	3.2	45	29	101	65.2	155	100
I feel that am not performing to my best in school examination	Boys	128	66	34	17.5	11	5.7	21	10.8	194	100
	Girls	106	68.3	27	17.4	8	5.2	14	9	155	100
I owe my academic performance to hard work	Boys	179	92.3	15	7.7	0	0	0	0	194	100
	Girls	149	96.1	6	3.9	0	0	0	0	155	100
I am proud to be a secondary school student	Boys	171	88.1	16	8.2	5	2.6	2	1	194	100
	Girls	131	67.5	10	5.2	8	5.2	6	3.9	155	100
I feel disadvantaged when compared with boys students in academic wok	Boys	44	2.3	21	10.8	63	32.5	66	34	194	100
	Girls	39	2.5	43	27.7	34	21.9	39	25.2	155	100
Given a chance I would opt out of my current school	Boys	4	2.1	49	25.3	83	42.8	58	29.9	194	100
	Girls	1	0.6	19	12.3	64	41.3	71	36.6	155	100

The results in Table 3 have revealed that both boys (85.5%) and girls (90%) did not feel satisfied with their last term's examination results. In addition, 71.3% and 94.2% of boys and girls respectively felt that they would not attain pass mark at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) to enable them to join their "dream" courses. Further, both boys (83.5%) and girls (85.7%) they were aware that they were not performing well in their school examinations. All the boys and girls attributed their performance to their hard work. These results suggest that students were not able to see the relationship between hardwork and performance because it is expected that hard work would produce good results and would lead them to attaining good grades that would enable them to join their preferred courses after secondary level of education. Finally, students were asked to indicate if they would opt to transfer to another school. The results showed that only (27.4%) and 12.9% of boys and girls respectively would have opted to leave their current school. This strongly suggests that the majority of students were happy with their school environment. It is therefore important in a future study to find out why students were not satisfied with their performance given that they did not want to change their school.

The expected Mean grade and Academic Aspirations of Boys and Girls

The analysis of motivation of boys and girls was also gauged on students' expected academic achievement in terms of grade score. The students reported their overall average grade expected in all the subjects based on the Kenya National Examination Council criteria. These grades included A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D- or E. The study transformed the overall grade into numerical scale to obtain grade point average, in which A = 12, A- = 11, B+ = 10, B = 9, B- = 8, C+ = 7, C = 6, C- = 5, D+ = 4, D = 3, D- = 2, and E = 1 points. The grade point average obtained, served as the student's expected academic achievement. The results in Table 4 contain students' expected academic achievement in terms of overall grade points by gender.

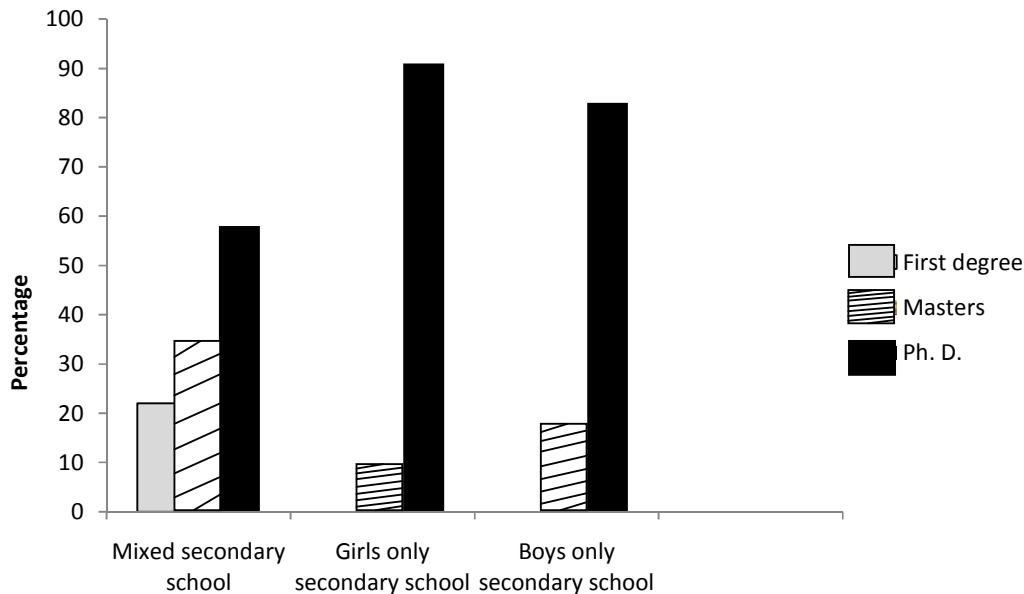
Table 4: Expected Academic Achievement Grades in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education by Boys and Girls.

Expected grade	Boys		Girls	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
12 = A	59	30.4	28	18.1
11 = A-	24	12.4	9	5.8
10 = B+	73	37.6	65	41.9
9 = B	17	8.8	12	7.7
8 = B-	5	2.6	11	7.1
7 = C+	14	7.2	22	14.2
6 = C	2	1.0	6	3.9
5 = C-	0	0.0	2	1.3
Total	194	100.0	155	100.0

The analysis in Table 4 indicates that 99.0 percent of the boys and 94.8 percent of girls expected an average grade point ranging between 7 points (C+) and 12 points (A). These results suggested that although all students expected higher academic achievement, boys hoped to attain better results than girls. However, considering the past performance of past students in this district, it appears that they are not realistic about their performance.

Finally, the study sought information on students' academic aspirations by school type. This analysis is summarized in Figure 1.

Fig 1. Academic Aspirations of Students from Mixed Secondary, Girls Only and Boys Only Schools



Data in Figure 1 indicates that all the students in Laikipia- West District had very high academic aspirations. The majority of the respondents aspired to attain Ph.D. level of education. Thus 91 per cent of the respondents from girls' only secondary schools aspired to attain Ph.D. level followed by students from boys' only schools with (83 per cent). Students from mixed secondary schools manifested lowest academic aspirations at 58%. These findings are in agreement with those of (Kibera, 1993).

Summary Findings

Based on the study objectives, research questions and data analysis, the following research findings emerged:

- (i) The results have shown that gender of the student has a marked influence on students' motivation to learn.
- (ii) The respondents were drawn from different types /categories of schools showed slight difference in their motivation to learn.
- (iii) On the whole, the majority of students have unrealistic academic expectations and aspirations. Overwhelmingly, majority of students expected to attain good grades and consequently aspired to achieve high academic qualifications at masters and doctoral levels respectively.

Conclusions

- (i) Based on the summary findings, the study concludes that learner characteristics were influential in determining students' level of motivation.
- (ii) The findings have also established that students in single sexed secondary schools have slightly higher academic expectations and aspirations compared to students in co-educational secondary schools.

Recommendations

In view of the above conclusions, this study recommends that there is a need to include more learner factors beyond gender, age, order of birth, and school category. Institutional and socio-cultural factors should be investigated in future studies. Further, more Counties should be studied for comparative purposes and generalization of results to the rest of the country.

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