

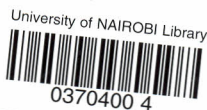
**FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO GENDER DISPARITIES IN
THE CHOICE OF COURSES IN TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS:
A CASE OF KABETE TECHNICAL TRAINING INSTITUTE-
NAIROBI**

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ABSTRACT

Gender disparities exist in the choice of courses in technical institutions. The study set out to investigate the factors that contribute to this. The study focused on the individual, the school factors and factors outside the school that contribute to gender disparities. The outcome of the study was intended to help educators make TVET meaningful, constructive, practical and attractive to both genders. It would also enable policy makers address the problems associated with technical education in Kenya. The findings may enable education planners revise, remodel and review the curriculum of technicians' course to take full care of the changing pattern of jobs.

The objective of the study was first to identify the factors that are important in influencing learners' choice of technical courses. The second objective was to find out the factors that account for gender disparities in the choice of technical courses. The third objective was to determine learner's views of technical courses and lastly to establish the extent to which learners view technical course chosen relevant to their desired careers.

In order to achieve the above objectives, primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires, whose respondents were diploma programme finalist students of Kabete Technical Training Institute.

Kabete TTI offers twenty-one diploma courses. From each course only five persons - finalist diploma students - were interviewed. This data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean scores, percentages, standard deviations and physical counts (frequencies) while data presentation was made in tables.

The findings from the study suggest that school factors, social factors and career factors are all important in influencing learner's choice of technical courses. Learners regard the quality of the course, its practical nature, availability of dedicated lecturers and their KSCE performance as important pointers to course chosen. The presence of role models in the society, the parents, labour market demand, personal interest and career development opportunities all played an important role in influencing learner's choice of technical courses.

The study also indicate that poor socialization, gender discriminatory practices, discriminatory task and role assignments at home, social prejudices and societal norms among others account for gender disparities in the choice of courses in technical institution. The school factors such as lack of encouragement, lack of female role models at school and poor career guidance and counseling were also held accountable. Learner's factors such as feeling of incapability, fear of challenging tasks, lack of spatial skills, poor performance of KSCE, lack

of adequate grounding in prerequisite subjects like mathematics, science and technical subjects among others were also cited.

The study also found out that learners hold favourable view of technical courses. They regard these courses to be important for improvement of technical skills, require long hours of studies and have a lot of practical work. These courses are marketable in the job market, relevant to society's needs, important for industrialization, technical advancements and modernization of production processes, and crucial for economic recovery as well as human resource development. These courses are therefore relevant to the learners' desired careers.

On the strength of these findings, some of the recommendations made were: -

- Train more female technical teachers to serve as role models in the school and in the society.
- Need to enhance unbiased career guidance and counseling at the secondary school level to enable learners make unbiased course choices.
- Facilitate girls' exposure to technical subjects and facilities by equipping the schools and having sufficient teaching staff.

- Sensitize parents and learners to change the attitudes held and diffuse misconceptions about technical subjects.
- Align technical courses to industrial requirements of the country and have credible assessment of industrial attachment.

The researcher also made recommendations for further studies. These were:

- A study to be done at the secondary school level to investigate any gender biases in the subject selection at this level.
- A study need be done with a larger sample than the one used in this study and from more than one institution with more female representation.
- A study to be done targeting “purely technical courses” – namely mechanical, electrical and building and civil engineering – to investigate gender biases in the choice of each of these courses.