



Influence of Gender Norms on Education Participation among Secondary School Girls in Homa Bay County

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ABSTRACT

Several studies in sub-Saharan Africa have looked at the impact of gender norms on the education of girls. Nevertheless, on a national level, limited studies have attempted to directly investigate the girls' views and their experiences of these norms. Therefore, this study is intended to investigate the influence of gender norms on the education participation of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County (HBC). The study adopted a concurrent transformative research design, majorly quantitative with an embedded qualitative bit. The population of interest comprised all secondary school girls in HBC. Purposive sampling was applied to limit the sample population to the three sub-counties of Rachwonyo South, Rachwonyo East, and Ndiwa. Solvin's formula was used to arrive at a sample size of 393. Respondents were selected using a proportionate stratified sampling method. Additionally, one guidance/counselling teacher, one principal, and one area education director from the participating schools were purposefully included in the study to provide complementary qualitative data. Data from female students was collected by means of questionnaires. Interview schedules were used to collect data from the other participants. The validity of the test was established through expert input and the adaptation of tests used in similar studies. Instrument reliability was confirmed by a test-retest test that returned a correlation coefficient of 0.766. The quantitative data was coded and analysed using SPSS version 24.0. Linear regression was run between education participation and gender norms, and the outcome was an equation model. Qualitative data provided evaluative references in the discussion. The relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was found to be statistically significant ($t = 1.295, p < .001$). The study found that the gender norms of most secondary school girls in Homa Bay County are disposed to unquestioning submissiveness to men and over-involvement in domestic chores. The study recommends that school authorities use parental gatherings to create awareness that focuses girls' attention on career development. Interventions to improve girls' education participation will benefit from these findings. Similar studies are needed to establish the plausibility of generalizing the findings beyond Homa Bay County.

Keywords: Attitudes, Education Participation, Gender Norms, Patriarchal Norms, Secondary School Girls

I. INTRODUCTION

This study aims to investigate the role of gender norms on secondary school girls' education participation. Norms are socially enforced, influence people's ideas, attitudes, and behaviours, and define what's acceptable and unacceptable in a community or society (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2013; McDonald & Crandall, 2015; Bicchieri, 2016). Understanding norms as a crucial aspect of sexual behaviour helps one determine what needs to change and which approaches can be deployed to minimize the bad effects of certain gender norms. The risk of sexual violence and harassment is increased by rigid gender norms that associate masculinity with control and femininity with compliance, power abuse, aggression, and violence (Lutta, 2015; Ngore, 2012; Bicchieri, 2016). These kinds of practices are masked behind patriarchal norms that are male-leaning (Ngore, 2012).

In Homa Bay County, the study site, decision-making by women, as reported by Lutta (2015) and Ngore (2012), is generally diminished and largely left to men, even in issues that directly affect women, such as getting inherited. This makes women as well as girls vulnerable to sexual exploitation that ends up harming their educational participation



interests. Predatory sexual behaviours appear to be widespread in Homa Bay County. This is supported by the report of the National Council for Population and Development (2020), which presented Homa Bay County as having a teenage pregnancy rate of 33% in 2019, which ranked it as the 2nd highest nationally. The study considers teenage pregnancy as an important keyword not only because of its strong association with poor education participation but also because sex-linked pregnancy occurs by taking advantage of patriarchal norms that confer decision-making powers to men and leaving women vulnerable to male-dominated decisions. Girls who become pregnant are usually forced to skip school in order to take care of their babies and other related baby chores that go with it. Previous studies have shown that a significant number of girls who become pregnant do not return to school after childbirth (Abuya et al., 2014; Pound et al., 2016; Danieli et al., 2018).

1.1 Problem Statement

In view of the above considerations, it is evident that girls face many challenges on their educational path. Gender norms that overburden the girl child with disproportionately high levels of domestic work, as well as sexual compliance behaviours, create unnecessary burdens on their education participation goals. Pregnancy, which is a direct result of sex, is widely associated with school withdrawal by girls (Pound et al., 2016). Given that girls often experience these challenges in situations where they are alone and without much support, there is a need to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying gender beliefs and norms that inform their behaviour. This is critical in addressing their knowledge gap as a vital first-line defence mechanism to ward off negative norms that undermine their educational goals. Accordingly, this research responded to this need by investigating the influence of gender norms on the education participation of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County. Given that poor education participation leads to poor educational outcomes, it is hoped that the resultant knowledge from this study will be helpful in informing counselling programs aimed at improving girls' education participation in Homa Bay County.

1.2 Hypothesis

H₀1: Gender norms do not influence the educational participation of girls in secondary schools in Homa Bay County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The Problem Behaviour Theory (Jessor, 2014) provided the theoretical framework for this study. Problem-behaviour theory tries to predict teen behaviour based on protective and risk factors. Protective factors are those that prevent or reduce the likelihood of problematic behaviours occurring, while risk factors are those that instigate deviant behaviours (Jessor et al., 2016). The theory enables the study to explain gender norms in terms of factors that promote the education participation of girls and those that impede it. Guidance and counselling interventions in schools are provided on the assumption that they enhance the capacity of the girls to practice acceptable norms that enhance their educational participation.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

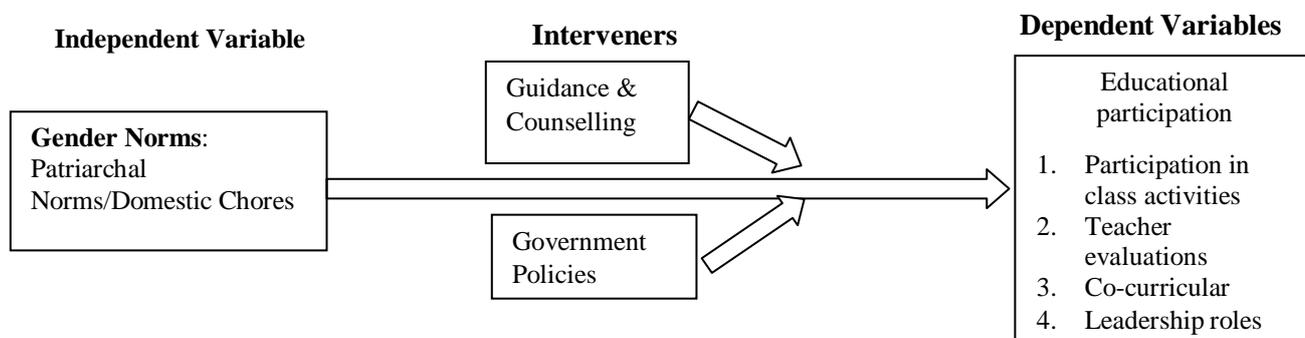


Figure 1
Conceptual Framework



2.3 Literature Review

Being female and a student is associated with many challenges. There are many factors that combine to disadvantage women's education participation (Aseta et al., 2016; Balamoune-Lutz & McGillivray, 2015). Gender norms that keep girls out of school have been identified and discussed in various studies. Leung, Shek, and Shek (2019) point out cultural practices that encourage early marriages, child slavery, child trafficking, prostitution, poverty, and multiple household duties for girls as some of the contributing factors. Equally, there are situations where girls are seen as a source of wealth that can be easily earned through dowry payments and cheap labour on the farm for agricultural produce (Unterhalter et al., 2017; Muyaka, 2018).

Holm (2010) longitudinal study of 30 years that analysed schoolgirl gender interactions is helpful in gaining the enduring power of gender norms on behaviour attitudes in a given society. The study examined children's views on gender power, classroom behaviour, future employment, and family values. The statistics reveal that students evaluate classroom behaviour as gendered. Despite increasing classroom engagement, female gender status did not alter, according to the study. As Holm said, men were still superior to women. In this study, girls organized the classroom, were calm, helped others, and prioritized family and future stability. Holm also highlighted that girls' school status dropped relative to boys. Interestingly, ladies' accomplishments were rated less even when they excelled boys in school. Holm observed that girls are judged by their gender and may never reach boys' social status.

Gender norms begin to exert their influence much earlier in life. For this reason, Ninsiima et al. (2018) reported in their study that interventions must equally begin early at the family level. In another study carried out in Eldoret Municipality, Barasa (2014) found that girls were underrepresented in physics enrolment of the Kenya Certificate Secondary Education by a ratio of 1:2. This underrepresentation reflected norms that tended to suggest that tough things are not for girls; they are better left for boys. Despite girls' reservations, the study indicated their early socialization shaped their beliefs and attitudes towards physics. The age factor revealed that younger girls (14–16) had better attitudes towards physics than older girls (17–19), thus suggesting that younger girls may be innocent of social norms that discourage girls from studying hard sciences while older girls confirm compliance with social norms that view sciences as a man's domain. This view is supported by Aziz, Quraishi, and Kazi (2018), who, in their study in Ghana, affirmed the gender factor in the choice of study subjects.

Gender norms exert themselves in all aspects of girls' lives, including the educational world (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2013; Bicchieri, 2016; Kessels et al., 2014). In that respect, some norms may lead girls to premature pregnancy (Gatwiri, 2019). Pregnancy has been cited by some studies as a common factor that explains school withdrawal by adolescent girls (Abuya et al., 2014; Aikman & Unterhalter, 2013). Again, in scenarios where these girls return to school, their social circumstances crowd up their education focus, leading to poor grades (Chingtham & Guite, 2017). In the end, such young mothers end up as housemaids in unstable employment with poor returns. Some studies suggest that girls who drop out of school early do not usually confer on their kids a life of economic security and dignity (Siu-ming et al., 2019). Instead, these young mothers pass on to their kids a cycle of poverty. If no interventions are made to limit or eradicate these unfavourable situations, a bright future is denied to them, with serious socio-economic consequences.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a concurrent transformative research design. This design was primarily quantitative with a qualitative component to achieve its research objectives. The study site was Homa Bay County in Western Kenya, due to its higher rates of teenage pregnancy. The target population consisted of approximately 60,000 secondary school girls in Homa Bay County. The sample population included 21,135 girls from three sub-counties with the highest teenage pregnancy incidences. Proportionate stratified sampling was used to select schools for data collection. Data was collected using instruments such as questionnaires for students and interviews with school principals, guidance and counselling teachers, and sub-county education directors. The questionnaires covered demographics, education participation, and gender norms, while interviews provided evaluative data on the same topic. Validity and reliability were ensured for research instruments. Ethical approvals and licenses were obtained for data collection.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Demographic Distribution by Age

The ages of the respondents were some of the important demographics of interest in this study. Age is important to evaluate the relevance of the measurement being made about the respondents (Connely, 2013). Age-appropriate



norms govern sensitive issues of sexual attitudes. Accordingly, the respondents were asked in the questionnaire to indicate their age based on their last birthday. The results are presented in Figure 2.

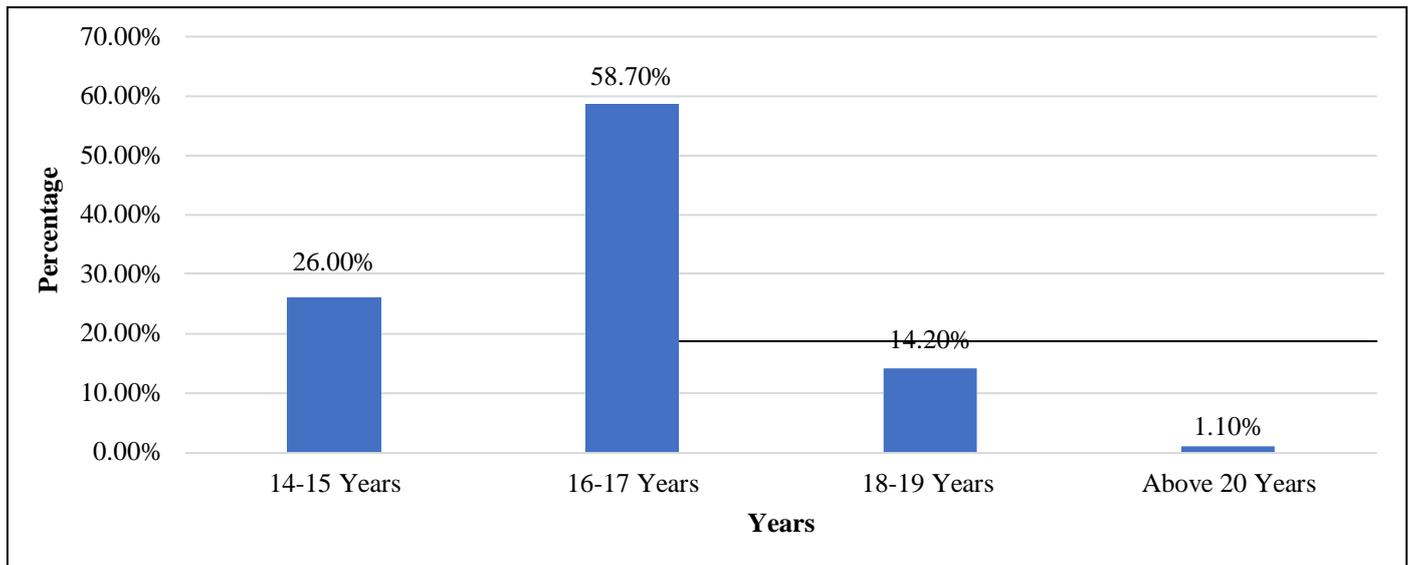


Figure 2

Age Demographics

4.2 Variables of the Study

The study had two variables, namely: gender norms (independent) and education participation (outcome variable).

4.2.1 Gender Norms Variable

The findings in table 1 provide insight into prevailing attitudes and beliefs concerning gender, relationships, and sexual behaviour.

Table 1

Gender Norms Factors

	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
G1: To get virgin girls nowadays, it is impossible	34.6	65.4
G2: Girls need boys more than boys need them	68.9	21.1
G3: You do not talk about sex; you just do it	57	43
G4: These days women say that they need more than one sexual partner to be happy	56.8	43.2
G5: Whether to have sex or not, it is up to the man to decide.	79.7	20.3
G6: Only a woman who has given birth is a real woman	67.6	32.4
G7: You do not argue with your man about sex, you just give in	86.3	13.7
G8: It is bad manners for a girl to reject sex from a man	72.7	27.3
G9: It is not right to involve boys in household work such as cooking, etc.	70.8	29.2
G 10: I do not mind engaging in household duties such as fetching firewood	88.9	10.1
G 11: Even in modern times, a woman's role is to take care of her home and family	92.3	7.7
G 12: It is a girl's mistake if she becomes pregnant	75.1	24.9
G 13: It is bad manners for a woman to ask her man to use a condom	65	35
G 14: If you do not give in to men, you might lack someone to marry you	67	33
G 15: You do not argue with your man about sex, you just give	52	48

Firstly, it's worth noting that a significant portion of respondents (65.4%) disagree with the idea that finding virgin girls is impossible in today's context, challenging the stereotype that virginity is rare or unattainable.

However, a majority (68.9%) believe that girls depend on boys more than the reverse, reflecting traditional gender roles where women are often seen as more dependent. When it comes to communication about sex,



approximately 57% agree that it's better not to talk about sex but to simply engage in it, possibly indicating discomfort or reluctance to openly discuss sexual matters.

Similarly, a significant portion (56.8%) believe that women claim to need more than one sexual partner to be happy, suggesting persistent stereotypes about women's sexual desires. Concerningly, a large majority (79.7%) agrees that the decision to have sex is primarily up to the man, disregarding the crucial concept of mutual consent.

There's also a belief among a significant proportion (67.6%) that a woman is only considered a "real" woman if she has given birth, which excludes childless women from this definition.

Moreover, a significant majority agrees with statements (G7, G8, G13, and G15) that suggest women should be submissive and compliant in sexual relationships, which can perpetuate unhealthy power dynamics.

While a majority (70.8%) disagrees with the idea that boys shouldn't be involved in household work, there is still a substantial minority (29.2%) that holds traditional views about gender roles.

Interestingly, a high percentage (88.9%) is willing to engage in household duties like fetching firewood, showing openness to sharing responsibilities.

There's also a strong belief (92.3%) in traditional gender roles where women are expected to take care of the home and family, which may clash with modern ideals of gender equality.

In terms of pregnancy, a significant portion (75.1%) places blame on the girl if she becomes pregnant, potentially contributing to stigmatizing attitudes towards teenage pregnancy.

Lastly, a notable proportion (67%) agrees that not conforming to men's desires might affect a woman's ability to find a marriage partner, suggesting a fear of social consequences for women who assert their boundaries. The findings above reveal a mix of traditional and potentially harmful beliefs regarding gender roles, relationships, and sexual behaviour. Many of these attitudes perpetuate unequal power dynamics and disregard the importance of consent and communication in relationships. Promoting gender equality, consent education, and respectful relationships are crucial to addressing these outdated and harmful beliefs.

4.2.2 Education Participation Variable

The findings presented in Table 2 below provide a comprehensive look into the attitudes and behaviours of students in an educational setting.

Table 2

Dependent Variable Questionnaire Results

	Educational participate	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
E1	I always attend all my lessons when I am in school	72.5	27.5
E2	I enjoy group work during learning sessions	82.3	17.7
E3	I submit regularly my homework for marking	67.1	32.9
E4	I often obtain good grades on class tests	43.4	56.6
E5	I never answer questions in class	30.4	69.6
E6	I do corrections where I fail to get it right	61.5	39.5
E7	My Class Teacher Report Card evaluations are generally positive	52.0	48.0
E8	I have always been promoted to the next class	95.4	4.6
E9	I am an active member in at least one school club (e.g., YCS, CU, Debating, History Club, etc.)	79.1	20.9
E10	I am also active in at least one school sport/game (e.g., soccer, long jump, High Jump, netball, etc.)	52.3	47.7
E11	I have represented my school/class/dormitory in some sport activity/game	48	52
E12	I have taken active roles in cheering my school/dorm/class team when they compete	55.2	44.8
E13	I have been given some temporary responsibility by prefects/teachers in cleaning work and others	89.7	10.3
E14	I have held (or still hold) leadership roles in my class/dormitory/games/club	35.8	64.2
E15	I do not mind serving my fellow students in any capacity or office that may be given to me.	49.0	51.0

Firstly, a significant majority of students (72.5%) claim to consistently attend all their lessons when in school, indicating a commitment to their education. Similarly, 67.1% state that they regularly submit their homework for grading, reflecting a strong work ethic. Regarding classroom dynamics, an overwhelming 82.3% of students enjoy group



work during learning sessions, suggesting a preference for collaborative learning experiences. Furthermore, 61.5% express a willingness to make corrections when they make mistakes, indicating a dedication to self-improvement.

However, when it comes to academic performance, only 43.4% of students believe they often obtain good grades on class tests, suggesting that a significant portion of students may encounter challenges in achieving high academic marks. In terms of class participation, approximately 30.4% of students admit to never answering questions in class, but the majority appear willing to engage in classroom discussions and activities.

The data also highlights strong participation in extracurricular activities, with 79.1% of students actively involved in at least one school club and 52.3% participating in school sports or games. This indicates a vibrant extracurricular life among students. Moreover, many students (89.7%) have been entrusted with temporary responsibilities, such as cleaning, by prefects or teachers, showcasing a sense of responsibility within the school community. However, fewer students (35.8%) have held or currently hold leadership roles within various school aspects.

Lastly, approximately half of the students (49.0%) express a willingness to serve their fellow students in any capacity or office, reflecting a service-oriented attitude. In a nutshell, the findings suggest that students generally value their education, actively engage in extracurricular activities, and are open to participation and responsibilities within the school community. However, there are varying levels of academic performance and leadership involvement among students.

4.3 Diagnostics and Analysis

4.3.1 Histogram Plot for Gender Norms

The histogram diagnostic between education participation and gender norms variable is presented in Figure 3.

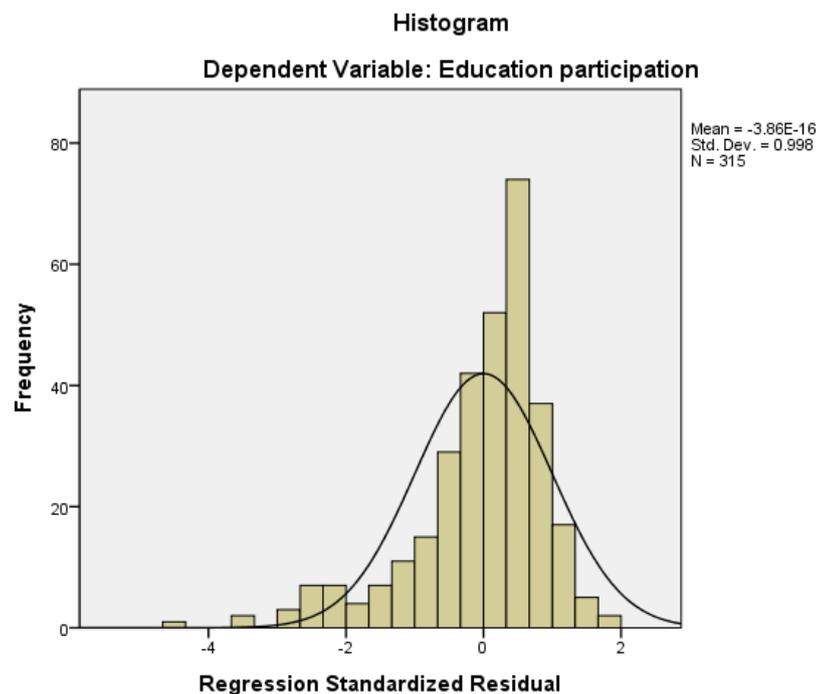


Figure 3

Histogram for Dependent Variable

Results in Figure 3 show that the plot was exactly symmetrical and bell-shaped, with a few outliers on the left side of the centre. Meaning, the distribution of the dataset was normal, and so, gender norms are linearly related to education participation.

4.3.2 Scatterplots

Scatterplots of education participation against gender norms (standardized residual) were plotted to determine linearity. The results are presented in Figure 4.



Scatter Plot of Education participation vs Gender Norms

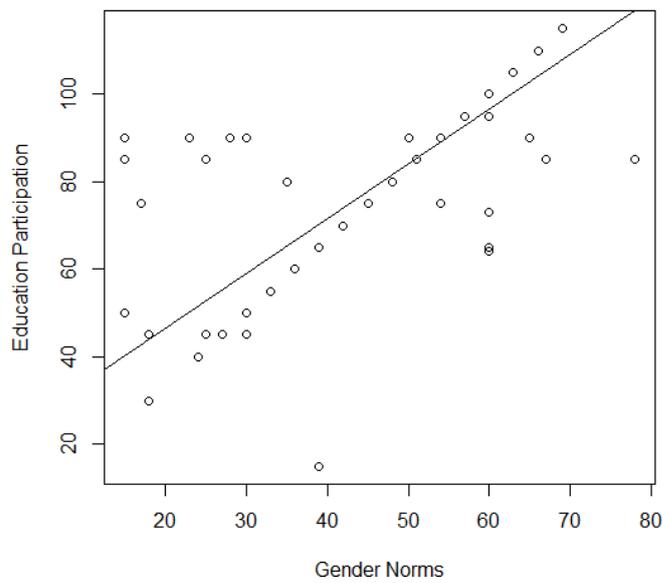


Figure 4
Correlation Gender Norms and Education

The results in Figure 4 showed a linear tendency because most of the points are concentrated along a straight line. Clearly, it gave a strong direction to the fact that education participation (outcome variable) and gender norms (predictor variable) linearly relate.

4.3.3 Normal Q-Q Plot

The plot shows the distribution of the data against the expected normal distribution. The results are presented in Figure 5.

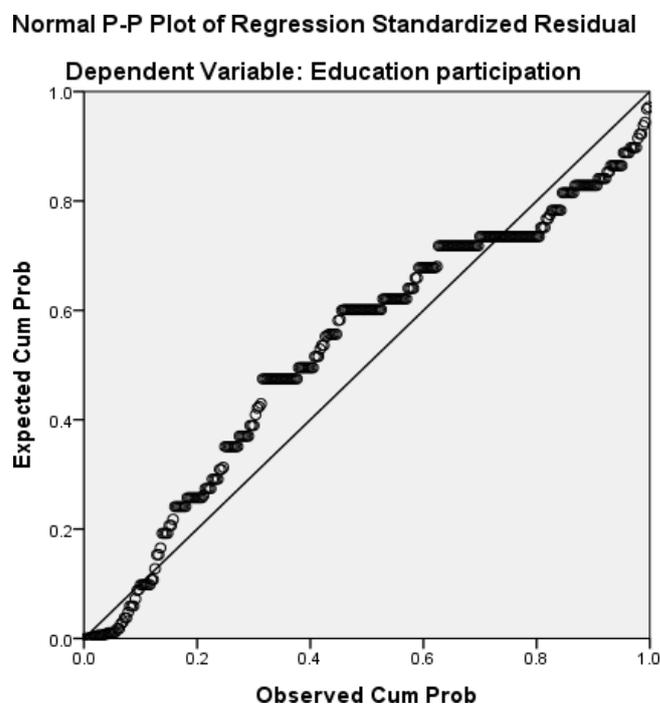


Figure 5
Normal P-P Plot



As shown in Figure 4, most of the points are falling or forming a pattern along a straight line in the Q-Q plot, an indication that these numbers truly did come from a uniform distribution. This means that education participation and gender norms are linearly related.

4.4 Regression Analysis

4.4.1 R-Squared and Adjusted R-Squared

R-squared, also called the coefficient of determination, or the coefficient of determinations for linear regressions, was run to evaluate the scatter of the data points around the fitted regression line. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Model Summary

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.808 ^a	.653	.0621	15.628	.005	1.678	1	313	.004
a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender norms									
b. Dependent Variable: Education Participation									

As shown in Table 7, R-squared being equal to 0.653, or 65.3%, means that the gender norms predictor variable explains about 65.3% of the variation in the girls' education participation.

4.4.2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The sums of squares SS-Regression and SS-Residuals are used to form two mean squares, one for regression and the other for residuals. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

ANOVA Sum of Squares and Mean Square

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	409.724	1	409.724	57.678	.004 ^b
	Residual	76447.787	313	244.242		
	Total	76857.511	314			
a. Dependent Variable: Education Participation						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Gender norms						

The ANOVA results in Table 4 indicate that the mean square regression is greater than the mean square residuals, meaning the null hypothesis that stated that gender norms have no effect on girls' education participation is rejected at $p\text{-value} = 0.004 < 0.05$, the significance level. This means the difference between mean square regression and mean square residuals is statistically significant.

4.4.3 F – Statistics

The F-test of overall significance was run to establish whether gender norms linearly relate to education participation. The results from the ANOVA were $F(1, 314) = 57.678, p < 0.05$. This provides evidence that education participation is linearly related to gender norms.

The assessment of the existence of a linear relationship between education participation (the response variable) and gender norms (the predictor variable) through all the model diagnostic tests revealed that these two variables relate linearly. The p-value obtained from the simple regression analysis between the education participation response variable and the gender norms predictor variable was compared to a significance level of 0.05. The results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5***ANOVA and Model Coefficients*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	81.985	2.425				
	Gender norms	.653	.041	.073	33.809	.000	77.214 .028 86.756 .134

a. Dependent Variable: Education Participation

The results show that gender norms related to sexuality are linearly associated with educational participation. This relationship is statistically significant at $p\text{-value} = 0.004, < 0.05$, the significant level set for assessing the null hypothesis. In this case, the null hypothesis, H_0 : Gender norms have no effect on education participation, is declined. The null hypothesis that 'Gender Norms Have an Influence on the Education Participation of Secondary School Girls in Homa Bay County is validated'. This simple regression model would be represented in the equation as Education Participation = 81.985 + 0.653 (Gender Norms).

4.5 Discussions

The study findings revealed that most secondary school girls in Homa Bay County were inclined towards submissive behaviour toward men and over-involvement in domestic chores. The study data further supported the view that this trend was detrimental to the girls' educational participation. Submissiveness to men appeared to be based on the belief that it was typical of a woman to behave that way. On the other hand, near-exclusive involvement in domestic chores was rationalized on the grounds that it was a woman's domain. These findings were contrary to the null hypothesis, which stated that 'gender norms have no influence on the education participation of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County'. The data analysis revealed that the relationship between the predictor variable (gender norms) and the outcome variable (education participation) was statistically significant ($t = 1.295, p < .001$). Nevertheless, the findings agreed with other studies reviewed in the introduction literature section (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2013; Barasa, 2014; Bicchieri, 2016). The study's findings can further be explained in terms of peer pressure influences, prevailing social norms, and other factors in family backgrounds that instigate and make girls prone to submissive behaviours and disproportionate involvement in domestic chores to the disadvantage of their educational participation.

A recap of a few responses in Table 4 backs up the above claim. In response to the statement 'whether to have sex or not, it is up to the man to decide', a majority of 79.7% of the girls agreed with the statement and only 20.3% disagreed. By and large, the majority deemed it acceptable to go along with a man's proposal for sex. The variation in opinion may be explained in terms of family background, guidance and counselling interventions, and religious and cultural beliefs, as Aseta et al. (2016) stated in their study. Similarly, on the question of 'Only a woman who has given birth is a real woman', a majority of 65% agreed with the statement, while a sizable minority of 35% disagreed. These responses present a persistent patriarchal influence that defines a woman in terms of fertility (Lutta, 2015). This appears to lend support to a number of teachers' and principals' claims, especially in mixed schools, that in some cases, up to 50% of the girls get pregnant by the time they complete the fourth form in a given class.

On the statement that '*changing diapers, giving a bath, and feeding kids is a woman's job*', a majority of 73.9% agreed with the statement, while a sizeable minority of 26.1% disagreed. Despite this being a modern age, girls appear to be still under traditional influences that affirm male superiority as opposed to the equal sharing of domestic tasks. This persistent inequality agrees with Khaemba (2015) and Lutta (2015). The unsettling position is that premature motherhood has been associated with poor educational outcomes, as already cited in the literature review (Abuya, Onsomu, & Moore, 2014; Mwenje, 2015). Nevertheless, the girls appear to place fecundity above their educational development. This trend needs to be addressed by school authorities to help girls value their education and the likely economic liberation that it promises.

The study further supported the view that women have been socialized to defer decision-making to men, even in issues in which they have a big stake. This tendency agrees with Aldawid (2010) and Ngore (2012), who, in their separate studies, confirmed women's dependence on men's decisions. This implies that girls may struggle to resist sexual overtures from men because of prior cultural programming that cedes decision-making to men. No wonder that in Table 4, a majority of 86.5% of girls believed that '*you do not dispute with your man about sex; you just give in*'. The disagreeing party of 27.7% appeared to recognize the principle of shared responsibility for an act that has risks for both of them. It is also evidenced that many girls were ignorant of the Children's Act (2001), which spells out shared



responsibility between a child's mother and a child's father. These observations justify the advocacy of feminist studies in education to improve understanding of women's gendered selves as well as gendered experiences of schooling. In the absence of good support, the girl child remains an easy target for early marriage and pre-mature pregnancy, which compromises her educational participation interests (Ninsiima et al., 2015).

Equally, on the statement that 'It is a woman's responsibility to avoid getting pregnant', 64.8% agreed with the statement, apparently recognizing personal responsibility. Nevertheless, a respectable minority of 35.2% disagreed with the statement, hinting at the possibility of sharing the blame with the male actor in the pregnancy and, at the same time, affirming shared responsibility for the sexual outcomes. Given that it takes two to make a child, it is confounding that the majority of the girls (64.8%) still preferred to assume sole responsibility for the pregnancy. This demonstrates the enduring influence of patriarchal norms that apportion blame to the woman while affirming a hedonistic lifestyle devoid of responsibility for the man. The willingness of girls to assume sole responsibility for a pregnancy confirmed compliance with existing patriarchal norms that favour men over women, as outlined in Khaemba's (2015) study.

It is the view of this paper that girls stand to benefit more sustainably through the path of education as opposed to the path of blind compliance with certain gender norms that are agreeable to men but are harmful in the long run to girls' educational development. MacNaughton and Koutsoumpas (2017) correctly argued that girls' education must go beyond getting them into school. It is paramount that girls' education encompasses the attainment of good grades and access to competitive courses that guarantee good economic outcomes. It is the study's view that school authorities should be empowered and encouraged to promote gender-sensitive education policies by protecting girls from harmful gender norms that lead to poor educational outcomes and premature school withdrawals (Mlyakado & Timothy, 2014; Muyaka, 2018). Thus, schools should consider these findings relevant in addressing the issues of gender norms that disadvantage girl-child education participation. In the context of problem behaviour theory, patriarchal norms that disadvantage girls' education and development can be characterized as risk factors that instigate problem behaviour in the community. School guidance and counselling services should boost protective elements and speak out against risk factors.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of gender norms on the educational participation of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County. The study found that the gender norms of most secondary school girls in Homa Bay County are disposed to unquestioning submissiveness to men and over-involvement in domestic chores. The study observed that this orientation is enforced by patriarchal norms that identify being female with unquestioning submissiveness (sexually as well) to men and carrying out a variety of domestic chores, including caring for siblings and cooking. The study further noted that these findings have a negative bearing on the educational participation of secondary school girls in Homa Bay County. Accordingly, the study recommends that school authorities leverage parental/guardian meetings to raise awareness about the need to affirm gender equality at the family level and to focus girls on career development as opposed to counting on men to provide for them. Future interventions to improve the education experience of these girls will benefit from these findings.

5.2 Limitations and Recommendations

Limited prior studies on the research topic limited the study in terms of formulating research questions that could target unanswered questions. Prior studies on the research could have helped the study frame the research questions, perhaps differently, to fill some of the gaps that had been pointed out. On that account, the study recommends that more related research be carried out in other counties.

Another limitation can be found in the data collection methods. Data from secondary school girls was collected using questionnaires that limited responses to either agreeing with the statement or disagreeing. This method denied the study additional data that could be harvested through interview schedules and probing of given statements.

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