

Gender Factors in Implementation of Life Skills Education in Secondary Schools in Nairobi, Kenya

Agnes Njoki Ndirangu, (MA)

Department of Gender and Development Studies
Kenyatta University, P.O Box 43844-00100, Nairobi, Kenya.
Tel: +254 (0) 721719202
Email: agnesnjoki24@gmail.com

Dr. Grace Wamue – Ngare, (PhD)

Department of Gender and Development Studies
Kenyatta University, P.O Box 43844-00100, Nairobi, Kenya.
Tel: +254 (0) 722961355
Email: gwamuengare@yahoo.com

Dr. Geoffery Wango, (PhD)

Department of Psychology
University of Nairobi, P.O BOX 30197-00100
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254 (0) 705105982.
Email: gwango200@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study explored the gender factors facing implementation of Life Skills Education in Secondary Schools in Nairobi East District, Nairobi County, Kenya. Data was analysed in the light of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory integrated with Pearson's (2002) Theory on gender relations. The study employed a descriptive research design whose sample comprised of PDE office. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected using a structured questionnaire, observation, interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Findings indicate that there are gender limitations in selecting life skills' teachers in schools and those life skills was mainly taught by female teachers. Teachers indicated that they were uncomfortable teaching sensitive topics to students of the opposite sex and that the syllabus was not fully covered. The majority of female students did not like sharing their problems with boys and preferred girls. This suggests gender specific barriers in the teaching of life skills in schools. In addition, findings revealed that principals of schools did not facilitate teachers' attendance of seminars and workshops to enhance their skills. The study recommends gender-responsive teaching of life skills.

Keywords: Gender, Challenges, Implementation, Life skills, Education, Adolescents, Nairobi, Kenya

1.0 Introduction

Boys and girls go through stages of dynamic physiological, emotional, and social changes as they transit from childhood to adulthood. The stages are characterized by new feelings, emotions excitement and a general desire to explore and make choices and decisions. As adolescents in secondary schools they period is characterized by psychosocial and physical development (Gitome, 1989). Adolescence has been described as one of the most challenging stages to students, teachers and parents (Brigham, 1989). The stage begins at approximately 10 - 13 years and either ends at 18 or 22 on average. In this period, majority undergo biological and cognitive development, which is mostly accompanied by behaviour change (Wasike et al., 2009). This critical period of human development, is challenging and schools need to equip learners of both gender with coping skills. In traditional African society adolescence period was relatively short and assumed a smooth process through rites of passage (Katola, 1996). The family, clan and the entire community was responsible for the holistic growth and development of a child. Consequently, it was the task of all members of the help children transit to responsible adults. Life skills were therefore given to children at all stages of growth. These ranged from simplistic skills to more complicated emotional and behavioural tasks that called for services of more experienced persons (Tumuti, 2001; Wango and Mungai, 2007).

Such education was available and compulsory to all it was also interwoven within an informal setup (Mute, 2000). Senior members of the community who were more experienced doubled as teachers, diviners, prophets, prophetesses and consultants respectively, especially in matters of custom, history and social norms. Moreover, child rearing in traditional communities was a collective responsibility (Tumuti, 2001). Gender roles were clearly -defined and all members of the community adhered. Role performance affected the status of every member of the society (Wamue, 1999).

Life Skills Education was an automatic requirement of every individual be they; boys or girls. The guidance was on how to grow up, what to be, what to do, what to know and how to consolidate gender-specific respective virtues. Parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts among other relatives orientated boys and girls on gender roles. Each specific gender learnt the use of appropriate language and respect for the elderly. For instance, grandfathers, fathers, uncles and other elderly male siblings instructed boys on warfare, hunting skills, and other “manly” skills. On the other hand, female relatives among them grandmothers, mothers, aunts and elderly female siblings gave specific instructions on domestic chores such controlling fire, , excessive bleeding, in additional to child rearing skills. At initiation, both boys and girls were suitably taught social obligations, first aid, self-defence, stopping excessive bleeding, choking detection of poisonous and anti-poisonous plants, and good moral values, . Virtues such as courage, honesty, effective skills and making independent choices were specifically given to both girls and boys. Of importance was the point that the youth were obliged to choose marriage partners under the guidance of societal norms (Kenyatta, 1938).

Equipped with skills, boys and girls are not only able to make rational decisions but also to demonstrate desirable gender specific attitudes, among them high self-esteem, positive self-expectance and self-awareness. By so doing, each gender realizes that good discipline serves as a pillar of success not only in academics but also in life. Consequently, effective implementation of life skills’ education enhances the wellbeing of a society and promotes a positive outlook and healthy behaviour to both boys and girls (KIE 2008a).

1.1 Gender Challenges Facing Life Skills

Teaching life skills in Kenya secondary schools has received gender related challenges. Due to

human sexual limitations, female and male teachers, find it a big challenge to address gender specific life skills' content meant for either boys or girls. Socialising agents have imposed gender-specific attitudes to men and women, boys and girls, of expected behaviour. Such attitudes dictate expectation of either, teacher or student, a fact that militates against content delivery of life skills. It literally determines boys' response to the female teachers and vice versa. The gender limitation not only impacts on the delivery of the intended life skills education but also undermines the overall purpose of the programme. The phenomenon is worsened by the stereotype mentality held by each gender be they students or teachers on the life skills' content and which gender should present it. . The study carried out by the above scholars examined gender-specific factors that continue to militate against full implementation of life skills education in secondary schools in Kenya.

1.3 History of Life Skills Education

The advancement of life skills education in schools and among young people has been proposed as an intervention strategy to serve several purposes (Castle, 1966; Nelson-Jones, 1972, 1995; Wango & Mungai, 2007; Wango, In Press): in enabling the discovery of personal capacities for social warmth; aptitude to enjoy and work with other people; and the competence to become effective members of the community. Castle (1966) argues that teaching of life skills education to young people leads to a prevention of maladjustment and enhances the development of human potential. Nelson-Jones (1972) states that life skills education facilitates effective living in the present, and subsequently, the development of understanding concepts and skills that will result in responsible living in the future.

One of the national goals of education in Kenya is to address the social needs of learners. The Kenyan education system is meant to prepare learners to changes in the students' relationships necessary for individual development. This national goal is meant to help learners, especially in the rapid changes brought by modernization, urbanization, globalization and industrialization.

Wanjama et al., (2006) presents life skills as psychological competencies or abilities that help learners deal effectively with the day-to-day individual demands of the society. Life skills, she as this scholar further asserts empower individuals to think and behave constructively when dealing with issues affecting them as individuals and when they deal with issues of others in the school of larger society.

Tuko Pamoja (2006) life skills when rightly taught in secondary schools help learners to succeed and experience fulfilled lives in their individual families and the society in general. These skills form pillars or foundations in one's life to equip students for societal changes.

In traditional African communities, Kinoti (1983) observes that boys and girls learnt that conformity to the community involved controlling natural impulse. Wamue (1999) further observes that a strict code of conduct in relationships between genders was well laid-out and roles clearly defined. This was backed up by sanctions. While appraising traditional African methods addressing gender-related challenges, Kinoti notes that integrating these with modern skills, would enable a society to have morally guided young people.

In contemporary society, studies indicate that there is a general lack of skills and values particularly among adolescents. Teenagers have tended to miss on principles, guidelines and models of conduct. There are no values personified in the lives of specific individuals who would inspire them to adopt a committed attitude to life (Castillo, 1986:45; KIE, 2008a). However, Ndirangu (2000:40:45) points out that contemporary youth are undergoing stressful experiences emanating from the pace of modern life, in particular its ruthless competition and unrealistic notions of success. Ndirangu argues that home-related problems, financial worries due to poverty, conflicting signals from adult world, peer pressure, rapid physiological changes, quest for identity, traumatizing experiences from

childhood, worries about career and school performances, the impact of televised violence, and pornographic magazines all have a negative effect on the adolescents. Wango (In Press) highlights that the current world requires a modern outlook that may inadvertently place life skills before counselling. Ndirangu too further observes that drug abuse, premarital sex, homosexuality and school dropouts are common problems among the youth. This is culminated by student strikes that are rampant in schools because adolescents are seeking attention and heroism, which they lack at home either because their parents are too busy to attend to them, or are ignorant about best parenting practices. Ndirangu asserts that first, the problem escalates when social support givers fail to understand the adolescents and second, when sexual perversion is common among disturbed adolescent, which often becomes a pathway to satanic cults and substance abuse.

Observably, the contemporary youth are exposed to many challenges as they grow, which push them to engage in risky behaviour making them vulnerable to many problems such as HIV and AIDS. It is, therefore, paramount that youths are equipped with knowledge and skills to help them cope with these emerging challenges.

Life skills are abilities that enable an individual to deal with day-to-day life challenges. Wanjama (2006) calls them 'shock absorbers' whose focus is the development of an individual in totality. In total, they help individuals discover themselves, explore their emotions, learn to cope with others and hence build healthy relationships.

Life skills are abilities that enable an individual to deal with the day-to-day challenges. It is a process that takes place through one's lifetime. Today, there are many challenges in Kenya and in the world (Wango, in Press) ranging from issues such as drugs, substance and alcohol abuse, broken relationships, wars, terrorism, moral decay, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), the HIV and AIDS pandemic, among others. People are so busy despite being aware of these challenges hence making little effort to challenge or change for the better (Wanjama et al., 2006). Skills are crucial for a person and the student at this stage of adolescence in the contemporary world and will form a critical aspect of counselling psychology even in the developing communities.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Theories such as Erikson's (1965) psychosocial theory, Pavlov's associative learning theory in Rescorla (1980), Mwiti (1994) cosmos-centric pastoral psychotherapy model, Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977) and Pearson's (2002). Theoretical framework on gender relations informs studies on challenges on human sexuality in society. Aspects of the models suggested in these sources will be proposed for integration with the teaching of life skills education which imparts life skills in Kenyan secondary schools.

To explain the variables under intervention, the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) was used. The theory promotes opportunity for processing life experience structuring experiences and actively going experiences. Bandura also states that life skills approach is built around creating opportunities for the youth to acquire skills such as media literacy or critical thinking that enables them to avoid manipulation by outside influences.

The life skills approach aim at assisting young people to regain control over their behaviour while taking informed decisions that can lead to positive values. Life skills approach is an interactive educational methodology that focuses on boys and girls acquiring gender specific skills, as among them social like communication and assertiveness, cognitive and decision-making, critical thinking and negotiation, coping emotionally, stress management and self-awareness.

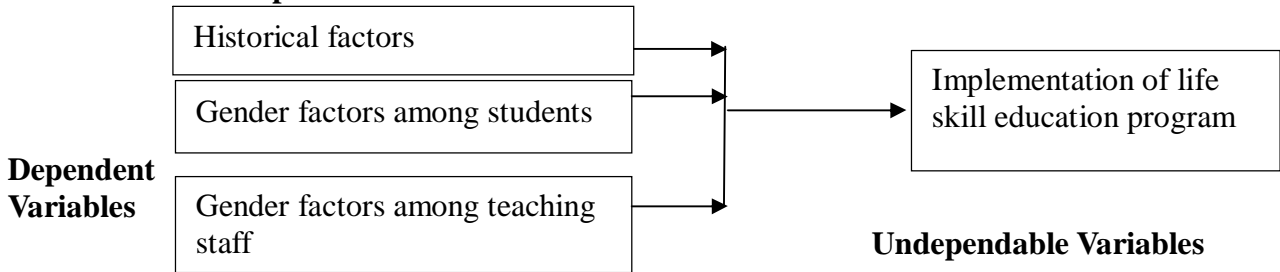
The curriculum based on this theory stresses experiential learning and opportunity to practise new skills acquired during situations, programme activities, actively involving youngsters through work in group peer facilitation, role playing, technique games, presentations and other interactive events.

Besides actual benefits of newly acquired life skills, the curriculum also results in improved student-teacher relations, better academic performance, higher school attendance and fewer behavioural problems in the classroom.

Bandura’s theory postulates that people are capable of learning vicariously by observing others and by initiating positive change or vice versa. Key aspects include observing, retaining, motivation and initiation. Learning is a process and practices such as peer counselling should be enhanced. The role of cognitions and feelings in influencing behaviour especially the faulty thought patterns is recognized in the theory. The study was also pegged on Pearson’s theoretical framework on gender relations which states that society views all activities that are carried out to be based on social roles and interactions of men and women. The Pearson’s gender relations framework is consistent with the UNICEF (2002) perspective, which identifies social differences between men and women, boys and girls that they are learned, are changeable over time and have wide variation between cultures.

In relation to this study, Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory shows that students are socialized differently. The role of life skills studies is to put both girls and boys into the proper perspective according to acceptable norms and value in the society. Life skills studies are tools to ensure that non-academic issues can be addressed. Life skills education as an event that can be conceptualized (figure 2.1. below) as central to performance, gender acceptance and social learning. If taught well to students, it can minimize gender disparities in education; thereby enhance students to attain higher performance not only in academics but also in life. It is in turn anticipated that this would improve people’s social and economic life thereby influencing informed professionalism. When students are taught the importance of accepting gender diversities, they accept variations in masculinities and femininities, and hence practise responsible living. By so doing, they are able to influence performance as well as promote integrated social life. Ultimately, a socially integrated person is not only healthy but also spiritually and socially fit to take part in socio-economic development. This can be illustrated in a diagrammatic flow as below.

1.5 Life skills conceptual framework



2.0 Methodological Approach

2.1 Research Design

The study used a descriptive research design to obtain information concerning the gender challenges facing implementation of life skills education in Secondary Schools in Kenya. It was carried out in schools in Nairobi East District, Nairobi County- Kenya. This District was specifically chosen due to it’s a high poor urban population as compared to others in the Metropolis. Besides , most of the students come from informal settlements and are day – scholars, thus quite vulnerable to social pressures; a reason that justifies imparting them with life skills The study targeted day and boarding secondary schools, all with a total of student population of 12,800 students. The District has three divisions, namely; Makadara, Embakasi and Njiru. The list of target schools was obtained from the Provincial District Education’s Office. These included: Buruburu Girls, Embakasi Girls, Muhuri Muchiri Boys, Dandora Mixed, Komarock School, St. Georges Athi Mixed, Uhuru Boys, Highway

Boys and Ruai Girls secondary school. The sampled schools had a student population of 2,560 and are classified in the table 1 below:

Table 1: List of Schools

District	Boys boarding	Girls boarding	Mixed Day and Boarding	Girls Day	Boys Day
Makadara	-	Buruburu Girls	Dandora sec.	-	Uhuru Boys
Njiru	Muhuri Muchiri	-	Komarock Schools	Ruai Girls	-
Embakasi	-	Embakasi Girls	St .Georges Athi Sec.	-	Highway Sec.

Purposive and maximum variation sampling method was employed to select respondents, among them, 5 (3 males and 2 females) school principals from 27 schools and 20 life skills education teachers. Individual in-depth interviews were used to extract views on how life skills education prepared students to overcome social pressures. To select teachers, purposive sampling was used to obtain a gender balance of 10 males and 10 females out of 180, representing 22.2% of the life skills education teachers in the district.

Stratified sampling was used to select students from the 5 purposively sampled schools. Using questionnaires, students described situations which mostly challenged them both within and without schools a total of 80 questionnaires were administered to 40 male and 40 female students out of a possible 2,560 students, which formed 30.1% of the student population in the selected secondary schools. In addition, officials from the PDEs office were selected through purposive sampling. Three out of 15 officers were interviewed (2 males and 1 female). This sample represents 20% of the total PDEs officials. Table 3.3 represents a summary of the sample size for each category of respondents.

Table 2.2: Sample Size

Category of Respondent	Target Population	Sample Size	Male	Female	%
Principals	27	5	2	3	18.5%
Life Skills education teachers	180	40	20	20	22.2%
Students	2560	80	40	40	3.1%
PDE office	15	3	2	1	20%

2.2 Research Instruments

Data were collected using questionnaires (appendix I and II), interviews (Appendix III), Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), Appendix IV) and Participant Observation. These were subjected to a validity and reliability test. A measuring instrument is considered to be valid only when it measures what it is supposed to measure (Boe, 1983). The research instruments were validated by the researcher's supervisors. Second, the validity was tested through a pilot study carried out in two schools which were not included in the study. This was done in order to find out irrelevant, ambiguous and inadequate items. Unnecessary items were discarded, other significant items added while some were modified for improvement. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) define reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated tests when administered a number of times. Test of reliability is concerned with securing consistent results with repeated measurements on the same person. An instrument is reliable when it provides consistent results. Test retest technique was used. This involved administering the same instrument twice to the same group of subjects with a time lapse between the first and second test. A Pearson's

product moment correlation coefficient formula was used.

$$r = \frac{N\sum xy - \left[\sum x \right] \left[\sum y \right]}{\sqrt{\left[N\sum (x)^2 - \left[\sum x \right]^2 \right] \left[n\sum (y^2) - \left[\sum y \right]^2 \right]}}$$

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), a coefficient of 0.80 or more, implied that there was high data reliability

3.0 Data Collection and Analysis

In order to carry out effective research, several aspects in ethical considerations were made. A research permit was obtained from the National Council of Science and Technology of Kenya for permission to conduct the research. Further approval was obtained from the Provincial Director of Education as well as the principals of the schools. Consent for the study was obtained from all the participants. Participating in the study was voluntary and those who did not consent were to be left out. Information regarding purpose and nature of study was made available to all respondents before their involvement. In addition, respondents were encouraged to ask questions about the study before they gave their consent. The identity of all respondents was reserved, and maintained in strict confidence during the course of the study and in the final report. After data had been collected, they were checked for accuracy, completeness to identify any items wrongly responded to, spelling mistakes and blank spaces. It was then analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The generated data were used to discuss the findings and act in response to the research questions.

3.1 Demographic Data of Respondents

There was equal representation of male and female teachers. Most of them were over 40 years old.

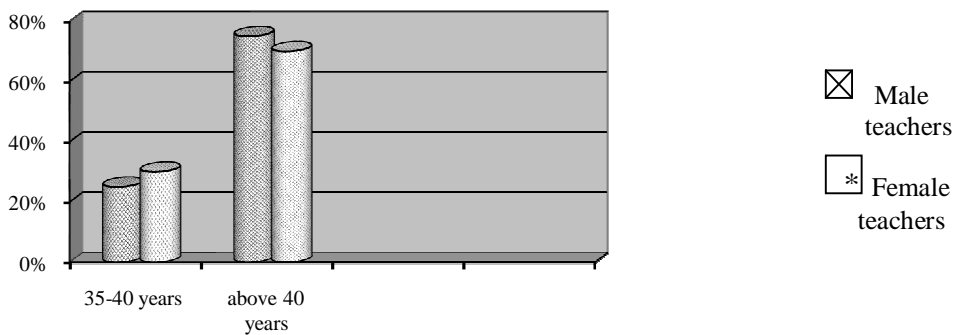


Figure 3.1: Distribution of Teachers by Age

The mature age of the teachers gives them an edge in the fact that they are expectedly experienced in the issues of teaching and life.

The study also sought to find out the teaching experience as shown in Figure [3.2.2](#).

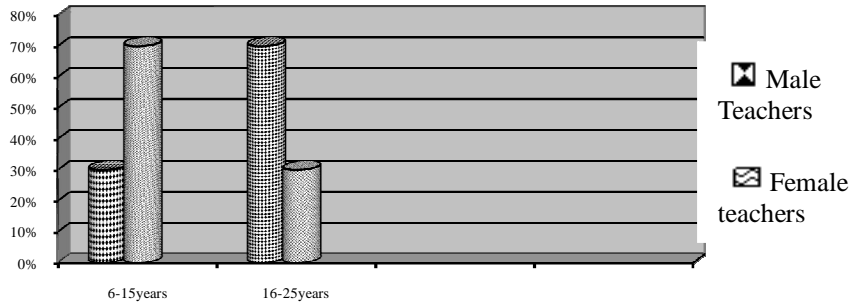


Figure 3.2: Teaching Experience

Majority (70%) of the male teachers had been teaching for more than 16 years while most (70%) female teachers had taught between 6-15 years. The study further sought to establish the classes that the teachers taught. Findings showed that majority (60%) of the male teachers taught Form III while (70%) female teachers taught the lower classes (Forms I and II). This enables them to give basic education in life skills and also guides the young students on what is expected. The male teachers take over from Form Three where they continued with what was started.

The demographic data for students were based on gender, age and respective Forms in which the students were in. Data were collected from an equal number of boys and girls, attributed to the sample taken from the population. An investigation on the distribution of students by age was also sought as represented in

Figure 3.3

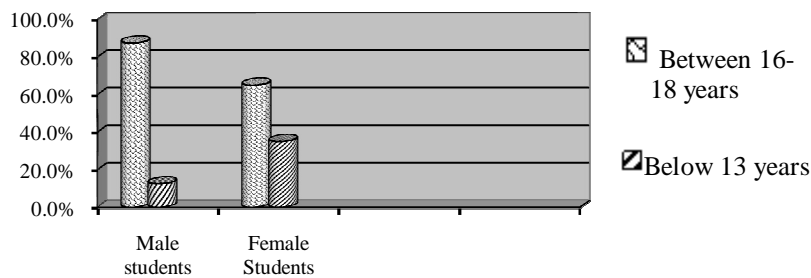


Figure 3.3: Students age by gender

Mrs Mwenda (0.1, 25/10/2011) commented:

Men don't like teaching Form One and Two due to the girls' innocence; they ask many questions that men teachers feel shy to answer i.e., some want to know about their physical body changes, others ask about their body feelings and emotions; so men prefer Form Three and Four, where the girls are mature

Only a few (12.5%) of the male students were aged below 13 years while majority (87.5%) were aged between 16–18 years. Similarly, most (65%) female students were aged between 16 – 18 years while some (35%) were aged below 13 years.

The study also examined the distribution of students by the Form they were in. Findings showed that there were more (57.5%) boys in Form II while the distribution of girls in Form II and III

showed almost near parity at 52.5% and 47.5% respectively. This indicates that boys are normally older than girls in all Forms but their level of thinking is at par, thus; require the same education in life skills.

3.2. Implementation of Life Skills Education in Secondary Schools

The study investigated the implementation of life skills education in secondary schools. Some of the aspects raised included: the commencement of the programme: the existence of a life skills department in schools; number of teachers attached to the concerned department; and factors that necessitated introduction of life skills education. Principals were asked to give an overview on the status of the programme. Majority of the respondents (80%) indicated that it existed in their schools since 2007. This seems to indicate the seriousness the school administrators had towards its implementation. These results concur with those of Botvin (1994, 1997) who observed that the programmes were offered to the students so that they acquire skills that can enable them resist peer and media pressure. Skill learnt in the programme would enhance assertiveness, critical thinking, decision making and problem solving as they help learners boost values like self-confidence, self-esteem, autonomy and self-control, besides avoiding vices like Drug Abuse.

The study further sought to establish factors that necessitated the introduction of life skills education in secondary schools. Majority (60%) of principals indicated that life skills education was introduced by the Ministry of Education as a directive, while others (40%) said it was introduced following the ineffectiveness of the guidance and counselling programme. Wango (In Press) notes that the contemporary world requires a modern outlook that may inadvertently place life skills before counselling.

Mr. Mureithi, (0.1, 2/11/11) reckons that;

Boys don't seek guidance and counselling; they shy off and do not share their problems with teachers especially when such teachers are women. Men also shy off from teaching life skills reckoning that it's a woman job to take care of their children especially daughters. They avoid teaching such topics like "girl's menstruation circle", complaining that the latter ask too many questions during the lesson than they do in biology. Consequently, men feel uncomfortable answering such questions.

Judging from this comment, it is evident that there was need for life skills education in secondary schools especially due to gender bias in the guidance and counselling programme.

The study also sought to establish the motive for the implementation of the programme. Response from the PDE staff indicates that some skills are not incorporated in guidance and counselling and hence the need for life skills; 20% had this opinion. On the other hand, (20%) of the PDE pointed out that it was prompted by environmental changes and students' careless lifestyles. However, a great proportion (60%) indicated that it was due to moral decadence in the society such as drug abuse, sexuality and general indiscipline. Traditionally, skills were imparted to children by their parents, grandparents and the community as a whole. However, in the contemporary society, parents are either too busy for their children or shy. Grandparents, on the other hand, are no longer available due to the changing family structure caused by urbanization and or globalization, besides other factors. Consequently, the option of imparting skills to children has been relegated to teachers wholeheartedly albeit their inexperience in this.

The study also sought to establish the number of teachers in life skills education department in various schools. Three principals indicated that they had five (5) teachers, both men and women; while two institutions indicated that they had sixteen (16) women teaching the life skills education program. This shows that the life skills program is mainly taught by female teachers, a factor

attributed to the fact that it is associated with women. Observably, men hardly impart life skills to children for they do not even considerate it their business. The socialization process in most communities in Africa hardly relegates duties of imparting life skills to men as this is considered a women's affair. Men hardly associate themselves with child-rearing and in particular, the girl-child. They quite often see this as the role of women be they; mothers, grandmothers, aunties, sisters or any other women within the community.

The study investigated the history of life skills education implementation in schools. The results are presented in Figure 3.4.

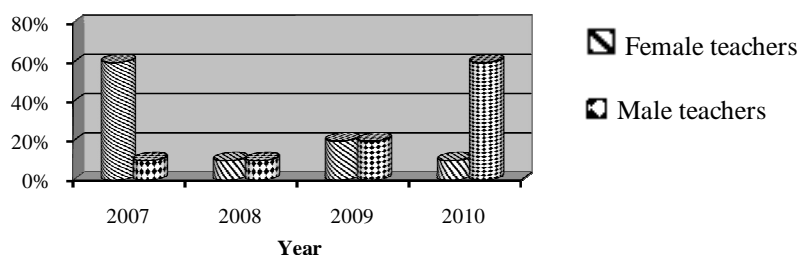


Figure 3.4: History of Life Skills Education in Schools

Findings indicate that majority of the women teachers (60%) felt life skills programme was introduced in 2007. Men teachers (60%) indicated that this programme began in 2010. This shows that either women teachers had been teaching life skills lessons long before the men or the later may have been inducted in the programme more recently. This demonstrates gender disparities in orientation among teachers. Women teachers may also have noticed a greater concern to impart certain skills among girls long before the formal programme began. This factor is attributed to their role as mothers who often detect problems of girls early, especially in relationships, and sex related matters. However, men on the contrary, hardly see such problems unless they are very visible, which often is too late. In many cases, men simply overlook girls' problems thereby blaming women once they occur. As such, teaching life skills has therefore; been associated with women, after all, it concerns 'women issues'.

Like other issues in the society concerning women, life skills lessons are often allocated little or less time in the timetable. This study specifically sought to determine the number of lessons allocated to life skills on the school timetable. It was observed that Forms I and II did not have lessons allocation at all. The lesson is mainly taught during free time or after four o'clock, which is past formal classes. In Forms 3 and 4, the lessons are assigned the time reserved for Physical Education (PE).

Time factor is crucial in learning. By leaving little time for the programme, implementation has been greatly hindered, despite its importance. It was also noted that while life skills lessons are assigned after formal classes, female teachers face the challenge of getting home late especially due to the congested traffic in Nairobi. Consequently, most of them are often not willing to teach at this particular time. As such, some students informed this study that they did not have teachers during or after school. Majority (87.5%) girls and (67.5%) boys indicated that there is need to increase the number of lessons for the subject, a factor that shows the students desire for the subject.

In relation to this Mrs. Mwangi (O.I, 28/10/2012) observes:

I can't remember when I last taught life skills to my Form One class because the lesson is not in the timetable. I am forced to teach it at 4pm; unfortunately this is the time I must rush home before the traffic becomes heavy since I stay very far from school. However, I normally request the peer counsellors in Form Four to teach the

Form Ones. Although the Form Ones have often complained to the head of the subject, I can do nothing for my family comes first!

Women have multiple gender roles. Consequently, pushing life skills lessons to late evening compromises their status. Most women teachers ignore the duty of teaching life skills thereby choosing to fulfil their gender duties as they have to rush home to address domestic chores. For the life skills programme to be beneficial to students, schools must prioritise it in the time-tabling.

3.4 Relevance of Life Skills Education in Secondary Schools

The study sought to establish the usefulness and benefit of life skills lessons to boys and girls. To address this, it students were requested to state the kind of social benefits accrued from the life skills lessons.

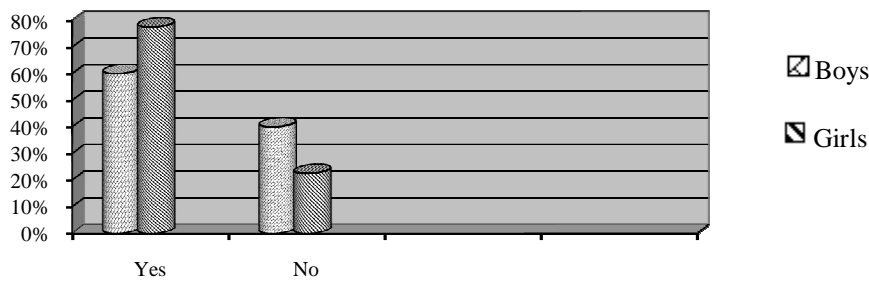


Figure 3.5: Social Benefits Students Derive from Life Skills Education

Findings indicate that majority (77.5%) girls and (60%) boys appear to have gained and derived certain benefits from life skills education lessons. Some of the aspects taught included: enhanced responsibility; “relations with members of the opposite sex”; “fate of bad company, drugs and substance abuse and how to avoid them”; and “focus on the future”. Results showed that almost a half (45%) of students benefited. An almost equal, though slightly less proportion (42.5%) indicated that in particular, they had been able to avoid bad company. Only a few (5%) said that it helped build their future, while (7.5%) indicated that they were able to avoid drugs.

John, a form three student in a mixed school (O. I, 24/10/2011) reckoned that:

These life skills have helped me. I am able to take care of myself and guide my friends especially on the dangers of drug and substance abuse. This is because the teacher gives many real life examples.

Majority (77.5%) girls stated that life skills lessons had helped them cope with social life compared to slightly over half (57.5%) boys. Students indicated several areas of improvement as shown in

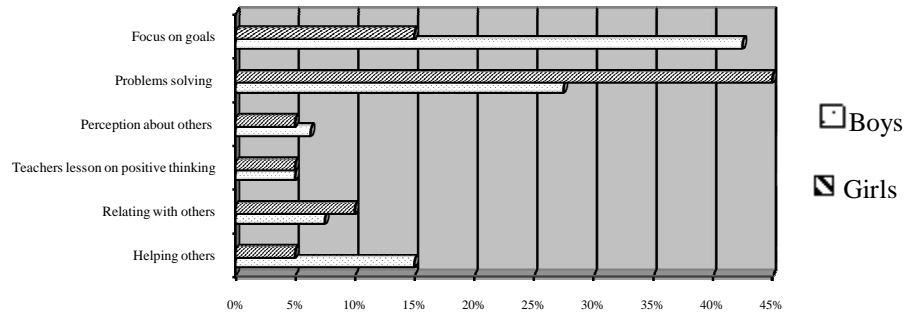


Figure 4.6.

Figure 3.6.: Benefits of life skill lessons to boys and girls

Data showed that almost half (42.5%) boys had been able to focus on their goals as compared to the low proportion (15%) girls. Similarly, almost half (45%) girls stated that they could be able to resolve their problems as compared to (27.5%) boys' respondents. Few students however, appeared to have gained skills in the areas of positive thinking, helping other students with issues, ability to relate with others or involvement with the welfare of others. Observably, from the statistics above, most students seem to have benefited from life skills lessons. Girls for instance, are able to cope and socialize with boys. Gender relations at this stage of development often pose serious challenges to both boys and girls. This is a crucial stage where each child is trying to discover themselves as they transit to adult life. As such, relational problems often develop and consequently, some students, in particular girls, become victims of teenage pregnancies. Boys on the other hand, often fall victims of drug and alcohol abuse. Teaching of life skills to both reduces such relational problems. This observation concurs with Marloo (1998) who notes that about ten thousand young women in Kenya give birth before the age of 20 hence teachers should be sensitized to teach topics related to sexuality; this will help to in-put gender skills that would prevent irresponsible sex between boys and girls.

The study further sought to investigate how life skills education learnt in school helped, or could enable students to solve their problems. Less than half (42.5%) girls felt that the life skills education learnt in school lead to high performance. A few (10%) said that it did offer knowledge to students on how to cope with some situations, while others (20%) said that teachers gave real life experiences when teaching. Only a handful (2.5%) said that they had been taught how to tackle their weaknesses.

On this note, Amelia Omondi (O.I, 7/11/2011) observes:

To me, life skills education deals with almost every aspect of a student's life. Social aspects like pregnancy, girl-boy relationship, relationship between parents and youths. We long for the lesson because we discuss many life issues with our teacher, when the teacher is not there we feel bad because we miss the lively discussions and moral teachings. Sometimes, we share own experiences, it's fun.

Students enjoy being taught life skills because they learn some of the social aspects of life. Wanjama et al., (2006) agree with this and add that they focus on the development of an individual in totality.

Almost third (35%) boys said that the life skills education learnt in school led to high performance. But once again, only (12.5%) said it offered knowledge on how to cope with certain situations. 5% said teachers gave real life experiences when teaching while (17.5%) said they had been taught how to tackle difficult issues. This implies that perhaps boys and girls were taught different aspects, and the programme might have been able to address boys' issues and/ or failed to address issues of life as they affect girls.

The study also sought to establish whether there was any positive change among boys and girls since the inception of life skill education in schools. Findings indicated that majority (70%) women teachers were of the opinion that there was a positive change in both boys and girls. In that case, it can be argued that life skills education has certain benefits to students of both genders. Teachers were asked to indicate whether their students benefitted socially and academically from the lessons. Findings are presented in Figure 4.7 below:

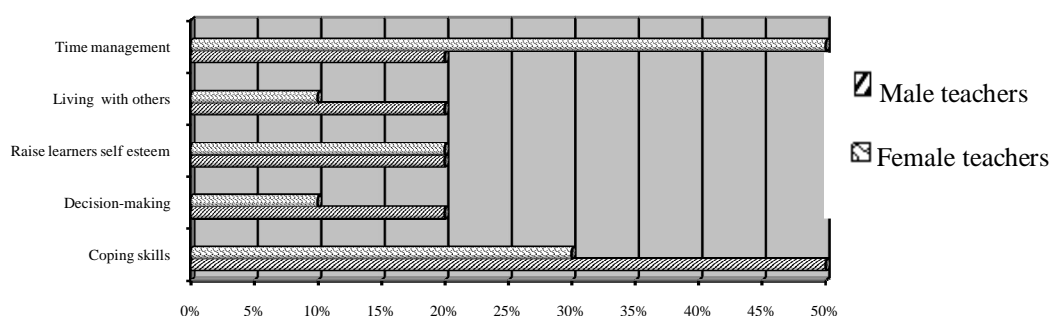


Figure 3.7: Teachers' Responses on Advantages of Life Skills Education

Data indicated that half of the male teachers (50%) were convinced that life skills education helped the students of both genders to cope with life issues as compared to (30%) female teachers. One in five (20%) male teachers indicated that life skills enhanced students' ability to make right decisions. In addition, it led to higher self-esteem in students. Only a few (10%) female teachers' said that it enhanced their ability to make decisions. One in five (20%) teachers indicated that students learnt to live with others and gained ability to manage time well. From the above analysis, it is obvious that although men are generally not as enthusiastic as women in teaching life skills, both see its importance in helping growing up children. However, gender perceptions do not allow men to embrace life skills lessons in the same magnitude as women, since as said earlier, socialising students is seen as a women's, rather than men's affair.

3.5 Teaching Life Skills Education

The analysis above shows that both genders are crucial to the teaching of life skills. As such, students were asked to indicate the gender of the teacher who taught life skills. The results are presented Figure 3.4.8 below:-.

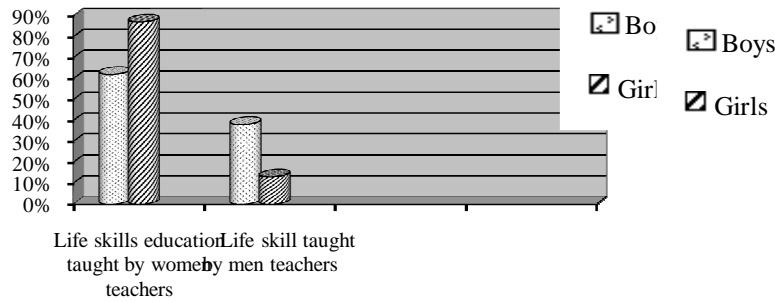


Figure 3.8: Teachers Taking Life Skills Lessons

Findings however, show that an overwhelming majority of girls (87%) and (62%) boys indicated that life skills education was taught by women. This left the study wondering where the problem was. Could it be that men are never given a chance to teach life skills or is it that they are not equipped to do so? The study hence sought to establish from the school principals whether there were any gender limitations in the selection of life skills teachers.

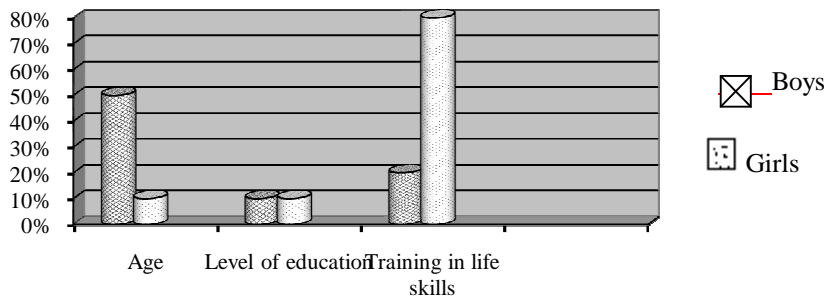


Figure 4.9: Criteria for Appointing Life Skills Education Teachers

Interestingly, opinions were also gender-based. For example, a high majority (80%) of female principals indicated that though training in life skills should be considered in the appointment of teachers, data show that women are more trained than men. However, when asked to indicate which gender had more teachers in the life skills department, it was evident that there were more women teaching it than men. To confirm this, the study checked the school timetables, which clearly had more women than men allocated life skills lessons. Data also revealed that there were gender disparities in the distribution of life skill-teachers in schools. The gender challenge was noted in the fact that women teachers teach both boys and girls. This demonstrates that the responsibility of imparting life skills is seemingly bestowed to women teachers, again confirming the fact that raising children in Africa is perceived to be women’s affair.

The study also sought to find out the gender relevance of the materials used to teach life skills. Findings are presented in Figure 3.10.

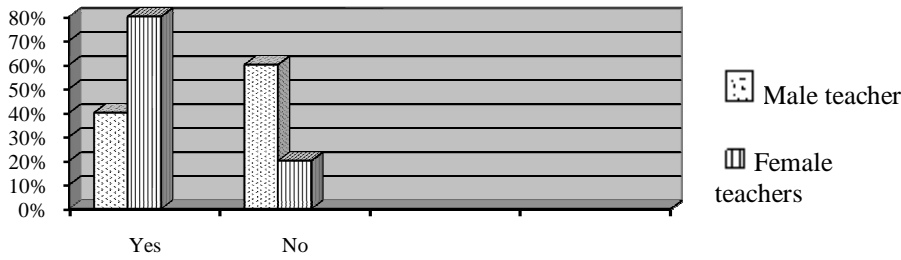


Figure 3.10: Use of Gender Responsive Resources

Findings revealed that majority (80%) of female teachers made use of gender specific teaching aids such as condom use and other critical issues depending on the person teaching. Women teachers fuss over teaching aids such as condom use demonstration, while men do not. This finding indicates that there are gender-specific challenges in the application of teaching and learning materials for life skills. Considering that male and female condoms are critical in the prevention of HIV and AIDS, other STIs and teenage pregnancies, the gender specific challenges in its application threatens the intended aim of its use as a learning resource in the teaching of life skills. It militates against implementation of the programme despite its good intention.

Other than the application of learning materials, the content coverage is equally crucial to learning. To find out aspects covered in life skills lessons, teachers were asked to indicate some of the topics taught in class. Findings are shown in Figure 3.11.

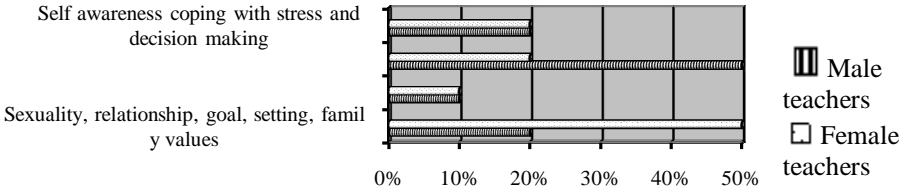


Figure 3.11: Aspects Covered in Life Skills

Findings indicate that several topics and themes were covered in life skills lessons. However, data revealed that there are some topics that neither teachers, nor students like simply due to their gender. They are uncomfortable. When asked whether they were comfortable being taught by specific gender in certain issues, majority of both boys and girls indicated their displeasure. For example, boys said that women teachers could not comfortably handle topics like ‘ejaculation’; while girls said that they were uncomfortable while men teachers handled topics on “menstruation”. It is obvious that most of them avoid such gender-specific topics. The KIE (2008) syllabus states that Life Skills Education is designed to help an individual grow and develop in totality so that they are able to deal with day-to-day challenges. Teachers should therefore cover all the topics in the syllabus (KIE, 2008b).

The students were also asked to indicate whether such topics were adequately covered. The responses are presented in Figure 3.12.

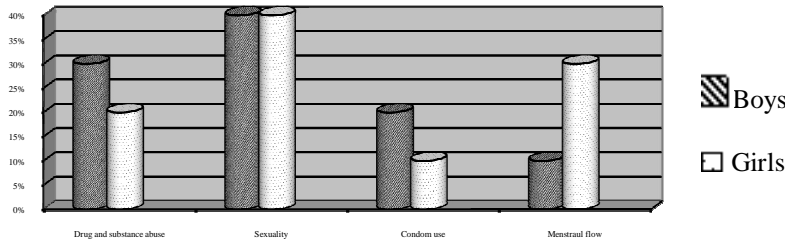


Figure 3.12: Life Skills Lessons not well covered by Teachers

Figure 4.12 shows that life skills lessons not well-covered by teachers were “condom use” and “menstrual flow” (10%). The most covered lessons were sexuality (40%) followed by drug and substance abuse (30%) and (20%) respectively.

Slightly over a half (52.5%) of female students indicated that lessons taught addressed their gender specific concerns. For example sexuality, spirituality, emotional and psychological stress while less than a half (47.5%) felt the lessons failed to cover such issues. Observably all the male students reported that the lessons addressed their life skills education needs. Majority (82.5%) of the female students said that life skill education adequately addressed their problems, while (17.5%) disagreed. Only 50% stated that sexuality, relationship, goal setting, family values were the main themes covered in class. Few (10%) indicated drug abuse, stress management, communication and decision making as being emphasized. A slightly higher proportion (20%) indicated goal setting, relationship, work, spiritual needs and growth as adequately covered.

Success in the implementation of a programme depends on the support given by management and other such bodies. Teaching of life skills is no exceptional. The study investigated the support offered to teachers in order to enhance life skills education. To assess this, teachers were asked to rate the support offered by the school principals and their deputies. Ironically, this was also seen to be gender specific.

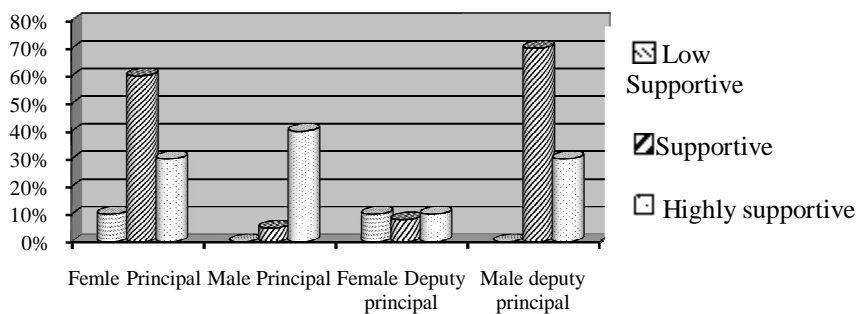


Figure 3.13: Support Provided by School Management to Teachers

From the figure above, the study notes that teachers received gender biased support in the implementation of life skill program. About 70% of the male deputy principals were said to be supportive to the life skill programme followed by 60% of the female principals. About 40% of the male principals were highly supportive of the life skill programme and 30% of female principals and male deputy principals were rated highly by the respondents. The female deputy principals were not as supportive since they were rated at 10%. This shows that the female deputy principals are required to support the programme so that implementation of life skills can contribute positively to both boys and girls growth in their respective schools.

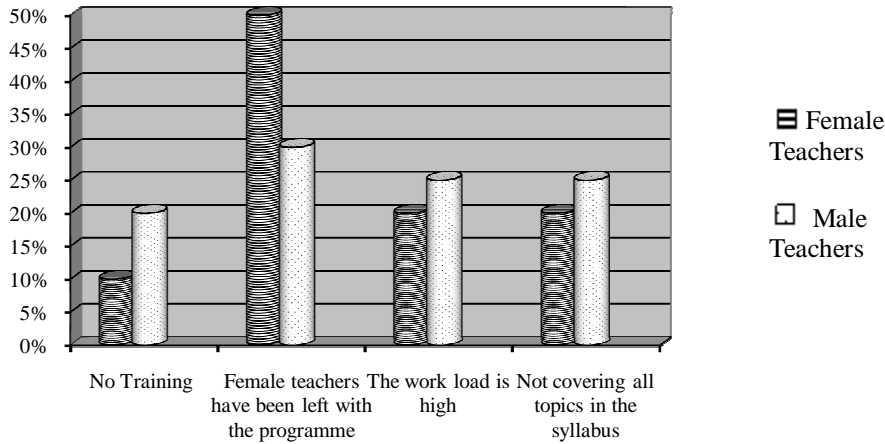


Figure 3.14: Gender Challenges Hindering Implementation of Life Skills

Lack of gender responsive training and gender sensitive topics are some of the challenges hindering implementation. . 20% stated that implementation of the programme had been relegated to women teachers . The officers from Ministry of Education PDE argued that the Ministry offered in - service courses for all teachers in life skills education but those training were not gender-responsive.

4.0 Conclusion and recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

Guidance and counselling services in schools has not been as effective, hence the introduction of life skills which is classroom-based was considered to be more effective. This was seen as a solution to those students' who could not open up to teacher counsellors. Life skills should be able to eliminate gender factors that limit the boys and men teachers in learning and teaching of life skill respectively. This enabled male teachers to impact life skill to boys and girls. Life skill lessons were taught by more female teachers than male teachers. The dominance by females could in turn imply that there was a gender challenge since female teachers were forced to teach male students. It would have been expected that since most of the male teachers teaching life skills had wide experience, they would highlight the importance of life skills. In conclusion, all the topics in life skills were not covered as is in the syllabus. These findings implied that the gender of the teacher was a challenge in the implementation of the life skills curriculum includes use of teaching-learning materials. Teaching of life skills can be enhanced through greater involvement of all teachers and in-service training in seminars and workshops.

4.2 Recommendations

- The Ministry of Education through the County Director of Education should strictly follow up inclusion of life skills lessons in the timetable and ensure that they are attended to.
- Life skills should be expanded to cover topics that are gender-related to the students.
- Intensive research on Life skills should be conducted among the student.
- Life skills should be benchmarked by schools like all other subjects.
- Schools should invite and utilize guest speakers to assist in the programme.
- School principals should organize gender responsive training and workshops for life skills teachers.
- Male teachers, in particular, should be encouraged to teach life skills like any other subject.

5.0 References

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs. N. J. Prentice – Hall
- Brigham T. A. (1989). *Self-management for adolescents: A skills training programme*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Boe, P. (1983). "Rites of manhood in the tribe of Nigeria" in Adegbola, *Ed Traditional Religion in West Africa*. Nairobi: Uzima Press.
- Botvin, G. J. and Steven, P. (1979). *The etiology and prevention of drug abuse among minority youths*. London: Routledge.
- Castle, E. B. (1966). *Growing up in East Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Castillo, G. (1986). *Teenagers and their problems*. Nairobi: Kenya Four Courts Press.
- Gitome, J. (1989). *Pastoral care and counselling to educated young adults in the PCEA. Church with Special Reference to Kikuyu Parish*. M.A Thesis.
- Katola, M. (1996). *Morality among the Akamba: A case study of youth in Central Division of Kitui District*. PhD Thesis, Kenyatta University.
- Kenyatta, J. (1938). *Facing Mount Kenya: The traditional life of the Gikuyu*. Nairobi: Heinemann Publishers.
- Kenya Institute of Education, (2008a). *Secondary education curriculum life skills education syllabus*. Nairobi: Kenya Institute of Education.
- Kinoti, H. W. (1983). *Aspects of Agikuyu traditional morality*. PhD Thesis Nairobi University.
- Kombo, D. K. (1998). *Correlates of students deviant behaviour in selected secondary schools in Nairobi*. Unpublished.
- Mutie, P. K. & Ndambuki, P. (2000). *Guidance and counselling for schools and colleges*. Oxford University Press.
- Mugenda, O. M and Mugenda, A. G. (1999). *Research methods: Quantitative and qualitative approach*. Nairobi: Acts Press.
- Nelson-Jones, R. (1995). *The theory and practice of counselling*. London: Cassell.
- Ndirangu, J. M. (2000). *The youth in danger*. Nairobi: Uzima Press.
- Rescorla, P. (1980). *Pavlovian second order conditioning: studies in associative learning*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Tumuti, S. (1985). *A study of guidance and counselling needs of primary school pupils of Gachoka Sub-location, Nyeri Town*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis.
- Wamue, G. (1999). *Gender roles and status of Agikuyu Women: A religio-cultural approach*. PhD Thesis, Kenyatta University.
- Wango, G. M. (In Press). *Psychological counselling in Kenya: A contemporary review of the developing World*. (In Press).
- Wango, G. M. and Mungai, E. K. (2007). *Counselling in the school: A handbook for teachers*. Nairobi: Phoenix Publishers.
- Wanjama, L, Muraya, P. and Gichaga, S. (2006). *Life skills: A handbook for parents and teachers*. Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.
- Wasike, F., Karuga, J. and Masika, A. (2009). *Responsible living, students' book for form 2*. Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.