

Implications of Gender Parity on Quality Education Provision in Public Primary Schools in Kenya

Nelson Siocha Omae¹, David Onyancha Omae²

School of Education, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, P.O. Box 210-40601, Bondo, Kenya

Abstract: *The quest to ensure that learners achieve quality education and acquire values and skills that help them play a positive role in their societies is an issue on the policy agenda of Government of Kenya. The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of gender parity on quality education provision in public primary schools in Masaba South sub-County, Kisii County, Kenya. The objective sought to establish the effect of gender parity on quality education. The study was guided by Human capital theory. The target population was 82 head teachers and 112 deputy head teachers. Sample size consisted of 68 head teachers and 86 deputy head teachers selected through stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaire, interview schedule, and document analysis were used to collect data. Quantitative analysis was done using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics using regression analysis. Qualitative data was analyzed on the basis of themes and sub-themes. On the concern about effect of gender parity on quality education in primary schools, the study revealed that absenteeism had the highest contribution towards gender parity with Beta coefficient of .552 whereas cases of absenteeism and low transition rates amongst boys was noted. The second largest Beta coefficient was .283 which was graduation. This was followed by the drop out with a Beta value of -0.030. The Beta value for admission was -.204. Male and female were the lowest with -0.294 indicating that it made the least contribution to the model. This study was useful to the Ministry of Education to make necessary changes on the effect of the selected factors on quality education. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education revisits its policies related to Primary Education and make changes on the findings to enhance quality education.*

Keywords: gender parity, Ministry of Education, Public Primary schools, Quality education and Kenya

1. Background of the Study

Quality education includes learners who are well-nourished, ready to participate and learn, healthy, and supported in learning by their families and communities. It is about school environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities. The content also should be reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace. The processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches should have well-managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning. This will reduce disparities and outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society (UNICEF, 2000).

Tikly and Barret (2007) and Tikly (2010) assert that the issue of the quality of education cannot be understood without an overall analysis of the historical, socioeconomic, political and cultural contexts within which a given education system is operating. Two elements are important in their framework. The first is the importance of the contextual factors (historical, socioeconomic, political, and cultural) that shape education policy. Secondly, the perspectives of local stakeholders, including those of teachers, are considered key in understanding quality in given context. Indeed, the model stresses the importance of taking into consideration the perceptions of stakeholders at the local level in any attempt to improve the quality of education.

A report from Ministry of Education, Kisii County, education board (2014), a conference held by scholars,

parents, professionals, political leaders and other players indicated that there is need for research on the cause of dwindling quality education in Kisii County. It further noted that our students are not learning despite the impressive enrolment rates in the County and only further research can help establish the problem. It is against this scenario that the study intended to determine effect of gender parity on quality education provision in public primary schools in Masaba South sub-County, Kisii County, Kenya.

Objective of the study

The following was the objective of the study:

To establish the effect of gender parity on quality education provision in public primary schools in Masaba South sub-County, Kisii County, Kenya.

Research Design

This study adopted a sequential explanatory design employed within mixed methods approach. Sequential explanatory design is a type in mixed method approach characterized by collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by a collection and analysis of qualitative data. Its purpose is to use qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of quantitative study.

Study Population

The target population for this study was 82 head teachers, 112 deputy head teachers in public primary schools, from 82 primary school teachers in Masaba South sub county Kisii County of Kenya.

Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

The researcher used both stratified random sampling technique and simple random sampling. To obtain the desired sample in this study stratified random sampling technique was used in dividing the population into small groups known as strata. The sample size constituted of 68

head teachers, 86 deputy head teachers, from the 68 sampled public primary schools based on Krescie and Morgan's formula.

Instruments of Data Collection

This research used a questionnaire for the deputy head teachers, document analysis and interview schedule for the head teachers to collect primary data for the study.

Document Analysis

The researcher examined primary school admission register, board of management minutes, school master timetable, stores records book to check on availability of school facilities. The information obtained was discussed with the head teachers with the aim of collecting data.

Validity of the Instruments

To ensure validity of the questionnaire, assistance was sought from the expert judgment of researcher's supervisors. They were also arranged from simple to complex for easy understanding. The researcher also took representative questions from each of the sections of the unit and then evaluated them against the desired outcomes. In addition, a detailed verbal descriptions and clear instructions were provided during the group administration, which the researcher personally conducted.

Reliability of Instruments

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, the split half method was used. This was done by assigning the odd

numbered items to one half and the even numbered items to the other of the test.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics was used to describe and summarize the data inform of tables, frequencies and percentages. The inferential statistics was used to help make inferences and draw conclusions. Statistical tests including Pearson correlation which is a measure of the linear correlation between two variables was used.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Data from interviews was analyzed by using the thematic frame work and the following steps were considered; the research followed the principles of thematic analysis.

2. Findings, Interpretation and Discussion

Findings on the Effects of Gender Parity on Quality Education in Public Primary Schools

Findings on Pupil enrolment

The study sought to investigate the students' enrollment in schools within the area of the study to establish the trend of enrollment. This information was got from documentary analysis from the schools and sub-county education office and was presented graphically as shown in figure 1.0

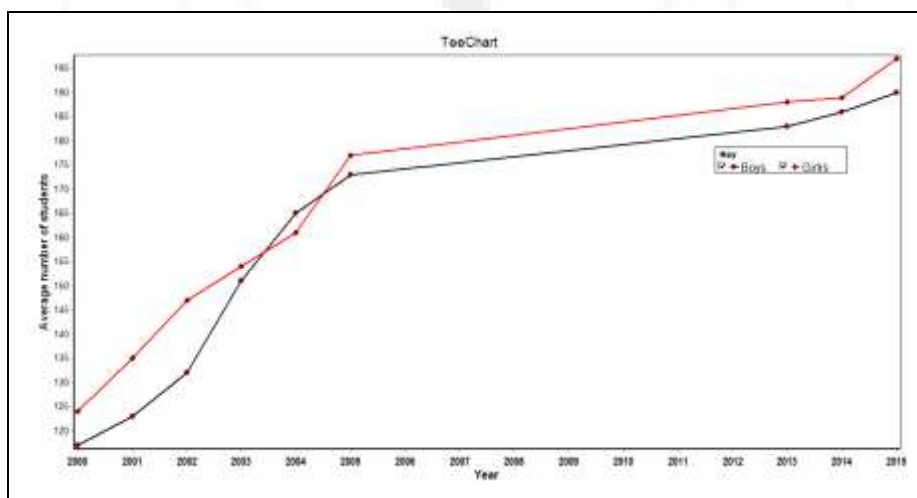


Figure 4: Students enrollment from the year 2000-2005 and 2013-2015

From Figure 4.0, it was evident that there was clear trend of students' population enrolment rising in a similar pattern for both boys and girls. However, girls seemed to outnumber the boys in all the years except 2004, when the boys were more

than the girls. This trend was also depicted by box-plot shown in figure 4.3.

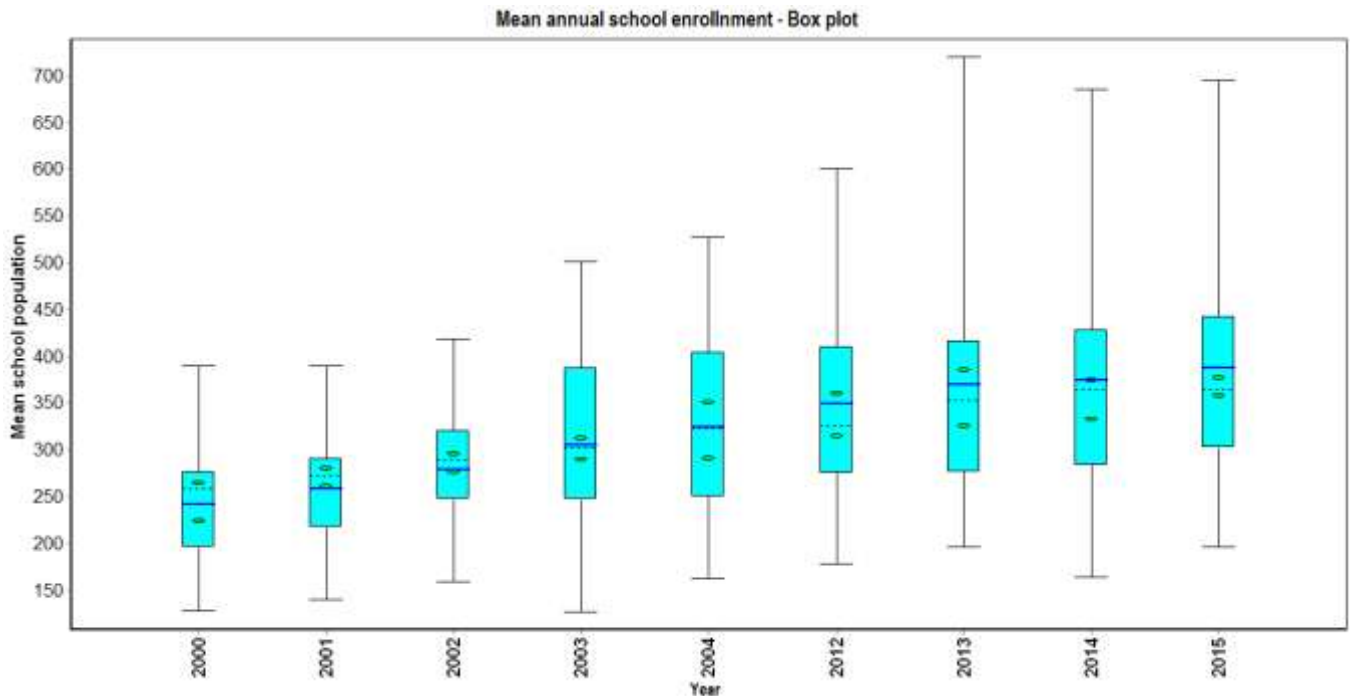


Figure 4.1: Boxplot showing mean annual school enrollment.
 Source: Survey data 2015

As FPE has provided children from the poorer strata of society with hope, it has at the same time created a myriad of hurdles. The massive increase in enrolments is already putting pressure on the available resources, demand for and access to primary education as the primary school expansion does not correspond with the population increase for the children. Similarly, as a result of high enrolment, there has been a tendency to over enroll. This overstretches the available physical facilities and increases the number of pupils to each teacher declining the quality of education as teachers are not able to give attention to individual learner differences.

The study sought the views of the deputy head teachers with respect to the likert scale pertaining to learning resources in schools. It also used interviews from head teachers to elicit information on effect of increased enrollment in public primary schools on gender parity.

Table 4.1: shows the descriptive analysis of gender parity variable using frequency, total frequency, total score, average and percentages.

Table 4.1: Effect of Gender Parity on Quality Education (n=86)

| Pupils' gender related factors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | TF | TS | AV | %SCORE |
|---|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|--------|
| Male and female are not equal in enrollment | 14 | 17 | 0 | 19 | 27 | 77 | 259 | 3.6 | 72.0 |
| Admission of both gender is not the same | 15 | 30 | 0 | 36 | 4 | 85 | 239 | 2.8 | 56.2 |
| There are more boys drop than girls | 35 | 29 | 0 | 10 | 7 | 81 | 168 | 2.1 | 41.5 |
| Cases of absenteeism are equal in number | 34 | 28 | 0 | 9 | 9 | 80 | 171 | 2.1 | 41.5 |
| Graduation rate amongst girls is higher than boys | 30 | 24 | 0 | 15 | 8 | 77 | 178 | 2.3 | 46.2 |

Key: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1), HT- Head teacher , DH- teachers, R – respondents

Table 4.2 depicts that, although (27.4%) of deputy head teachers who took part in the study did not agree with the view that the male and female are not equal in enrollment in their schools, a significant proportion [4 (72.4%)] held the belief that the male and female are not equal in enrollment. The state of the admission of both gender is not the same was not any better either; whereas (43.6%) of the deputy head teachers who were sampled for the study were against the perception that admission of both gender is not the same, a slightly higher percentage of (56.4%) of the deputy head teachers said that the, admission of both gender is not the same as shown in table 4.16. It also emerged that most of the schools had more boys drop than girls, as confirmed by minority (42.5%) of the deputy head teachers whereas above average of the deputy head teachers vehemently

disagreed with assertion that the more boys drop than girls as the view was shared by (58.5.5%).

Further findings reveal that the cases of absenteeism are equal in number was attested by (41.5%) of the deputy head teachers who took part in the study who alluded that absenteeism are equal for both boys and girls since the inception of FPE whereas (58.5%) disagreed with an option that cases of absenteeism are equal in number. This state was replicated in the other parameters; graduation rate amongst boys is higher than girls (46.2%) of the deputy head teachers who participated in the study alluded that graduation rate amongst boys is higher than boys and (53.8%) of the deputy head teachers disagreed that the graduation rate amongst girls is higher than girls. In an

interview, a head teacher commented. *“ people’s mind, men’s in particular look at girl child as a lesser child.”* (HT8)

Another head teacher commented in an interview:

“There should be proper implementation of reforms in primary education and gender biasness which seeks to reduce disparities between girls’ and boys’ access to and performance in education. Sanitation is generally poor”. (HT4)

This study found out that, in schools girls are considered inferior and gender stereotypes are being progressively practiced in schools. One head teacher said:

“Gender inequalities affect the structure and management of the education system, the practices and attitudes of teachers, learning materials and the content of the curriculum”. (HT2).

There is much need to designing fair and inclusive education systems as a stepping stone to providing high quality education for every child, boy or girl. It means therefore that inappropriate design and practices of education systems allow educational inequities and gender disparity. Some system level policies, such as grade repetition or early tracking, tend to amplify socio-economic disparities and are conducive to disengagement and dropout, whereas other policies seem to mitigate them. It takes time to implement change, for national and regional education policies to reach schools. It implies designing appropriate strategies and then changing the expectations, beliefs cultures and practices of many diverse individuals as well as changing collective systems, structures and values is necessary in order to curb gender disparity.

A head teacher said that;

“It is felt that child labor is prevalent in poor households as the children are able to help their poor parents earn bread and butter” (HT3).

This implies that regarding the home environment, there is low parental care towards the child’s education. It was found that because of poverty, parents need their children to help farm to produce food or do other work rather than sending them to school. Poverty and proper parental care needed to be improved. Some pupils do not have a bag, shoes or even food to eat before coming to class and may end up dropping school on the way.

One head teacher said:

“Cultural dynamics have been seen to influence the educational opportunities of pupils”. (HT6)

Children from families which are deep rooted in their culture were found to be reluctant in taking their children to school. The way of life including practices, beliefs and customs have a great share to parental determining on when to enroll their children. Another head teacher noted:

“Children whose parents have received some sort of schooling are more likely themselves to attend school for longer. In particular, a mother’s education level often influences length of access for girls.” (HT2)

The factors influencing female enrolments have been identified as: food aid is an incentive for girls to enroll, attend and remain in school till completion, creating more awareness of the importance and benefits of girls’ participation in basic education. This is also in agreement with the research that, educated parent create equal opportunity their children of different gender to access education without inhibitions. A head teacher said:

“There is a positive relationship between education of the head of the household and gross enrollment of the children”. (HT2).

Another head teacher also said:

“Enrollment is related to social economic background” (HT9)

This means that children from households in the lower welfare households are likely to enter primary school at an older age compared to children from households in higher wealth quintiles, and are also more likely to drop out of school. Children from the wealthiest households are twice as likely to be in school as children from the poorest household. Studies indicate that health status has implications for attendance, retention and drop out, with hunger, malaria, headaches and poor eyesight noted as major causes of absenteeism and dropping out. Another head teacher said:

“Students from richer households increasingly enroll in school.”

The study found that parents who frequently aspire to educate their children are those whose social- economic status is high. However, education is sometimes seen by most parents as one among a range of means of securing children’s long-term welfare. Those whose social- economic status is low always want to take their children to school but financial constrain deny them a chance. Consequently, the ability and desire to educate all their children is tempered by a child’s perceived interest and scholastic ability. This implied that the higher the parents level of education and economic background the chances of a child accessing quality education are increased. On the contrary the more communities cling to their cultures the poorer the quality of education is likely to be among the public primary schools in Masaba sub-county.

Testing Hypothesis on gender of the study (Zero order correlation matrix)

Gender equity is the impartial treatment of women and men so as to ensure equal enjoyment of privileges and rights allotted to members of either gender. In Kenyan society, this has been a controversial subject since the country got its independence. The subject is continually quelled by challenges and hindrances that not only make it difficult for the nation to make greater strides on its way to achieve gender equity but also continue to restrict the country’s development whether in the political, social or economic spheres as envisioned in the country’s economic growth blueprint dubbed Kenya Vision 2030. These challenges include traditional and cultural practices, rapid population growth, religion, poverty, disease and so on.

Table 4.2: shows the correlation on elements of gender parity related factors using a zero order correlation matrix

Table 4.2: Correlations for Gender Parity Related Factors

| | | Male female ratio | Admission | Drop out | Absenteeism | Graduation |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-------------|------------|
| Male female ratio | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | | |
| | N | 87 | | | | |
| Admission | Pearson Correlation | .465** | 1 | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | | | |
| | N | 86 | 86 | | | |
| Dropout | Pearson Correlation | .847** | .331** | 1 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .003 | | | |
| | N | 81 | 81 | 81 | | |
| Absenteeism | Pearson Correlation | -.146 | .547** | .135 | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .195 | .000 | .232 | | |
| | N | 80 | 80 | 80 | 80 | |
| Graduation | Pearson Correlation | .342** | .043 | .474** | .418** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .002 | .713 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 77 | 77 | 77 | 77 | 77 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There was a strong positive correlation of .847 between well-educated parents giving their male and female children equal chance to attend school and with the introduction of free primary education; enrollment in terms of male and female is at the same level. This was followed with a positive correlation of .547 between many cases of absenteeism and low admission among boys due to them seeking for employment at early ages and many cases of absenteeism among girl pupils due to allocation of more domestic responsibilities at home. The correlations were significant at a P-value of 0.01. They also showed a positive association of the model gender Variable. However, there was no negative association between the parameters.

In conclusion, a decision was reached on the null hypothesis; **Ho3:** There is no significant relationship between gender and quality of education in public primary schools

Given that the level of significance was attained in all the variables, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, from this analysis a conclusion was reached that; **Ha3:** There is a statistically significant relationship between the gender parameters (male female ratio, admission, absenteeism, dropout and graduation) and quality of education. Education throughout the world enhances any type of development since it gives people the knowledge and the skills needed in social, economic, and political sectors. Women form the majority of the uneducated population in the county and as such they are more vulnerable to being victims of poverty. This has continued to contribute to the gender disparity and thus poverty is one of the great challenges that will continue to hinder the county's achievement of gender equity as well as middle income status as it has been proposed in the country's Vision 2030. Looking deeper into how poverty restricts the county's progression in terms of gender equity shows how much the aspect has greatly held the country back on the road to development. This poverty which is a result of many other factors such as corruption, natural disasters and poor governance as well as the aforementioned such as rapid population growth and culture has in turn affected many other areas that are of great impact to the country's development. Some of these areas are education, leadership, and health which are viewed as fundamental

requirements for development. A lack of these skills affects the society in many ways. For example, poor parents would prefer investing in a boy's education than in a girl with the belief that the girl will only enrich her husband's family when she gets married. As a result of this ignorance, many women lag behind as they lack basic empowerment avenues that would equip them with skills which would help them make major contributions to the country's development. Persistent hunger and starvation that affects the country almost every year and inability to access fundamental services such as healthcare, education, shelter, and clean water is presently defined as a humanitarian crisis in Kenya. A lack of these facilities continues to restrict the country's advancement towards attaining gender equity and this is because all the aforementioned factors affect Kenyan women in a worse capacity compared to men since women are more marginalized and excluded.

Table 4.3 shows the model summary for gender related factors variable which was generated by the researcher. It indicates that the coefficient of multiple determination (R squared), a statistical measure of how close the data are fitted to the regression line.

Table 4.3: Model Summary for Gender Parity Related Factors

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .676 ^a | .444 | .431 | .0001068618 |

Gender parity: (Constant), Inheriting property, Absenteeism among girls, Male and female at the same level, Equal chances to attend school, Boys seeking employment at early age

From Table 4.18, it was noted that the coefficient of multiple determination for gender related factors and quality education, R squared value for the model was .444 (or 44.4 per cent explained variance). The total R squared value, included the unique variance explained by each variable and also that shared. R squared = 44.4%, this implies that the gender related factors in question accounts for 44.4% variability in quality education and the unexplained variation

55.6% are the gender related factors not considered in the equation that would contribute to the effect of quality education. The parameters were reasonably strongly correlated; hence there were a lot of shared variance that was statistically removed when they were all included in the model.

Table 4.4 shows the Coefficients of gender related factors variable which was generated by the researcher. Comparing the different parameters of gender related factors; a standardized coefficient was used because the values for each of the different parameters were converted to the same scale so that they could be easily compared. However, in constructing a regression equation, the unstandardized coefficient values listed as B were used. Given that the interest was to compare the contribution of each independent variable the Beta values were considered.

Table 4.4: Coefficients of Gender Parity Related Factors

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | .001 | .000 | | 2.817 | .006 |
| Male female ratio | -.142 | .052 | -.294 | -2.752 | .008 |
| Admission | -.474 | .155 | -.204 | -3.064 | .003 |
| Drop out | -.018 | .062 | -.030 | -.290 | .005 |
| Absenteeism | .949 | .114 | .552 | 8.333 | .000 |
| Graduation | .163 | .034 | .283 | 4.741 | .000 |

Dependent variable: Gender parity related factors

From table 4.4: the table of coefficients, the largest Beta was .552 which was of many cases of absenteeism and low transition rates amongst boys due to them seeking for employment at early age. This implies that it made the strongest unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable of Gender Related Factors. The second largest Beta was .283 which was of boys believing that they will inherit property and drop out of school on the way. It also made a unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable. This was followed by the drop out with a Beta value of -0.030. The Beta value for admission was -.204. Male and female was the lowest with -0.294 indicating that it made the least contribution to the model. From the coefficients table, the parameters gender parity was significant at a P-value of <0.05.

The Regression Model for Gender Parity

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the country has still made enormous progress in trying to achieve gender equity in all sectors including education development and this is due to various efforts made by all stakeholders towards addressing the many gender issues and concerns experienced in the country. Among the progressive initiatives in this regard is the promulgation of the country’s new constitution whose set of laws are aligned towards promoting gender equity and the incorporation of the country’s economic growth strategic plan Vision 2030 which recognizes the achievement of gender equity and equality as an important component to driving economic development. A regression model for the relationship between the gender variable and the parameters is shown below.

In this model: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + \beta_5 x_5 + \epsilon$.

Where: Y are the Gender related factors

x_1 Male female ratio

x_2 Admission

x_3 Drop out

x_4 Absenteeism

x_5 Graduation

$= .007units + -.142x_1units + -.474x_2units + -.018x_3units + .949x_4units + .163x_5units + \epsilon$

It can be deduced from the above equation that the gender related factors contributed to quality education in Masaba sub-county in order of importance as were factored in the model as indicated above.

From the regression model, the parameter of absenteeism had a highest input of .949 towards gender related factors; it was followed by graduation which had an input of .209 units. The parameter drop out had the lowest input of -.474units whereas admission and male female ratio had – 0.142, 0.007 respectively. The model is explained by 44.4 per cent, the gender related factors variable. This means that there is moderate relationship between gender related factors and quality education. These findings are in agreement with Akunga, Amadalo and Maiyo (2010) who found that there are gender and regional disparities in enrolment and academic achievement. Although near parity in enrolment has been realized in some regions, the North Eastern part of Kenya is grossly affected. It is characterized by general low enrolment and a serious gender disparity in enrolment. The near parity enrolment in most regions notwithstanding, the disparity in academic achievement cuts across regions and gender.

Traditionalism and other cultural hindrances towards achieving gender equity in education development are conspicuous in much of Kenyan society particularly in the rural regions of the country. In much of the rural regions where the citizenry has held on to traditional and ethnic cultural beliefs, there is disregard for almost all of the gender equity values and this is particularly worse on the female gender since fundamental rights accorded to every woman, man, girl and boy such as the right to basic education are continually overlooked. Most girls are affected by traditionalist concepts such as early marriages and occasionally fatal practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM). Much of Masaba sub-county societies still need to understand the importance of educating women so as to prepare them for development and leadership. This in turn would help in achieving gender parity which goes beyond just empowering women. The whole country should be empowered for development to take place. The fact that women’s empowerment is key to achieving long term development has been embraced among almost all governments of developing countries and this is due to the crucial role women play traditionally which is essentially managing household.

3. Conclusion

It can be concluded from the correlation regression model of that the parameters of gender parity affected quality education in order of importance as were factored in the

regression model. The parameter, absenteeism had a highest input towards gender parity with Beta coefficient of .552 where cases of absenteeism and low transition rates amongst boys was noted due to seeking for employment at early age. This implies that it made the strongest unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable of quality education. The second largest Beta was .283 which was graduation made a unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable. This was followed by the drop out with a Beta value of -0.030. The Beta value for admission was -.204. Male and female was the lowest with -0.294 indicating that it made the least contribution to the model it was followed by graduation. The model is 44.4% explained by the parameters. This means that gender parity variable had an effect on quality education.

4. Recommendations

In light of the findings about effect of gender parity on quality education in primary education, the study recommends that:

Coordination of inter-ministerial efforts to address rural poverty and sensitization on the need to give equal chances to girls and boys access to school should be done. There should also be proper coordination in implementation of programmes of respective ministries and agencies to address the structural issue of poverty reduction among households. Further still, the MOE should gather supplementary data on out-of-school children along with the reasons for being out of school in order to assess the constraints and identify appropriate interventions to bring them to primary school. The capacity of education managers at various levels to implement or supervise implementation of interventions should be enhanced. Finally the MOE to step up sensitization programmes by the government to intensify the level of awareness on value of education especially illiterate or uninformed populations.

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