

Gender Equality in Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools in Temeke District, Tanzania

Bertha Erasto Losioki

Department of Psychology and Curriculum Studies

The Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy, Kivukoni Campus, Dar es Salaam

*bertha.losioki@mnma.ac.tz

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8874-2356>

Abstract

Gender equality in teaching and learning ensures participation of girls and boys in the classroom. However, pedagogical issues and social cultural norms continue to impede the implementation of gender equality in teaching and learning in schools. This study examined adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning in secondary schools in Temeke District. Data were collected from 288 participants selected through random and purposive sampling. The study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In depth interview, questionnaire survey and non-participant observation methods were used to collect primary data, and documentary review was used to collect secondary data. Likert scale was used to measure gender equality adherence. Content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data according to key themes and research objectives. Major findings show that gender equality is adhered to adequately in school practices and in teaching and learning process. Three quarter of the respondents showed that the curriculum addresses gender equality in school practice including teaching and learning in the classroom. This study recommends that the Ministry of Education Science and Technology in collaboration with education stakeholders should continue to emphasize the implementation of a gender equality in teaching and learning practice in schools and to raise awareness on gender equality issues at the community level.

Keywords: *Gender equality, secondary schools, teaching and learning, Tanzania*

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1.0 Introduction

Gender inequity remains a concern in teaching and learning process (GPE, 2019). UNESCO (2020), emphasises equity in educational matters, requiring the development of teaching and learning approaches that respond to individual differences and that benefit all children. Equitable treatment of girls and boys entails equal provision of studying and learning opportunities and equitable access to educational resources (Thompson & Thompson, 2018). However, there are pedagogical issues and social cultural norms that continue to impede the efforts towards gender equality in education (GPE, 2019). Cooper (2023) advocates for equal and just treatment of students regarding their learning environment inside and outside the classroom to help them succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Also, gender equality creates equal opportunities for boys and girls to participate in the education process (Kahamba, et. al., 2017). It allows equal attention to male and female learners, and provides equal access to school and learning facilities among male and female learners. Thus, teachers' consideration of strategies that ensure gender equity in learners' participation in teaching and learning is crucial (Kahamba, et. al., 2017; Mhewa et. al., 2020).

It is argued that gender biased instructional practices can affect confidence and feelings of belongingness of one sex. Hence, learning practices have a crucial role in shaping learners attitudes, knowledge and skills. Teachers' adoption of the teaching and learning approaches that are appropriate for the implementation of gender equity in teaching and learning is emphasised. According to scholars (i.e., Mhewa et. al., 2020; Fitriyan & Nurhassana, 2022), there are different ways of learning between males and female. Therefore, lesson plans must show clear and unbiased instructions regarding class activities.

The UNESCO convention against discrimination in Education target to ensuring that all learners have access to quality education. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 also calls for equitable quality education. The goal aims at eliminating gender disparities in education and ensuring learners' equal access to all levels of education for vulnerable individuals including persons with disabilities. It also targets at ensuring gender sensitive and effective learning environment for all (UN, 2016; UNESCO, 2020).

Tanzania government has made some efforts and taken initiatives in the promotion of gender equality in

education at different levels including pre-primary, primary education and secondary education (Mhewa, 2020; URT, 2018; URT, 2019). For example, The Tanzania Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) is one of the government efforts of ensuring equitable access to education and training for all, including the most disadvantaged. The ESDP also sets out the need for an enhanced effort on improving the quality of education at all levels. This is necessary in order to ensure that children and young people do not merely pass through a universalised education system but that they do so by acquiring knowledge, attitudes and life skills that equip them to become productive, loyal and fulfilled citizens (URT, 2018). However, unequal treatment of boys and girls in schools limit one or the other gender from equal access to learning opportunities and to teaching and learning resources. This study specifically explores gender equality in teaching and learning in ordinary level of secondary education. The study sought to answer the question; how gender equality in teaching and learning practices is adhered to among secondary schools learners.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by a Cognitive Gender Schema Theory. The theory explains how information is processed in the gender related schemas. In respect of the argument that children tend to recall the information which is consistent to their gender schema (Martin, 2000), the theory explains how gender schemas can be used to guide information processing and regulate behaviour (Martin, 2000). The theory also emphasizes personal and attitudinal dimensions of gender schemas. Personal component involves gender typed traits, roles and activities that an individual can personally accept and support. The attitudinal component includes beliefs about other people's gender roles (Liben & Bigler, 2002).

It is argued that gender schema link gender cognition with gender related behaviour. Thus, the schemas are dynamic and they keep on changing based on situations and age. Furthermore, they are determined by personal perception including; cultural differences, individual differences and social experiences (Liben & Bigler, 2002). The Cognitive gender schema theory was used in this study to explain the ways in which learners in schools can represent and process gender related information. It explains how gender identity as boys and girls can guide children to shape their behaviour and make gender related judgements. The theory helps to emphasize the importance of group identity in shaping learners' perception and behaviour (Martine & Ruble, 2004). This has implications in teaching and learning in schools context where a gender responsive pedagogy needs to be adhered to ensure equal treatment and engagement in teaching and learning activities.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Gender Equality in Teaching and Learning in Schools

Gender equality as a concept refers to fair distribution of responsibilities and benefits between men and women. It involves access to rights, equal treatment and opportunities for the realization of full potential and dignity of an individual (UNICEF, 2017). Gender equality goals target to improve equality in access, participation and learning and strengthen equality in education system, policy and planning process (GPE, 2019; Sulaimani & Gut, 2019). Studies on gender equality in schools have revealed critical challenges of equality. This section reviews some relevant studies on gender equality practices in schools and in societies as a whole.

A study by Tienxhi (2017) on gender gaps in Malaysia showed gender gaps in terms of enrolment which extends to every field of study. However, there were fields that have succeeded in achieving much closer gender parity in Malaysia as compared to other countries in Asia and Pacific Regions and in more developed Nations such as the United State of America and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, a study on gender equality in curriculum among students in Turkey showed that students have adopted traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes. Acts of violence were mostly instigated by male students against female students or female teachers. In addition, gender stereotyping and inequalities persisted in the narratives. Women appeared largely in material roles, while males were mostly in decision making and protective roles (Eldor & Gozutok, 2017).

It is argued that development of the curriculum that addresses gender inequality cannot happen in isolation from other aspects of schooling, particularly approaches of teaching and learning and interaction within the classroom. Whatever the content of the curriculum, equity will not be achieved if girls are discouraged from speaking and that the physical environment does not provide them equal access to education and to other amenities such as girls' toilets and wheel chairs for physically challenged individuals (Eldor & Gozutok, 2017). Therefore,

highlights from different scholars show that gender equality is necessary for achieving education for all. Likewise, national policies consider gender equality as important in ensuring access to education for all.

2.2 Gender Equality in the Treatment of Boys and Girls in Schools

Gender equality is a critical dimension in providing education services at all levels of education (The UN Women Organisation (2013). According to Aikman and Unterhalter (2005), gender equality in education as a goal cannot be separated from gender equality in society as a whole. This perception entails translating the sustenance of gender equality efforts to promoting gender equality in society involving strengthening equality in providing education services.'

In the views of Subrahmaniah (2005), gender equality in education does not only mean the education system with equal numbers of boys and girls participating, who may progress evenly through the system, but also a consideration of the right to education (access and participation), as well as rights within education (gender sensitive educational environments, processes, and outcomes), and rights through education (meaningful education outcomes that link education equality with wider processes of gender justice). It also involves how school teachers treat female and male students. The report by OECD (2015) interprets gender equality in education as equal treatment of girls and boys. In these respects, policy prescriptions mostly focus on eliminating discrimination and providing the learning environment, which is tailored to the needs of individual students, regardless of gender.

Scholars argue further that unequal treatment of boys and girls may contribute to psychological barriers against education outcomes and success which can negatively affect learners and lead to educational inequalities. The disadvantaged and marginalised individuals who tend to experience inequalities are likely to fail in their studies. These individuals feel alienated and discouraged, thus, limiting their progress and performance in education leading to differences in educational attainment between the groups (Easerbrook, et al, 2019).

Furthermore, the sense of being marginalised and stigmatized due to social identity can increase anxiety and worry which may have adverse effects to academic performance. The stereotypes about the identity of disadvantaged learners tend to reduce their ability and desire to learn (Lyons et. al., 2018); due to the reduction of motivation and persistence to engage in academic activities (Bedynska, et. al., 2020). Figure1 shows the conceptual framework that explains gender equality in teaching and learning.

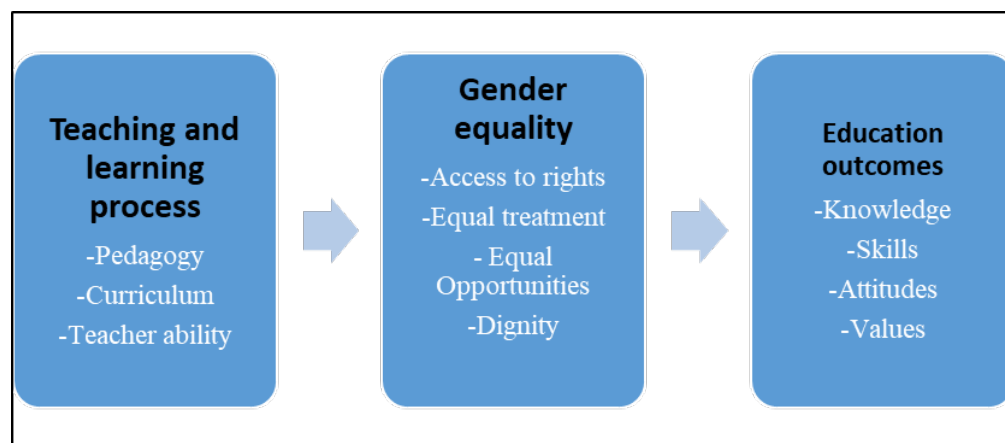


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Gender Equality in Teaching and Learning

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 shows the place of gender equality in access to education, learning process and education outcomes attained by learners both boys and girls. This conceptual framework explains teaching and learning through pedagogy, curriculum and teachers ability.

It shows further the place of gender equality in teaching and learning process reflecting the adherence to important aspects including access to rights, equal treatment, opportunities and individual dignity. These

attributes contribute to attaining equitable education outcomes for all learners. This is then translated into equality in the acquisition of knowledge and skills, attitudes and values and other related competencies among all learners.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 The Study area

The study was conducted in Temeke District in Dar –es –Salaam Region. The population in Temeke is 1,346,674 with 655,137 males and 691,537 females (URT, 2022). The district has 384,046 households with an average household size of 3.5 (URT, 2022).

3.2 Design of the study and Target population

The study employed a convergent parallel research design where both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. This research design enabled the researchers to collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously and analyse data separately.

The study targeted students and teachers selected from a population of 26,678 and 326 students and teachers respectively through simple random sampling. The study also targeted Heads of School, Educational Officers and teachers' representatives selected through purposive sampling from the population of 165, 368 individuals in four wards namely Miburani, Mbagala Kuu, Tandika, and Temeke. Two private and two public secondary schools in Temeke District were involved in the study. Both male and female respondents participated in the study. Teachers and Heads of School were involved in the study because they play a key role in teaching and learning in schools. Educational Officers were involved in the study as they are responsible for the management of educational matters in their respective areas.

3.3 Sample size and Sampling Procedures

The study sample involved 240 respondents including students and teachers in ordinary level secondary schools. Other informants comprising 48 individuals included Heads of School, Educational Officers, and teachers' representatives. Thus, 288 respondents participated in the study. The study used probability sampling techniques where by random sampling techniques was used to select students and teachers involved in the study. Systematic random sampling technique was used to select students in Form Three and Form Four and teachers. The class list was used to select 25 students from the two classes in each school. Likewise, 10 teachers were selected through random sampling from each school. Through this technique, 240 respondents were selected from four secondary schools. Probability sampling technique reduces bias thus every participant has an equal chance of being selected into the sample due to randomization of picking respondents (Creswell, 2012). The selection also ensured equal representation by gender.

Purposive sampling technique was used to obtain 48 key informants from the four wards including Heads of School, Educational Officers (Ward and District Education Officers) and teachers' representatives) who had relevant information based on their respective positions. Four secondary schools (2 public– and 2private) were selected purposively. Data came from both primary and secondary sources. Students, teachers and Heads of School were involved in the study because they participate and play a key role in teaching and learning in schools. Educational Officers were involved in the study as they are responsible in the management of educational matters in their areas of jurisdiction. Both male and female respondents participated in the study.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

Different methods were used to collect data from the respondents. First, In - depth interview was carried out with key informants where by Heads of School, Educational Officers and teachers' representatives were interviewed. This method provided a structured contact with the informants. Semi –structured Interviews and Open - ended questionnaires were used to collect information including socio demographic data such as age, sex, and education level which were used as explanatory variables. Key informants' diversity is important as it allows a wide range of people (Gray, 2009).

Second, survey method with closed ended questionnaire was used to collected data from students and teachers. Likert scale with ten items was used to collect information about gender equality in school practices and in teaching and learning process. Likert scale was chosen as it improves the reliability and validity of study findings (Babbie, 2010). The items that measured gender equality in teaching and learning were computed and

transformed into single variable; GENDEREQUALITY. The transformed variable was used to measure adherence to gender equality by school. Reliability of items in the tool was assessed using scale reliability and Cronbach Alpha was determined. The reliability of the items in the scale was 0.80 which is acceptable.

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Table: Scale Reliability

	Scale Reliability Statistics	Chronbanch's Alpha	No. of Items
1	GENDEREQUALITY	0.80	10

3.5 Data analysis

Quantitative data were coded and entered in a computer. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to analyse quantitative data. Questionnaires that were not adequately filled in were discarded. Therefore, data entry was done for 175 questionnaire from students and 40 questionnaire from teachers. Data were presented and interpreted using cross tabulation, frequency tables and bar charts. Qualitative data obtained from 48 respondents were coded and organized into key themes according to the objectives of the study. Content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. The information obtained from the respondents was summarised and interpreted to generate the findings and general study conclusions.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Characteristics of the respondents (n=263)

The findings show that participation of male respondents was slight high (50.5%) compared to participation of females (49.5%). Also 66.5 and 28.1 per cent were students and teacher respectively. Figure 2 provides the details.

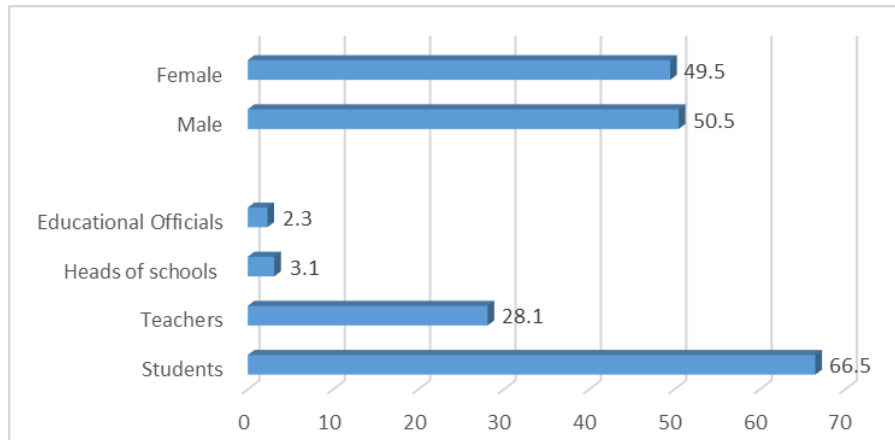


Figure 2: Characteristics of the Respondents

4.2 Adherence to Gender Equality in Teaching and Learning in Schools

The objective of the study was to examine adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning process.

the findings show that gender equality is adhered to adequately in Schools A, B and C, as reported by 72, 70 and 60 per cent of the respondents respectively in the three schools. However, adherence to gender equality was slight lower in school D compared to other schools where only a half (50%) of the respondents reported adequate adherence to gender equality in their school. The findings in Figure 1 show adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning in schools.

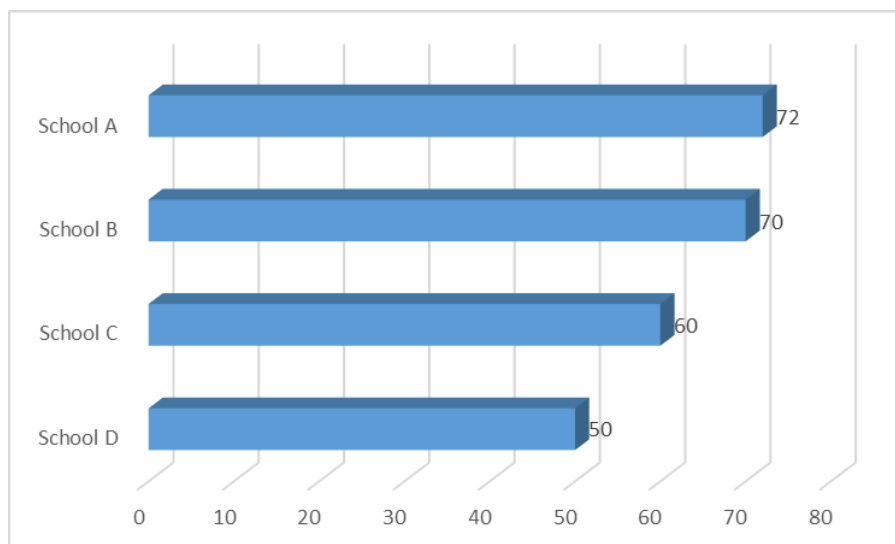


Figure 1: Adherence to Gender Equality in Teaching and Learning by School

The findings obtained in School D suggest that despite the good initiatives and efforts to address gender inequality issues in education, there are still barriers that call for more attention to ensure equal access to education and adherence to a gender responsive pedagogy. It is argued that equitable and participatory learning require full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance to and achievement of all learners including the

disadvantaged and those at risk of being marginalized. Also, equitable and participatory learning ensures equal learning opportunities among learners in the classroom without discrimination (Pedrajas & Jalandoni, 2023). Furthermore, the findings show that gender equality is adhered to adequately in Schools A, B and C, as reported by 72, 70 and 60 per cent of the respondents respectively in the three schools. However, adherence to gender equality was slight lower in school D compared to other schools where only a half (50%) of the respondents reported adequate adherence to gender equality in their school. The findings in Figure 1 show adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning in schools.

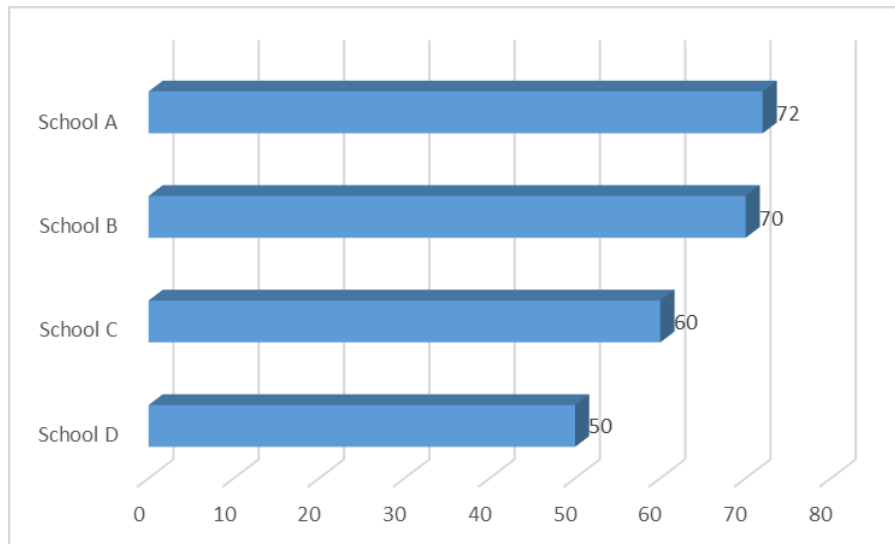


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Furthermore, the study found that adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning process in schools was adequate. The findings show that more than three quarters of the responses established that learning opportunities were fairly encouraged for both girls and boys (92.4%). Likewise, the school environment support equal access to education for both boys and girls (87.3%).

The findings show further that gender equality is adhered to in school practices as well as in teaching and learning process. More than three quarters of respondents (79.4%) show that curriculum address gender equality in teaching, learning and interaction in the classroom. Moreover, more than three quarters (83.9%) of the respondents show that teaching materials present stories equitably for both girls and boys. Likewise learning pays attention to specific needs of boys and girls as reported by 77.7 per cent of the respondents. These findings show that there were improvements in adherence to gender equality issues in teaching and learning. Table 1 shows adherence to gender equality in secondary schools as reported by the respondents.

Table 1: Adherence to Gender Equality in Teaching and Learning

Adherence to Gender Equality in Teaching and Learning		n=175			χ^2	df	P value
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree				
1.	Sharing of learning opportunities is encouraged fairly amongst boys and girls at school	159(92.4)	8(4.7)	5(2.9)	0.784	6	0.992
2.	Physical environment support equal access to education for boys and girls.	153(87.3)	15(8.6)	7(4.0)	7.849	6	0.249
3	Teaching materials equitably present stories for both girls and boys	146(83.9)	17(9.8)	11(6.3)	4.962	6	0.549
4	Curriculum address gender equality in aspects of schooling.	139(79.4)	26(14.9)	10(5.7)	3.027	6	0.805
5	Learning processes pay attention to the specific learning needs of girls and boys	136(77.7)	24(13.7)	15(8.6)	8.033	6	0.236
6	All learners are encouraged to take the full range of subjects and plan for careers in any area.	130(74.7)	28(16.1)	16(9.2)	16.134	6	0.013*
7	Boys and girls perform different roles in school	102(58.6)	31(17.8)	41(23.6)	9.664	6	0.549
8	Negative attitudes towards students with special needs are addressed	102(58.3)	66(37.7)	7(4.0)	31.774	6	0.000*
9	The infrastructure ensures adequate sanitation, and health Facilities	97(55.4)	66(37.7)	12(6.9)	11.545	6	0.073
10	Gender stereotyping and inequalities persist among learners with special needs	45(25.7)	47(26.9)	83(47.4)	11.728	6	0.068

Numbers in brackets are percentages.

Furthermore, the results obtained through in-depth interview also show that there was adequate adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning. The results show that boys and girls are treated equally in teaching and learning. The Head of School from School B Aged 41 years had this to say:

“This school considers gender equality. There are no differences in treating boys and girls in my school. All of them are treated equally in classrooms, extra-curricular activities, and in leadership issues. A good example is the nature of the school itself being a co-education school. Also, the school has proper facilities to manage menstruation for girls, separate toilets and playgrounds for both girls and boys” (August, 2022).

The interview conducted with the Head of School A also shows that gender equality is adhered to in teaching and learning in their school. The Head of School aged 49 reported,

“Teaching and learning are guided by the curricular and syllabuses which are gender sensitive. We also encourage participation of boys and girls in the classroom and in other school activities. But, I think parents can also help to encourage boys and girls to participate in different activities. They (parents) can also give all children opportunity to do school assignments without giving excuses to boys in some activities including house chores” (August, 2022).

These findings show that there are gender sensitive guiding documents and teaching and learning materials in schools. However, encouraging participation of boys and girls in the classroom does not guarantee a gender sensitive pedagogy. Scholars (i.e., Mhewa, et al., 2020) argue that consideration of strategies to be implemented in teaching and learning and the learning facilities for boys and girls are of paramount importance.

The findings show further that gender stereotypes are experienced in families and that they (stereotypes) contribute to impeding performance among learners in schools. This calls for a continued gender awareness

raising in the community and in schools as well. Other scholars (i.e., Dewi et al., 2024) also found that girls spend less time in school work at home. They tend to perform house chores and engage in caring for the family. Similar results were reported by Ward Education Officer on adherence to gender equality among learners in school and in the community. A Ward Education Officer aged 46 had this to say:

“My community is practicing gender equality. For example, both men and women have equal opportunities to serve the community. Also, all children (boys and girls) who are illegible to go to school are in school in all levels (August, 2022).

These results show that there is awareness of gender equality in the provision of equal opportunities. However, adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning focus other important aspects apart from ensuring gender parity in students’ enrolment. Other studies also put forward that rising enrolment of female in schools does not ensure equality. There are social norms that affect gender equality through socialization at home and school environment. Gender equality also focuses on increasing quality education for all learners and equal academic achievements among learners (Islam & Asadullah, 2018; GPE, 2019).

The findings obtained in School D suggest that despite the good initiatives and efforts to address gender inequality issues in education, there are still barriers that call for more attention to ensure equal access to education and adherence to a gender responsive pedagogy. It is argued that equitable and participatory learning require full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance to and achievement of all learners including the disadvantaged and those at risk of being marginalized. Also, equitable and participatory learning ensures equal learning opportunities among learners in the classroom without discrimination (Pedrajas & Jalandoni, 2023).

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achievements among learners (Islam & Asadullah, 2018; GPE, 2019).

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The study examined adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning among learners in secondary schools. Based on the study objectives, the major findings show that there was adequate implementation of gender equality in teaching and learning in secondary schools. The curriculum addresses gender equality in teaching, learning and interaction in the classroom. Moreover, teaching materials present stories equitably for both girls and boys. The study findings provide valuable insights in adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning in secondary schools.

5.2 Practical Implications

The study findings have practical implications for education leaders, teachers and students. The findings could be used to inform policy on adherence to gender equality in pedagogy and school practices. The findings could also be useful in sensitization and awareness rising among teachers and community members on adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning.

The study is of great importance to government, schools, parents and community members at large. The study is envisaged to provide insightful information to education stakeholders and community members in their participation to ensuring that secondary schools adhere to gender equality in teaching and learning process.

5.3 Recommendations

This study recommends that the Ministry of Education Science and Technology in collaboration with education stakeholders should continue to ensure adherence to gender equality in teaching and learning in secondary schools. The study recommends that a gender responsive teaching and learning pedagogy be emphasized in schools and that awareness on gender equality issues needs to be raised at a community level.

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