

The Kenya National Drama Festival is a socializing agent that teaches children lessons about appropriate and inappropriate gender roles and stereotypes. In addition, it persuades them to accept the values represented by the characters and the themes besides providing them with role models for what they can and should be like when they grow up. This study sought to examine the construction and representation of femininity and masculinity in selected plays presented between 2004 and 2010 at the Kenya National Drama Festival (KNDF) using a gender lens. The study had the following research objectives: to investigate how femininity and masculinity is represented in terms of gender roles and stereotypes of the characters, to examine the processes through which the actors/actresses and viewers internalize and interpret and therefore normalize them, and to identify the measures that can be adopted to encourage gender responsive drama during national festivals. In order to determine this; the target population for the study was all the plays presented by primary schools between 2004 and 2010 at the KNDF. The ABC of Gender Analysis Framework model and The Performative theory were used to analyse the plays. The ABC of Gender Analysis Framework model measures the gender representation in terms of the gender roles and stereotypes of the plays selected for study while The Performative theory emphasizes the actors/actresses and viewers role in creating meaning of the contents of the plays. The study employed stratified sampling to select one play out of the three best of every year to participate in the study. The study thus had a sample of seven plays. The study used both primary and secondary data collection techniques. The instruments for primary data collection were: observation for the analysis of plays content and personal interviews. The findings indicated that men, women, boys and girls in the plays are perpetually stereotyped in character and role. The women and girls are seen in the domestic and reproductive sphere while men and boys characters are seen in the productive sphere. Those interviewed revealed a great sense of gender awareness

and sensitivity in regard to gender differentiation through the gender stereotypes and roles presented in the plays. The study recommends that more studies need to be conducted with reference to gender representation in drama especially in other genres that are presented at the KNDF. A comparative study should be carried out on the scripts written by the pupils and those written by the scriptwriters and drama teachers to establish the different point of views and especially in gender representation. Based on the findings, the study recommended the following measures: that the drama teachers, script writers and adjudicators should undertake gender awareness trainings because this will go a long way in ensuring that there is gender responsiveness in all the items presented at the drama festivals from the zonal to the national level. The pupils should be encouraged to write their own scripts based on their understanding of the world.