

## *Original Paper*

# Influence of Parents' Age on Perceptions of the Role of Male Teachers in Preschools in Vihiga Sub-County, Kenya

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### **Abstract**

*Children who are taught by both male and female teachers develop holistically. This means that male teachers are vital in the education of young children. The study was to explore parents' perceptions of the role of male teachers' in preschools in Vihiga Sub-county as well as examine the influence of age on parents' perception of the role the teachers in pre-schools in the sub-county. The study was guided by Albert Bandura's Social Learning theory. Descriptive research design was used to guide the study. The dependent variable was parents' perception of role of male teachers' in pre-schools, while the independent variable was parents' age. The locale of the study was Vihiga Sub County in Kenya. Questionnaire and interview schedules were used to collect data and analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Results from data analysis indicated that parents' perception of the role of male teachers' in pre-schools was negative. It was also clear from the results that the perception was influenced by parents' age. It was recommended that school management should organize programs to help parents to understand the role played by male teachers in preschools in order to change their attitude towards the teachers.*

### **Keywords**

*influence, parents, age, perception, preschool*

## **1. Introduction**

Over the years childcare has been assumed to be women's domain (Wardle, 2004). This is because in many countries preschool education is traditionally associated with childcare (Fagan & Iglesias, 1999). Sari and Basarir (2016) affirm that the roles of preschool teachers were related to traditional gender roles in their communities. An increase in males in preschool would subsequently raise the status of male preschool teachers (Yilmaz, & Sahin, 2010).

Research has shown that male teachers have a striking effect on children during early years of their education and that children who are taught by both male and female teachers become all-round adults (Martino, 2008). Although there is enough evidence on the significant role played by male teachers in preschools, the percentage of males in preschool remains low.

Martino (2008) state that the low participation of male teachers is occasioned by the way teaching in preschools is perceived in many societies as females' territory. The negative perception discourages men from joining the profession (Kesici, 2008). It also makes them avoid teaching in preschools because of prejudice from the society. This denies young children the opportunity to learn from both male and female teachers to enhance their holistic development (Wardle, 2003).

In the western world, despite the structures established to accommodate male preschool teachers, the numbers are still low at 1-4% (Sanders, 2002). In Norway for instance, the percentage of male teachers in preschools was less than 20%, while that of Australia was 4%. In Europe, teaching in preschools is perceived as mother care and therefore contributing to small numbers of male teachers in preschools (Demuyne & Peters, 2006).

The number of male teachers in preschools is also limited in Asia. This is because there are a few males in preschool teaching in Turkey (EERA, 2009). In Taiwan, many of the preschool teachers were mainly female with male teachers' population around 1.13 % (Chung, 2006). This is because of the perception that preschool teaching is a female domain.

In Africa, the number of males in preschools is also low. This is due to the fear of upsetting the traditional gender roles of women by letting in males, hence reducing the power bestowed on the males by society (Creaser & Dau, 2001). In South Africa, there are gender challenges in teaching in preschools because the concept of male teachers in preschools is still foreign and education for the early years has a gendered image where nurturance of young children has been traditionally associated with women. The dominance of female preschool teachers in the early years means that young children lack male preschool teachers as role models (UNESCO, 2011). The lack of male pre-school teachers' role models poses a threat to children's growth and development.

In Kenya, cases of gender distribution in preschools match with that of other countries in the world (Ngome, 2002). This is because the numbers of male teachers participating in preschools in Kenya is generally low. Karanja (2007) notes that the disparities in gender are ingrained in the African culture where child bearing and care are women's roles. In the gender policy in education of 2007, there were only 12.6% of male preschool teachers in 2004 compared to their female counterparts. In Vihiga Sub County, the trend was similar in that there were seven male teachers compared to 275 female teachers in the 152 preschools (Vihiga sub county data, 2013). The low numbers pose a threat to children's growth and development because there will be fewer male role models for the learners to emulate.

This study was therefore designed to establish parents' perception of the role of male teachers in preschools in Vihiga Sub-county, by more specifically exploring parents' perception of the role of male teachers' in preschools in Vihiga Sub-county due the important role they play if given a chance to fully

participate in children's education. No studies so far appeared to have been done to that effect.

### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

Learners who are nurtured by both genders stand a better chance of being all-round adults and ready to take both gender perspectives in facing life's challenges. The male teachers therefore play very important roles in children's education in preschools. Studies by many researchers have been carried out on the relevance of the men in preschool, but none has been carried out in Vihiga Sub-County. Such studies include Owen (2003) perspectives of women on male participation, Chang-Nai (2003) and the gender dimension of ECDE teacher participation in Kenya by Karanja (2007). The review had indicated that there existed insufficient information on studies that have been carried out in Vihiga Sub-county on parents' perception of the role of male teachers in preschool in Vihiga Sub-county of Vihiga County and hence the need for this study.

### *1.2 Objectives of the Study*

- (i) To establish parents' perception on the role of male teachers' in pre-schools.
- (ii) To explore the difference in parents' perception on the role of male teachers in pre-schools across various ages.

### *1.3 Research Hypotheses*

Ha1: There is a difference in perception on the role of male teachers' in preschools between male and female parents.

Ha2: There is a difference in parents' perception on the role of male teachers in preschools across various ages.

### *1.4 Theoretical Framework*

The study was grounded on Albert Bandura's Motivational and Social Learning theory (1977). The fundamental principle of this theory is that personality is learned. According to Bandura, one of the most powerful socialization forces is imitation. Models like parents, siblings or teachers who have been rewarding to the child in the past are likely to be imitated. Eventually children acquire a drive to imitate them (Bandura & Walters, 1977). This imitation of behavior continues during early childhood when the child joins preschool where the perception of both female and male parents towards holistic development of the child is paramount.

Bandura presented an outline of the cognitive component process underlying observational learning which supports the important influences of behavior and cognitive development of the child in preschool. According to the outline, the child selects and processes information, applies general rules or principles, weighs information and makes a decision. According to Bandura children learn by watching both parents and by observing others, listening to others and even by reading. He called this "observational learning". On the aspect of motivation, Bandura looks at reinforcement of behavior as key to learning the behavior. This study envisaged reinforcement as the continued presence of male teachers in preschools and positive perception by the society of the role played by male teachers in children's education.

According to Bandura children acquire behavior by seeing, hearing and experiencing it and learners must pay attention to what the model is doing. He also states that behavior that is produced and practiced until it is perfected will be repeated. If the behavior is motivated and reinforced through incentives like praise and reward, it encourages the person who has copied the behavior to keep on producing it. However, he said that imitating certain behavior is not only determined by its controlling environment but how one cognitively processes information from the surrounding. It is not possible therefore, to learn everything by being actively involved in it.

Therefore, the qualities and personality of the parents of preschool children are said to influence the development of preschool children because the children observe and imitate them. This has a close connection with sex-typing. It is therefore of utmost importance that gender considerations in recruitment of the pre-school teachers to be put in place to ensure the presence of appropriate male role models. However, individual fathers in the society observe that men do not work as preschool teachers nor do they care for young children. This study therefore sought to establish parents' perceptions on the role of male teachers in preschool.

## **2. Research Methodology**

### *2.1 Research Design*

This study employed the descriptive research design because it helped the researcher to obtain the respondents opinions, on the question of demographic factors influencing parents' perception on the role of male teachers in Preschool.

### *2.2 Variables and Variables*

The dependent variable was parents' perception on the role of male teachers. It was measured by asking parents to indicating how good male teachers were when performing the different roles, they were supposed to perform in school. Independent variables were parents' gender, age, level of education and income.

### *2.3 Location of study and Target population.*

The study was conducted in Vihiga Sub County. The study targeted parents of children in 154 preschools within Vihiga Sub County.

### *2.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size Determination*

Purposive sampling method was used to select the county and sub-county. Stratified random sampling method was used to select preschools and parents. The total number of respondents from the schools sampled was 85 parents.

### *2.5 Research Instruments*

Questionnaire and interview were used to collect data. The questionnaire was identified as suitable for the study due to its ease of administration and capability to reach many respondents in a short time. Interview schedule was used to get in depth information from the interviews was used to gather detailed information on parents' perceptions on the role of male teachers in preschools. Content validity

and test-retest were used to ensure the instruments were valid and reliable.

### 2.6 Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected in two stages: In stage one the questionnaire was administered to parents, while in stage two parents were interviewed. The parents were invited to schools with the help of head teachers. The interviews begun by an introduction from the researcher and an assurance of confidentiality and autonomy of the respondents. The quantitative data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, while t-test and ANOVA used to test hypotheses and results presented using tables, figures and text.

### 2.7 Logistical and Ethical Considerations

The researchers after obtaining letter from graduate school of Kenyatta University, permission to collect data was obtained from relevant authorities before collecting data. The names of the respondents were coded and all the information kept confidential. This was done by assuring them of anonymity and confidentiality.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1 Parents' Perception of Role of Male Teachers' in Pre-Schools

The first objective of the study was to establish parents' perception of the role of male teachers' in pre-schools based on gender. To achieve the objective, the perception of both male and female parents on the role of male teachers in pre-schools was measured. The results are as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Parents' Perception of the Role of Male Teachers' in Preschools**

	Poor		Fair		Good		Excellent	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Taking care of children	10	11.8	38	44.7	27	31.8	10	11.8
Communicating with parents	3	3.5	30	35.3	40	47.1	12	14.1
Patient with children	14	16.5	38	44.7	23	27.1	10	11.8
Preventing child abuse	7	8.2	31	36.5	37	43.5	10	11.8
Disciplining children	9	10.6	24	28.2	41	48.2	11	12.9
Dedicated to work	6	7.1	26	30.6	29	34.1	23	27.1
Role models	9	10.6	34	40.0	28	32.9	14	16.5
Relates well with parents	4	4.8	29	34.5	30	35.7	21	25.0
Teaching children	4	4.7	28	32.9	30	35.3	23	27.1
Management of children	10	11.8	33	38.8	34	40.0	8	9.4

Table 1 shows that parents' perception of the role of male teachers' in preschools ranged from poor to excellent. The overall mean scores in parents' perception of the role of male teachers' in preschools were calculated and the results have been presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Mean Scores in Parents' Perception of the Role of Male Teachers' in Preschools**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Male	11	2.71	.378
Female	74	2.61	.671
Total	85	2.66	.525

As shown in Table 2 the mean score in parents' perception of the role of male teachers for males was higher than that of female parents. The overall mean scores in parents' perception of role of male teachers' in preschool was 2.66. The result implies that parents' perception of role of male teachers in preschools was low.

The difference in between in parents' perception of the role of male teachers' in preschools was also determined using t-test and the results have been presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Independent Samples t-test of Equality of Means**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Average parent Role perception	Equal variances assumed	4.77	.032	.46	82	.647	.095	.208	-.318	.509
	Equal variances not assumed			.69	21.08	.498	.095	.138	-.192	.383

Table 4 shows that the difference between male and female parents' perception of the role of male teachers' in preschools mean scores was .095 with a p-value of .647 level of significance (2tailed) implying that the difference between the two means was not significant at .05. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted meaning that male and female parents' perception of the role of male teachers' in preschools was similar.

The results from interviews with the parents had revealed that the parents' were doubtful of the patience of the male teachers and inability to manage their children's behavior. The female parents noted that learners were quiet and observant with the male teacher and only loosened up when they felt secure with the teacher and it took hard work on the teacher's side to win the children's trust.

On the other hand, not all respondents had negative perceptions on male teachers teaching in preschools. Some parents indicated that male preschool teachers were dedicated to their work were disciplined and followed the laid down procedures in teaching. They were also very patient with children as evidenced by the fact that they kept close to the children and the children loved them. The

parents also reported that they could easily discuss children's problems with male teachers who were not as rude as their female counterparts.

The findings are comparable to those found by Sanders (2002) whose study established that women and the society in general were more comfortable working with women at preschools than working with males. The findings also agree with those reported by Berrin, Necdet, Zeynep, Ozlem and Figen (2014) who did a study in Turkey. Results from data analysis had shown that the majority of the parents viewed preschool teaching as female's domain due to the society stereotypes and traditional gender roles. Similarly, Turan (2017) found that parents had negative attitudes towards male teachers, were concerned that male teachers might abuse their children, felt that male teachers could not properly handle children's self-care and have problems communicating with girls because they were not mothers.

In Greece, Rentzou (2011) found majority of the parents supported employment of more male teachers and recognized the challenges they encountered the results which are contrary to the findings of this study. Likewise, Yulindrasari (2017) investigated the conflicting social perceptions of men in Indonesian kindergartens. Results had shown that the respondents had positive perceptions of ECE male teachers.

Sari and Basarir (2016) did a study to analyze teachers' perceptions of female teacher and male teacher within traditional gender roles. Results from data analysis had shown that meanings that male and female teachers attributed to their roles were related to traditional gender roles in their community, results which are supported by the findings of this study.

### 3.2 Parents' Age and Perception of Role of Male Teachers in Pre-Schools

The second objective was to find out the difference in parents' perception on the role of male teachers in pre-schools across various ages. To achieve the objective mean scores in parents' perception of the role of male teachers were determined and the results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Mean Scores of parents' perception of Role of Male Teachers in Pre-Schools by Age**

Age Range	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
18-30	33	2	4	2.88	.487
31-40	30	2	4	2.60	.635
41-50	16	1	4	2.41	.675
51-60	5	1	3	1.84	.673
Total	84	1	4	2.63	.639

As it can be seen in Table 4 the mean scores in parents' perception of role of male teachers' in preschool across the various age ranges ranged from 1.84 to 2.88. The overall mean scores in parents' perception of role of male teachers' in preschool by age was 2.63. The results imply that parents' perception of role of male teachers in preschools was low.

ANOVA was used to determine whether the difference in parents' perception of role of male teachers in preschools across various ages was significant and the results have been presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. ANOVA Results on Parents' Perception of Role of Male Teachers in Pre-Schools by Age**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.996	3	1.999	5.726	.001
Within Groups	27.926	80	.349		
Total	33.922	83			

Table 5 shows that the F statistic was 5.726 with a p-value of .001. The results imply that the mean difference in parents' perception of role of male teachers in preschools across various ages was highly significant and hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

Ahmad, Al-Zboon, Alkhalwaldeh, and Al Khatib (2017) found that less than 1% of the preschool teachers were males and younger parents accepted males' teachers more than older parents, results which correspond to findings of this study.

The study findings are also supported by Lareau (2002) who found that parents of low socio-economic status were not ready to participate in children's education. The findings are similar to those reported by Muthima, Udoto and Anditi (2016) found that the quality of teachers and pupils' sanitary facilities were inadequate and influenced parents' perceptions of education.

#### 4. Conclusions

The first objective was to establish parents' perception of the role of male teachers' in pre-schools based on gender in Vihiga Sub-county. The mean difference in mean scores was .095 with a p-value of .647 level of significance (2tailed) and parents' perception of the role of male teachers' in pre-schools was found to be low and negative.

In the second objective the researcher was to parents' perception on the role of male teachers in pre-schools across various ages. Results revealed that the mean difference in parents' perception of role of male teachers in preschools across various ages was highly significant. The F statistic was 5.726 with a p-value of .00 level of significance (2tailed). It therefore apparent that parents' perception of the role of male teachers in preschools was influenced by parents' age.

The third objective was to determine parents' perception across various levels of education. Finding had shown that the mean difference in parents' perception of role of male teachers in preschools across various levels of education was not significant. It is therefore evident that parents' perception of role of male teachers in preschools was not influenced by their level of education.

In the last objective the study was to find out parents' perception on role of male teachers across various levels of income. Results had shown that the mean difference in parents' perception of role of

male teachers in preschools across various levels of income was not significant. It was therefore clear that parents' perception of role of male teachers in preschools was not influenced by parents' level of income.

## 5. Recommendations

### 5.1 Parents

- (i) Attend sensitization programs on role of male teachers in preschools to change the negative attitude towards male teachers.
- (ii) Recognize the role played by male preschool teachers. This is because parents and community feel that preschool is a domain for female teachers.
- (iii) Have positive perception of the role played by male preschool teachers. This is because the parents' perception of male teachers in preschools was negative and low.
- (iv) Recognize and appreciate the role played by male teachers in preschools. This is because majority of parents felt that male teachers did not have a role to play.

### 5.2 Teachers

Sensitize parents on the importance of gender equity in teaching of pre-school children to change the negative attitude towards male teachers. This is because many parents felt that male teachers do not have a role to play in preschools.

### 5.3 School Management

- (i) Improve salaries of preschool teachers to attract more male teachers to join the profession. This was because the number of male teachers in preschools was small.
- (ii) Organize programs to sensitize parents and the school community on the role played by male preschool teachers and to change the negative attitude towards male teachers. This is because parents' attitudes towards male teachers were negative.

### 5.4 Policy Makers

- (i) Formulation of policy to support employment of more male teachers in preschools. This was because the number of male teachers in preschools was small.
- (ii) Improve salaries of preschool teachers to attract more male teachers to join the profession. This is because male teachers are bread winners and so depended by the family.

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