



## Attendance and Gender: Impact on Students' Academic Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Hamisi Sub-County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** Students' school attendance stands out as a major factor in student academic achievement. Sporadic attendance leads to transient knowledge retention hence dismal academic results manifested by poor/receding test scores. Similarly, some archaic gender stereotypes and gender bigotry plays to the disadvantage of students' thus affecting their schooling. This study attempted to analyze the impact of students' school attendance and gender on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Hamisi sub-county, Kenya. The focus was put on the observed preceding academic achievement of students at secondary school's KCSE with respect to their scores at primary-level schooling. The study was guided by the following objectives: 1. To determine the effect of students' school attendance to academic achievement in secondary schools in Hamisi Sub-county and 2. Establish the effect of gender to students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Hamisi Sub-county. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The target population was 4,295 consisting of 41 Principals, 428 teachers, 3826 students. Simple random sampling was used to select both the teachers and students. Stratified random sampling was used to classify and select schools hence 12 principals. The sample size was 523 respondents consisting of 12 principals, 128 teachers and 383 students. Data collection tools used were structured and unstructured questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. Content validity and test re-test techniques were used to validate and test instrument reliability respectively. A Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.5 provided the benchmark for instrument reliability. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics. Quantitative data was presented using frequency counts, means and percentages with the aid of the SPSS Version 24.0. Thematic trends were used to analyze qualitative data with presentation done using frequency distribution tables, bar graphs, and pie charts. The study established that: The students' school attendance was way below acceptable low. Boys' participation in schooling was higher compared to that of girls. It was recommended that: Secondary schools in Hamisi sub-county should join their programs and routines in a manner that encourages students to attend school. The gender bigotry and stereotypes should be done away with. The government should put in place a clear policy framework to guard against issues that segregate against either gender both at home and school. More emphasis should be placed on the girl child so that they have equal opportunities in schooling with the boy child.

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### 1. Background of the study:

#### 1.1. The Attendance Aspect and Academic Achievement

The government of Kenya has consistently allocated a significant proportion of its resources to education. Buchmann (1999) says that the Kenya government had enacted policies that signaled greater educational opportunities for all Kenyan children and sent the message that the government was taking steps to create an even more meritocratic educational system (p. 63). This is in line with the dictates of the World Declaration on EFA (1990) to which the country is a signatory. Students' school attendance is an issue that can be identified as giving rise to concern about student learning and academic achievement. Absenteeism is detrimental to students' achievement, promotion, self-

esteem, and employment potential (DeKalb, 1999; Jones, 2006). Wheat (1998) opines that 'the connection between attendance and academic achievement is grounded in common sense, that unless a student attends school, he or she will have difficulty learning what is taught. The obvious outcome shall be low students' academic achievement and vice versa. More research works have even shown that higher school attendance outdoes socio-economic factors in the attainment of higher test scores, (Wheat, 1998; Jones, 2006).

Students' academic achievement, teacher instructions and effectiveness, Principal's discipline, administration and funding are all affected negatively when students fail to attend school chronically, (Baker et al., 2001; Jones, 2006). Students with excessive absences



lag behind peers in the classroom, which in turn increases the probability that at-risk students will drop out of school (DeKalb, 1999). Though EFA, (1990) and Kellaghan, (2004) assert that it cannot be assumed because a child has been to school he/she has, in the words of the World Declaration on Education For All, actually acquired 'useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills and values', many researchers believe student academic success is in regular school attendance (Rothman, 2001).

Smith, (1998) adds that success of the school in carrying out its primary charge of educating and socializing students is contingent on students attending school regularly". Student school success is evident in their attainment of high test scores in local and national examinations. Baker et al. (2001); Jones (2006), noted also that attention to the pointers within the family, the society, individual student's circumstances and the student academic surroundings and materials must be considered while addressing school attendance. The role of examinations in secondary education is key in that they: aid in selecting students during the course of their careers and provide an evaluation of students when leaving school. This evaluation is likely to have very important implications to their further education and even life chances. Examinations at the end of secondary schooling legitimate membership in the international global society, and facilitate international mobility (Kellaghan & Greaney, 1992; Kellaghan, 2004). With this in mind, it is worthwhile considering the status of students' academic achievement within a country, district, county or any other geographical area. These students require intervention, for the benefits of regular attendance may be the difference between a lifetime of burdens and a lifetime of accomplishments (Garry, 1996).

### 1.2. The Gender Aspect and Academic Achievement

Hoy (2010) and Sifuna et al. (2006) defined gender as the social and cultural construction and allocation of roles on the basis of the biologically-determined category of male and female. Sex is naturally determined while gender is socially and culturally constructed. Consequently, gender roles and stereotypes come to fore. Gender has been seen as an important determinant of academic achievement for either male or female students. Girls have been seen to underachieve in most subjects especially in physical sciences and technology-related subjects (Sifuna et al., 2006). Some researchers such as Chambers and Schreiber (2004) as cited by Farooq et al., (2011) found out in their study that there existed a gap in student achievement as a result of gender differences. They found out that girls outdid boys in certain instances.

Farkas et al., (1990) argued that the evidence on whether girls perform better than boys, net aptitude, was mixed. In contrast, however, a consensus was built in the literature that girls outperform boys in both reading and math courses in the U.S. (Duckworth and Seligman, 2005;

Perkins et al., 2004). In spite of this, boys are seen to gain in math achievement compared to girls in elementary schools while girls keep gaining in reading (Penner and Paret, 2008; Cole, 1997).

Teese et al. (as cited by Considine and Zappala, 2002) observed that girls also out-perform boys within high and low socio-economic status and that the achievement of boys deteriorates more rapidly than that of girls as they move down the socio-economic scale. This is attributed to family structure. As Sifuna et al. (2006) added, gender roles disadvantage the academics of girls as seen in the allocation of more challenging chores to boys which build their aptitude and attitude. Girls perform routine, motherly duties requiring less creativity. It is also widely seen that girls do not have ample time for homework as they are kept busy while boys use their time in books. In a nutshell, gender roles and stereotypes, in view of the researcher, may end up impacting negatively on either male or female students hence contribute to academic underachievement among the students.

### 1.3. Statement of the Problem:

Secondary school Students' academic achievement in Hamisi sub-county (2011–2014) has been analytically observed to be below expected level. The worst-case scenario has been the receding achievement of students at the secondary school's KCSE. That 63.7 % of the students admitted to these schools (2011–2014) had had an entry mark of at least C+ or 273 marks and above in primary school summative examination (KCPE). Of this percentage number of students, only 38.0 % got the same grade (C+) and above in KCSE (Primary data on sample schools, 2015). Research work done at Ogun state in Nigeria by Asikhia (2010) notes inter-alia factors such as; type of family, family size and the position in which one is born, family educational background, and social economic status, school location and its buildings and quality of the teaching staff as key factors to students' academic achievement in secondary school by students. Just like theirs, many a research works tend not to explain the role of student attendance and gender to their academic achievement with especial interest to the relative academic achievement at primary and secondary school. This researcher found too little of such work in the study area. To demystify the issues raised, this research aimed at analyzing the impact of students' school attendance and gender to their academic achievement.

### 1.4. The purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study was to analyze factors contributing to students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Hamisi Sub-county, Vihiga County - Kenya with specific attention on students' school attendance and gender. High performing students in primary school who could not return a higher grade in secondary school.



1.5. Research Objectives:

This study was guided by the following objectives:

- 1) To determine the effect of students’ school attendance to academic achievement in secondary schools in Hamisi Sub-county.
- 2) To establish the effect of gender to students’ academic achievement in secondary schools in Hamisi Sub-county.

1.6. Research Questions:

This study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the school attendance level of students in public secondary schools in Hamisi sub-county with respect to 2011 – 2014?
- 2) What gender issues/differences exist among students in public secondary schools in Hamisi Sub-county?
- 3) How do school attendance and gender affect students’ academic achievement in public secondary schools in Hamisi sub-county?

2. Methodology:

2.1. Research Design:

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. By virtue of the large sample size used in this study (523 respondents), this design offered required efficiency in collecting large amounts of data by interviewing or issuing questionnaires to the sampled individuals (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Descriptive survey research design, as per Salaria, (2012) employs the application of scientific method by critically analyzing and examining the source materials, by interpreting data, and by arriving at generalization and prediction. This design also allows for analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data (ibid). It is also noted that descriptive research is devoted to a gathering of information about prevailing conditions and or situations for purposes of description and interpretation (Aggarwal, 2008; Salaria, 2012). Since this study attempted to observe factors contributing to students’ academic achievement in respect to attendance and gender, these researchers considered the design appropriate for this study.

2.2. Study Area:

The study was carried out in Hamisi sub-County which is one of the four sub-Counties of Vihiga County, Kenya. Hamisi sub-county, formally Hamisi District, incidentally forms the Hamisi constituency.

2.3. Target Population:

This study targeted 41 public secondary schools within the sub-county which had been presenting candidates for the KCSE examination for the period 2011-2014. A total of 3,826 students (both boys and girls), 128 teachers and 41 Principals in Hamisi sub-county

participated in the study. In total, the research targeted 4,295 persons. The summary is as in table 1 below.

Table 1: Target Population

Divisions	Schools	Principals	Teachers	Students
Tiriki West	24	24	251	2581
Tiriki East	17	17	177	1245
Totals	41	41	428	3826

Source: DEO’s Office, 2015.

2.4. Sample Size and Sampling Procedures:

These researchers used simple random sampling to select 12 public secondary schools, 12 Principals, 128 teachers and 383 former secondary school students ( years 2011-2014). The use of simple random sampling was applied because it gives each member of a population an equal chance of being selected (Kombo and Tromp, 2000). It also allows for the generalization of the yielded data and subsequent findings to the entire population. Stratified random sampling was used to classify public secondary schools into two divisions i.e. Tiriki West and Tiriki East. These homogeneous sub-groups so created allowed for proportional representation of the population sub-groups (Kombo and Tromp, 2000). The sample size of between 20%-30% according to Best and Khan (2003) proposed figure, gives ideal sample size for providing reliable data when selected randomly. By virtue of having a larger student population, Kombo and Tromp (2000) recommendations’ of a 10% - 30% sample size was used. See table 2 below.

Table 1: Sample size

Divisions	Schools	Principals	Teachers	Students
Tiriki West	7	7	75	258
Tiriki East	5	5	53	125
Totals	12	12	128	383

Source: Hamisi Sub-county DEO’s Office (2015)

2.5. Data Collection Tools:

Questionnaires, interviews schedules and document analysis procedures were used to collect data in this study.

2.6. Validity and Reliability:

As Wiersma (1995) puts it, content validity is used to establish a representation of the items with respect to the objective(s) of a study. Content validity of a test is a measure of how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure (Kombo and Tromp, 2000). To improve the validity of data collection instruments, these researchers sought expert knowledge from lecturers from Mount Kenya University and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. The ability of a test to give a similar return of results after several tests are done is the reliability of the test instrument under investigation,



(ibid). The test and retest technique was used to achieve reliability of tools in this research in which a score of  $r = +0.5$  was obtained and considered appropriate as per Bowa (1997).

2.7. Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

These researchers followed due process in the acquisition of the required letters of authorities from among others the Kenya National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the District Education Office (DEO) to carry out research in Hamisi sub-county. Letters were taken to sample schools in person informing the respondents of the imminent study with an indication of the date of questionnaire delivery. These researchers then delivered the questionnaires on the agreed date to the respondents and allowed sufficient time before going back to collect them. On the day of the questionnaire collection, the researcher carried out interviews with the principals. All respondents were assured of the highest degree of confidentiality with which data provided by them was to be treated

Data analysis was done using mixed methods i.e. both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS version 24.0 and presented in frequency tables, graphs, pie charts, and measures of central tendency. Qualitative data from the in-depth interviews was analyzed thematically and presented appropriately.

3. Findings and Discussion:

This study involved 12 principals, 128 teachers, 383 students. Questionnaire return for teachers stood at 121 representing 94.5% while for students the return was 311 questionnaires which represented 81.2%.

3.1. Demographic Factors:

3.1.1. Gender and Age of Respondents:

The number of male teachers exceeded that of females' in that 67(55.4%) represented males while 54(44.6%) were females. As regards principals, 3 (25.0%) were females while 9 (75.0%) were males. Regarding students, males stood higher at 182(58.4%) while the female student number was 129(41.6%). Table 3 shows the gender distribution of the respondents who took part in the study.

The higher number of males as shown in the table and figures above could suggest that there were more males among the target population than females. The finding is true to what World Bank (1998) report on the overall status of women in Africa. Women's participation in national educational systems is biased due to the socio-cultural and economic environments. Women are seen to be inferior and even the political environment does not favor them. They lag behind almost in all aspects, education notwithstanding. It is largely assumed that educating women would make them too independent thus

make them deviate from their roles such as looking after the children, their husbands and the homestead (World Bank, 1998).

Table 4 shows the age of principals and teachers while table 5 shows that of the students who took part in this study.

Table 3: Gender of respondents

Category of Respondents	n	Gender	Frequency	%
Principals	12	Male	9	75.0%
		Female	3	25.0%
Teachers	121	Male	67	54.5%
		Female	54	44.0%
Students	311	Male	182	58.4%
		Female	129	41.6%
DEO	1	Male	1	100%
		Female	0	0.0%
AEO	1	Male	1	100%
		Female	0	0.0%

Source: Researchers (2015)

Table 4: Age of Respondents – Principals, Teachers

Category of Respondents	Age brackets				Total
	30 or below	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 or above	
Principals	0 (0.0%)	3 (25%)	5 (41.7%)	4 (33.3%)	12 (100%)
Teachers	38 (31.4%)	47 (38.9%)	31 (25.6%)	5 (4.1%)	121 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork (2015)

Table 5: Age of Respondents – Students

Age Bracket	15 –17	18 – 19	20 – 21	Above 21	Total
No. of Students	24 (7.7%)	190 (61.1%)	61 (19.6%)	36 (11.6%)	311 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork (2015)

As indicated in the tables above, this study established that none of the principals was aged below 30 years. Most principals, 5(41.7%) were aged 40 – 49 years while 3(25%) principals had their age lying within bracket 30 – 39 years. The largest number was 5 (41.7%) whose age fell between 40 – 49 years while 4(33.3%) principals had their ages at 50 or above. Considering this age brackets, it was worthwhile noting that all the principals were mature individuals whose median age revolved at around 40 - 49 years. Studies carried out on age and decision-making suggest that adults (persons above 26 years) have developed varied and sophisticated ways to contrast the elements that affect a decision (Maria et al.,

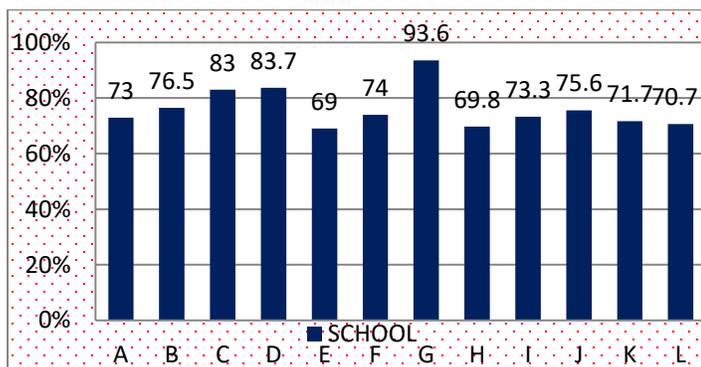


2007). This could be the result of past exposure and experiences.

Having the highest number (41.7%) of principals within the age bracket of 40 – 49, these researchers opined that these principals were better placed to lead the schools in Hamisi sub-county well. On the side of teachers, 38 (31.4%) were aged 30 years and below. A total of 47(38.9%) had ages between 30 – 40 years, 31 (25.6%) had ages between 40 – 49 years. 5(4.1%) teachers were aged above 50 years. For students, 24(7.7%) were aged between 15 – 17 years. A total of 190 (61.1%) were between 18 – 19 years of age with a total of 61 or (19.6%) falling in the 20 – 21 age bracket. Finally, 36 students, 11.6%, were above 21 years of age at the time they did their KCSE.

### 3.2. Students' School Attendance

Regular school attendance by students – as elucidated in the background of this study – is vital in enabling students to attain highly in their academics. Consequently, these researchers sought to find out and analyze data related to this aspect in Hamisi sub-county secondary schools for the period of years 2011 – 2014. See the data collected on Students' School Attendance as indicated in the subsequent figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** Students' Attendance in Secondary Schools  
Source: Fieldwork (2015)

Data as indicated in figure 1, show that only 1 out of the 12 sample schools had an average attendance of above 90% (school G, 93.6%) for the four-year period. Only two schools (schools' C and D) had their student average attendance (A) of  $80.0 < A < 90.0$  i.e. 83.0% and 83.7% respectively. Seven other schools constituting 58.3% of the sample schools had student average attendance for the same period of between 70.0% and 79.0%. It should be noted with concern that all these percentage figures inform that most students in Hamisi sub-county did not attend school well enough to be ready for national assessment at the end of their secondary schooling. The resultant effect was (as put forward by Rothman, (2001) who found a positive correlation between regular school attendance and academic success)

student low/poor test scores and receding achievement by bright students in the sub-county.

Table 6 below shows a more comprehensive data depicting each school's students' annual average attendance for the four years under study. An average of the averages was also computed. See the table below.

Table 6: Average Attendance of Students (Dashes represent missing data).

Year School	Annual Average Attendance of Students				Average of Attendance (For 4 years)
	2011	2012	2013	2014	
A	75 %	61 %	--	83 %	73.0
B	75 %	78 %	74 %	79 %	76.5
C	82 %	84 %	86 %	90 %	83.0
D	--	83 %	82 %	86 %	83.7
E	69 %	68 %	64 %	75 %	69.0
F	--	74 %	75 %	73 %	74.0
G	91 %	--	94 %	96 %	93.6
H	72 %	72 %	68 %	67 %	69.8
I	74 %	72 %	71 %	76 %	73.3
J	--	75 %	71 %	81 %	75.6
K	71 %	69 %	--	75 %	71.7
L	--	71 %	69 %	72 %	70.7

913.9 = 76.2%

Source: Researchers (2015)

The table above shows the grand average attendance of students computed from annual averages for four years for each school. School A, for instance, had a grand average of 73.0% attendance of its students in school for the period 2011 – 2014. The data collected from the students' attendance registers for the years 2011 – 2014 capturing the annual average attendance of the students painted a picture of students who were almost always absent from school. This was evident from an average attendance of 76.2% for all the sampled-out schools. This revealed that each of the KCSE candidates in Hamisi sub-county secondary schools attended 76.2% of annual learning time each year for the four years under study. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) define chronic absenteeism as missing 10% of a school year for any reason. A school can have an average daily attendance of 90% and still have 40% of its students chronically absent, because on different days, different students make up that 90 percent (ibid). Taking Balfanz and Byrnes assertion into consideration, these researchers deduced that students' school attendance in Hamisi sub-county was worryingly dismal.

### 3.3. Gender alignment vis-à-vis Academic Achievement

These researchers also sought to find out how gender alignment affected students' academic achievement. The issues in the questionnaires for gender



alignment touched on parents obliging upon their children to cook and do other domestic chores instead of reading, duty to take care of livestock, till land etcetera at home, whether brother(s)/sister(s) were given more attention than the respondents in fee payment among other things and finally whether parents ensured that the respondent studied while at home by giving him/her ample time. The data were analyzed with respect to gender and how academics of the respondent could have been affected. Findings from the data were presented in two tables as shown below. Table 7 show responses of the female (girls) and male (boys) students to the issues stated. See the table below:

Table 7: Girls' Responses on Gender alignment

ISSUE	Gender	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
I was always obliged upon to cook and do other domestic chores instead of reading	Girls	80 [62.0%]	14 [10.9%]	35 [27.1%]
	Boys	30 [16.5%]	27 [14.8%]	125 [68.7%]
I at times did petty jobs for pay during school holidays and the weekends.	Girls	39 [30.2%]	25 [19.4%]	65 [50.4%]
	Boys	108 [59.3%]	36 [19.8%]	38 [20.9%]
My brother(s)/sister(s) were given more attention or priority in fee payment among other things	Girls	59 [45.7%]	29 [22.5%]	41 [31.8%]
	Boys	67 [36.8%]	29 [15.9%]	86 [47.3%]
My parents ensured that I studied while at home by giving me ample time.	Girls	32 [25.1%]	34 [26.1%]	63 [48.8%]
	Boys	64 [35.2%]	35 [19.2%]	83 [45.6%]

Source: Field data (2015)

Out of the total number of 311 student respondents, 182 were boys while the remaining 129 were girls. From the two tables above it was observed that 80(62.0%) of the female respondents (girls) agreed that they were obliged upon to cook and do many other domestic chores while 35 [27.1%] disagreed doing these chores. On the contrary, 125 [68.7%] of the boys disagreed that they were obliged to carry out the same duties but 30 [16.5%] of them agreed that it was their obligation to carry out the chores. It is worth noting that all these chores were considered a deterrent to a personal study of the students while at home. The girls here were seen to spend most their time carrying out the domestic chores with the boys seemingly having more time to read.

This confirmed Sifuna's et al. (2006) findings that gender roles disadvantage the academics of girls as seen in the allocation of more challenging chores to boys which build their aptitude and attitude. Girls perform routine, motherly duties requiring less creativity (ibid). Only 14[10.9%] of the girls and 27[14.8%] of the boys were undecided on this issue (see tables 7). The female students highlighted chores such as: cooking, laundry, general cleaning, looking after their younger siblings. The boys indicated that they had more time for home-based study especially late in the evenings but the girls seemed to go slumbering with little or no study.

Regarding the second aspect as indicated in the questionnaires, it was found out that 108(59.3%) of boys agreed to at times doing petty jobs for pay during school holidays and the weekends. This compared to 39[30.2%] of the girls who agreed with the same statement. As discovered earlier that most of the parents to these students were of low income, the researcher deduced that the parents relied on these students in supplementing family income through such pay. Boys seemed to be engaged in this more as seen by only 38[20.9%] of them disagreeing and 36[19.8%] being undecided. A high number of the girls, precisely 65[50.4%], disagreed to working for pay with 25[19.4%] being undecided.

Another aspect sought was to establish the level of attention as regards the provision of schooling necessities accorded to either a daughter or a son by the parent/guardian. It was observed that 59[45.7%] of the girl students agreed to the statement that their brothers received more attention or priority in fee payments among other things from their parents. A further 41[31.8%] disagreed that their brothers received this preferential consideration. More boys, 108[59.3%], however, agreed to receive more attention or priority in fee payment among other vital necessities than their sisters. A further 86[47.3%] disagreed that their sisters received more attention than themselves. The remaining 29[15.9%] of the boys were undecided on the issue. Worth noting is a fact, considering these figures, that the parents/guardians to students in Hamisi sub-county seemed to favor the boys more than the girls in provision schooling requirements. The girls' academic achievement must have been affected negatively by lack of especial focus on their secondary school schooling.

The last aspect sought to establish how students were treated while at home as regards gender and studying. The students were asked whether they were given ample time by their parents to study while at home. Data collected showed that 32(25.1%) of the girls agreeing, 63(48.8%) of them disagreeing while the remaining 34(26.1%) being undecided. With the highest percentage disagreeing, it indicated that the girls were kept busy with non-academic duties and that their parents/guardians never compelled them to go studying while at home. Meanwhile, data collected from the boys



indicated that 64(35.2%) agreed to be given ample time to study while 35(19.2%) were undecided. The highest figure of 83(45.6%) of the male students disagreed that the parents/guardians ensured that they studied while at home by giving them ample time.

These researchers, through an open-ended question, sought to find out teacher's opinions towards the participation of boys to that of girls in the learning process in secondary schools in the Hamisi sub-county. Data collected from the teachers showed 71(58.7%) asserting that the participation of boys vis-à-vis that of girls was not equal. This larger percentage opined that boys were more active and outdid the girls both in class work and in the examination. A further 50(41.3%) said that the participation of the two gender was equal in the sense that both the boys and the girls had the same level of participation in academics. In the comment section, some respondents collectively indicated that; Most boys outdo girls in question and answer sessions in class. The girls tend to cower as the boys dominate lessons. Girls act as passive onlookers during practical lessons but tend to excel in literature and grammar with more superior reading skills.

The outcome above tended to agree with Sifuna et al. (2006) findings that girls have been seen to underachieve in most subjects especially in physical sciences and technology-related subjects. That if these girls remain passive through lessons then their academic achievement is likely to recede. Too much domestic chores at home did not help in sparing time for the female students to do their private studies while at home. The boys were pushed into working for pay, use the proceeds to pay for entertainment and spare some time for studies before bedtime. The girls must have become too exhausted to read by this time presumably.

#### 4. Summary of Major Findings

Students' School Attendance was not appealing. Data collected from student registers led to a computed mean attendance of 76.2%. This revealed that each of the KCSE candidates in Hamisi sub-county secondary schools attended 76.2% of annual learning time each year for the four years under study.

This researcher sought to know what students did while not at school in relation to their gender. This information was to be used in analyzing how such activities affected their academic achievement in school. The results from students showed that: 80(62.0%) of the female respondents agreed that they were obliged upon to cook and do many other domestic chores while 35 [27.1%] disagreed doing these chores. On the contrast, 125 [68.7%] of the boys disagreed that they were obliged to carry out the same duties but 30 [16.5%] of them agreed that it was their obligation to carry out the chores. The chores included cooking, laundry and general cleaning and looking after their younger siblings. Most

boys, 108(59.3%), were found to do petty jobs for pay during school holidays and the weekends. This compared to 39[30.2%] of the girls who agreed with the same statement with 65[50.4%] disagreeing to working for pay. The researcher found out that boys received preferential treatment from their parents than the girls in that 59[45.7%] of the girl students agreed this phenomenon did exist. The boys themselves at 108[59.3%] seemed to agree to receive more attention or priority in fee payment among other vital necessities than their sisters.

The students were asked whether they obliged to by their parents to study while at home. Data from the girls revealed that 32(25.1%) of the girls were given ample time, 63(48.8%) of them were not while the remaining 34(26.1%) being undecided. This indicated that the girls were kept busy with non-academic duties and that their parents/guardians never compelled them to go studying while at home.

Slightly more boys, 64(35.2%), on the other hand, indicated that they were given ample time to study while 35(19.2%) were undecided. The highest figure of 83(45.6%) of the students disagreed that the parents/guardians ensured that they studied while at home by giving them ample time.

Data collected from the teachers showed 71(58.8%) asserting that the participation of boys vis-à-vis that of girls was not equal. Boys were more active and outdid the girls both in class work and in the examination. The other 50(41.3%) said that the participation of the two gender was equal in the sense that both the boys and the girls had the same level of participation in academics.

#### 5. Conclusion:

The students' school attendance was way below acceptable low. At an average attendance of 76.2%, students in the sub-county missed a lot of valuable learning time hence the low academic achievement. The problem of non-attendance was seen to be caused by poverty (as seen by many students working for pay) making parents unable to pay fees.

Boys' participation in schooling was higher compared to that of girls and the teachers/principals agreed that boys were edging girls academically. The girls seemed to have lots of domestic chores that compromised their home study time.

#### 6. Recommendations:

The government should sensitize parents on the need for and how to take care of their secondary school-going children with the aim of giving them ample time to study, providing necessities and attending meetings at school for all their children. This will improve students' school attendance. Secondary schools in Hamisi sub-county should join their programs and routines in a manner that encourages students to attend school. The gender bigotry and stereotypes should be done away with. The government should put in place a clear policy



framework to guard against issues that segregate against either gender both at home and school. More emphasis should be placed on the girl child so that they have equal opportunities in schooling with the boy child. Secondary schools should be encouraged to make academic achievement targets in respect to students' entry behavior so that the schools and students always work to augment these previous test scores. This will solve the problem of academic underachievement.

**Conflicts of Interest:**

Authors declared no conflicts of interest.

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