

# Influence of Socio-Cultural Factors on Gender Participation in Basic Adult Literacy Development Programme in Nakuru West Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine the influence of socio-cultural factors on gender participation in basic adult literacy development programme. The study was guided by the institutional theory and employed the descriptive research design. It targeted a population of 1,564 individuals consisting of 17 adult education instructors, as well as, 1,547 learners that were involved in basic adult literacy development programmes in Nakuru West Sub-County. From the population, a sample of 16 instructors and 140 adult learners was selected using the clustered random sampling technique. Semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect data from the learners while interview guides were used to gather data from instructors. Quantitative data was analysed using percentages and the chi-square test while qualitative data was analysed using the thematic technique. Results showed that women had greater participation in basic adult literacy development programme in Nakuru West than men in terms of enrolment, class attendance, class involvement, and course completion. The low participation of men in basic adult literacy development programme was influenced significantly by the gender of the instructors ( $p = 0.046$ ). Based on these findings, the study recommends that the directorate of adult education in Nakuru West and instructors should incorporate intercultural education in the basic adult literacy development programme and promote gender parity in the programme's teaching workforce.

**Keywords:** Socio-cultural, Gender participation, Basic adult literacy development programme, Stereotypes, Family responsibilities, Family support, Nakuru county, Kenya.

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### Highlights of this paper

- The aim of this study was to examine the influence of socio-cultural factors on gender participation in basic adult literacy development programme.
- The study was guided by the institutional theory and employed the descriptive research design.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Basic Adult literacy development programme (BALDP) is generally a course aimed at improving basic literacy skills such as reading, writing, numeracy, communication, and cultural literacy among grown persons (Pinder, 2011). Research has documented various benefits of literacy including greater self-confidence and self-esteem, improved voice and decision-making role in the community, deeper awareness of the social environment, enlarged social networks and enhanced understanding of the importance of educating children. BALDP are a common phenomenon in many parts of the globe, but major gender disparities have been observed among learners participating in these programmes. In the Netherland, Severians and Dam (2012) documented that women outnumbered men and were more successful in adult education programmes but there is no consensus regarding the factors that have contributed to this gender disparity. According to Lauglo (2010) adult women lag behind their male counterparts in terms of their level of schooling. Consequently, most BALDPs find it easy to attract female learners than males.

Aitchison and Alidou (2009) also observed that most learners in BALDPs in Africa are women and the participation of men is declining. In Nigeria, Sanda (2014) found that more females were attending literacy classes compared to men. In her research done in Borno state in Nigeria, she found out that only 28% of the participants attending BALDP in 2011 were males. She further noted that male participation in BALDP was hindered by dispositional barriers related to their thoughts and attitude, institutional barriers related to social norms and existing policies, and situational barriers such as time and money.

At independence, the Kenyan government identified ignorance as one of the major obstacles to the country's development. To promote literacy among its adult population who had not gotten the opportunity to attend school, the government established the Board of Adult Education (BAE) in 1966 under the Board of Adult Education Act (Republic of Kenya, 2012). The Act led to the creation of the basic adult literacy development programme (BALDP) (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The BALDP seeks to equip illiterate adults and youths who are out of school with reading, numeracy, communication and writing skills. By 1979, the government had established 11,766 adult literacy centres with an enrolment of 415,074. The enrolment however started to drop and reached 93,052 by the year 2000 despite the fact that adult illiteracy level remained high.

Apart from the low enrolment problem, Ndiku, Muthamia, Ipara, and Obaki (2009) noted that there were glaring gender and regional disparities in the provision of adult basic education. In 2005, female comprised the largest segment of learners in BALDP at 72.9% as compared to males whose proportion was 21.1% (Ndiku et al., 2009). In another study, Mogeni (2012) found that 62.5% of individuals participating in BALDP in Masaba North Sub-County were women while Wanja (2012) also found that women constituted 71% of the individuals enrolled in BALDP in Magumoni Sub-County in Meru County. These studies provide evidence regarding the existence of gender disparity in the Kenyan BALDP setup in favour of women but did not explore factors responsible for this disparity.

In Nakuru County, it is estimated that 17% of adults have no formal education while the rate of illiteracy among males stands at 16.2% (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2013). The gender disparity in BALDP in favour of women suggests that these men may not get the opportunity to benefit from the programme. The

disparity also goes against the BAE policy of equity, which asserts the need to accord equal opportunities in the distribution of programmes, resources and services. Studies conducted in other countries show that gender disparities in adult education could be linked to several factors including; a culture that makes men unwilling to sit in class with their wives or to be taught by female teachers, family responsibilities that reduce the time available to attend class and lack of support from the family (Aminchi, 2015; Huisman & Smits, 2015; Lauglo, 2010). It is not clear which of these factors have contributed to the gender differences in BALDP participation in Kenya. This study sought to address this research gap.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study was guided by the Institutional Theory, which was first proposed by Richard Scott in 1995 to explain how certain phenomena such as gender disparity in education are institutionalized within a given community (Scott, 2008). The theory asserts that behaviours of actors within a given society are established using three forces: normative, cognitive and regulatory forces. Normative forces refer to pressure that originates from general beliefs, norms and expectations regarding the issue or behaviour in question (Bright, 2014). For instance, girls are more likely to develop low academic expectation when societal norms allocate traditional roles such as housework and caregiving to them.

Cognitive forces refer to pressure that originates from people's knowledge of the way the society has internalized a given behaviour or issue (Scott, 2008). People tend to pursue behaviours that according to their understanding will confer greater benefits to them. For instance, girl education may be undermined in a community where dowry traditions increase the benefits of marrying-off girls early as opposed to investing in their education (Branisa, Klasen, & Ziegler, 2010). Similarly, girls' education may be undermined by the understanding of the discrimination that exists in the labour market where women tend to attract lower wages than men. The cognitive aspects thus highlight the importance of creating awareness about the benefits associated with educating all members of the society including girls and women.

Regulatory forces refer to pressure that emanates from laws, rules and procedures in a given society (Scott, 2008). A given behaviour is more likely to become entrenched in a society when existing laws and policy reward this behaviour while the same behaviour will be abandoned in a society where rules and policy tend to punish this behaviour. For instance, affirmative action policies such as reducing college entry points for girls, allocating a certain portion of public jobs to women and sponsoring women who excel in academics may reinforce the education of girls (Dilli & Westerhuis, 2018).

The Institutional Theory was relevant to the present study as it provided a framework for examining gender participation in BALDP. The theory contends that the participation of males and females in this programme is likely to be shaped by normative forces such as cultural values and beliefs, cognitive forces such as community members understanding of the benefits of the programme and regulatory forces such as giving material support to economically disadvantaged learners.

### **2.1. Empirical Review**

Basic Adult Literacy Development Programme is an alternative system of enhancing numeracy and literacy that target adults (Blunch, 2017). Illiteracy was identified as one of the impediment to the development of Kenya at independence. Helping all citizens to acquire basic literacy became one of the priority areas for the Kenyan government. Consequently, the basic adult education programme was developed as part of the broad adult literacy programme. The aim of the BALDP was to promote literacy for all, encourage use of Kiswahili as a national

language, enhance positive attitude towards the national heritage, and encourage learning as a life-long process (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The national BALDP curriculum covers four major areas: reading and writing, numeracy, Kiswahili, and English.

Despite the government's efforts to bring gender equity in BALDP, cultural practices have proved to be hard to eradicate as a factor leading to gender disparity. There is an African stereotype that women are not supposed to be superior to men in any way (Njeri, 2011). Therefore, most men refuse to attend BALDP with female tutors. There are cases where men dropped out of BALDP classes when women perform better than them. They value their pride so much that they cannot accept a situation where women would perform better than them. This phenomenon was recorded in a study by Sanda (2014) where most of the men in Nigeria who had dropped out of BALDP stated inability to compete with female counterparts as the main reason for dropping out of the programmes. In his research, Aminchi (2015) found out that gender stereotyping was a significant reason for the low attendance of women in adult literacy classes. The study examined factors influencing low level of women participation in literacy programme in Maiha local government area of Adamawa state, Nigeria. Findings revealed that stereotypes regarding the role of women were major barriers to BALDP enrolment by women. It emerged that most community members believed that the main role of women in society is to procreate and take care of the home.

In survey by UNESCO. (2017) which examined participation in BALDP in Turkey, most people stated that the reason for not attending adult literacy classes was the fear of being branded as illiterate. The survey established that in many regions in Turkey, people going for adult classes were perceived as "fall," a layman language meaning a fool. This perception prevented many people from enrolling into BALDPs. However, the study did not examine whether the perception affected males and females differently. Similar findings were also obtained in the study by UNESCO (2013) where it was found that many people in Uganda were unwilling to join BALDPs because they were worried that their enrolment would confirm their illiterate status and portray them as inferior members of the community. In some areas, BALDP participants were referred to as "fala", which is a Swahili word for idiot.

In Kenya, Wanja (2012) found that social factors such as lack of adequate facilities and unfriendly learning environment were largely responsible for the gender disparity observed in BALDP in Magumoni Sub-County in Meru County. The researcher observed that BALDP were conducted in early childhood education (ECD) centres, an environment that did not inspire confidence among potential participants. The centres also lacked basic resources such as books. Mogeni (2012) found that socio-cultural factors were the leading cause of decline in male participation in BALDP in Masaba Sub-County. Findings showed that most males left classes because females were performing better. Others were not willing to share classes with women. It was also observed that most classes placed together young adults with older adults leading to feelings of discomfort among the older adults especially when the young adults were females.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study made use of the descriptive research design. Particularly, the design entailed collecting the views and opinions of individuals who had been exposed to the study variables. It used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The target population was 1,564 individuals comprising of 17 adult education instructors stationed in Nakuru West Sub-County, as well as, 1,547 adult learners who enrolled in the BALDP in Nakuru West Sub-County (Nakuru West Sub-County Adult and Continuing Education Officer, 2018). These individuals were targeted because they had direct experience with the BALDP in the study area and thus, they were in the best position to provide information regarding factors that influence gender participation.

### *3.1. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques*

The sample size for proposed study was determined using the [Mugenda and Mugenda \(2003\)](#) recommendation that for a large population of above 1,000 individuals, a sample that is equivalent to 10% of the population would be sufficient for statistical analysis. Based on this recommendation, the appropriate sample size for the study was determined as 156 individuals. The random sampling technique was used to select respondents from the population. First, ten centres were selected from the 11 adult learning centres that were in existence in Nakuru West Sub-County using the lottery method. The names of the 11 centres were written on small pieces of papers, folded and shuffled. The researcher then picked 10 pieces of papers and the names of the centres contained therein were included in the study. The remaining centre was left out for purposes of conducting the pilot study. The 10 centres that were selected using the lottery method had 16 instructors who were automatically included in the study. In addition, 14 learners were selected randomly from each of the 10 centres to make a total of 140 learners.

### *3.2. Data Collection Tools and Procedures*

Two instruments of data collection were used: (1) questionnaire for adult learners and (2) interview guide for instructors. The questionnaire was developed in line with the study variables that included gender participation in BALDP and socio-cultural factors. The questionnaire contained close-ended questions that sought to elicit the respondents' views regarding the study variables. An interview guide was used to collect data from instructors in the adult literacy centres in Nakuru West Sub-County. The guide was semi-structured in nature, meaning that it comprised a list of uniform initial questions that were posted to all participants, and follow-up questions that differed from one interviewee to the next based on their responses to the initial questions. Both the questionnaire and the interview guide were pilot-tested by collecting data from Nakuru District Headquarter A. centre. The pilot study data was used to enhance the validity of the research instrument.

Research approval was obtained from St. Paul's University, the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), the Nakuru County Commissioner and the Nakuru County Director of Education. Once these approvals were obtained, the researcher approached the heads of the learning centres, explained the study to them and asked for permission to conduct the research in their centres. The researcher with the assistance of the instructors selected adult learners in each centre, informed them about the study and personally administered the questionnaire to those who agreed to participate. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher rather than being left to the respondents in order to overcome the illiteracy barrier. All the instructors present in the 11 adult literacy centres were also interviewed.

### *3.3. Data Analysis Methods*

Quantitative data was sorted, coded and entered into the SPSS version 25 software where it was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies and means were used to describe the current situation within the BALDP in relations to the study variables. Inferential statistics were used to examine the significance of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The specific inferential statistic that was used in this study was chi-square, which was interpreted at 0.05 level of significance. Qualitative data was analysed using the thematic analysis technique. This method entailed analysing responses from all interviewees, identifying similarities and differences in responses, and creating themes that relate to research issues ([Maguire & Delahunt, 2017](#)).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the 156 individuals who were expected to participate, 146 responded by either completing a questionnaire or participating in an interview. This figure translates to a response rate of 93.6%. According to Fincham (2018) a response rate of 60% or above is usually the expectation of most journal editors while for surveys envisioned to represent a large population, a response rate of 80% is expected.

There were more female adult learners (59.5%) than males (40.5%) in the study sample. The results highlight that there is a gender disparity in the BALDP in Nakuru West in favour of women. The studies by Mogeni (2012) and Wanja (2012) also found that men were underrepresented in BALDP in Masaba North Sub-County and Magumoni Sub-County in Meru County respectively. Current findings coupled with the results of the two previous studies suggest that the staff of BALDP centres in Kenya may not be gender sensitive. The results also suggest that there might be elements in the BALDPs that contribute to low enrolment and retention of men in the programme.

The majority of the learners (58.8%) were in the 20-40 years' age brackets. About 26.7% were below 20 years and 12.2% were between 41 and 60 years. Only 2.3% were above the age of 60 years. These findings denote that majority of the learners in BALDP centres in Nakuru West Sub-County are in the early and middle adulthood age. However, the programme has attracted individuals of different age groups including those who are past 60 years. The youthful learners are probably those who had dropped out of formal schooling in their childhood and had decided to advance their education.

Results also showed that majority of the respondents (58.8%) were single. This characteristic could have a positive implication on the participation of both genders in the BALDP. The results mean that majority of the learners are less likely to have many family responsibilities that may hinder them from enrolling and attending the BALDP classes. This marital status is more likely to have a positive influence on female learners because they are disproportionately affected by family responsibilities when they get married.

Results further showed that 32.8 % were married, 4.6% were divorced or separated, and 3.8% were widows or widowers. The proportion of married learners in this programme is much lower than that recorded in the study by Wanja (2012) who found that 81.3% of learners in BALDP centres in Meru South Sub-County were married. This discrepancy suggests that there might be substantial diversity in the learners attending BALDP in different parts of the country in terms of demographic variables such as marital status. Consequently, contextual factors should be considered when interpreting findings of studies investigating adult literacy programmes.

### 4.1. Gender Participation in BALDP

The dependent variable of the study was gender participation in BALDP. One of the indicators that were used to measure this variable was enrolment to the BALDP by males and females. Learners were presented with three questions related to enrolment and asked to indicate their level of agreement with each on a five point scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree). Results are presented in Table 1.

**Table-1. Enrolment of Males and Females in BALDP.**

Key: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree					
Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
In our class, the number of male and female students is more or less the same	28.2	8.4	2.3	32.8	28.2
Many female students have joined the course	9.9	12.2	5.3	29.0	43.5
Many male students have joined the programme	22.9	22.9	7.6	29.8	16.8

Source: Field Data (2020).



Three scenarios were examined; (1) rate of male and female enrolment being more less the same, (2) there being more female enrolling to a centre, and (3) there being more male learners joining the programme. Results in Table 1 shows that the 29.0% of the respondents agreed and another 43.5% strongly agreed with the position that there were many female students joining the BALDP in their centres. About 61.0% agreed or strongly agreed that the number of male students is more or less the same while only 46.6% agreed or strongly agreed that many male students were joining the programme. These results suggest that there is higher enrolment of females in the BALDP in Nakuru West Sub-County. They also demonstrate apathy and disinterest among the males towards the BALDP.

The results are reinforced by qualitative data where most of the instructors who were interviewed affirmed that the number of female learners was higher than the male learners in their classes (Interview Data, 2020). Similar findings were also observed in the study by Mogeni (2012) who found that enrolment and attendance was higher among men than women in Masaba North Sub-County BALDP centres. Wanja (2012) also found that more females than males were enrolling in BALDP in Magumoni Sub-Counties respectively. These findings suggest that males have not fully embraced the BALDP across the country. They also suggest that there are elements within the programme and the communities that hinder the full participation of males in literacy programmes. The present study sought to uncover these factors.

Class attendance by male and female learners was used as another indicator to assess gender participation in BALDP. Respondents were asked to give their views on several issues related to class attendance. Results are summarized in Table 2.

Table-2. Class attendance by male and female learners.

Key: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree					
Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
The class attendance of male and female students at this centre is more or less the same	25.2	27.5	1.5	22.9	22.9
Male students attend most of the classes consistently	18.3	22.9	6.9	28.2	23.7
Female students attend most of the classes consistently	13.0	11.5	4.6	29.8	41.2
Most male students arrive to class before the lessons begin	16.8	18.3	7.6	26.7	30.5
Most female students arrive to class before the lessons begin	7.6	12.2	11.5	28.2	40.5

Source: Field Data (2020).

Results in Table 2 illustrate that majority of the respondents either strongly disagreed (25.2%) or disagreed (27.5%) with the assertion that class attendance of male and female students at their centre was more or less the same. About 51.9% of the respondents held the view that male students attend most of the classes consistently as opposed to 71% who felt that female students attended classes consistently. In terms of class arrival time, more respondents (68.7%) said that female students arrive to class before the lesson begins than those who reported that male students arrive to class on time (57.3%). These results suggest that female learners have better class attendance when compared to male learners. Poor class attendance among the males limits them from benefiting from adult literacy development programme. Poor class attendance sets men up to remain behind in fundamental skills that they require in order to learn more complicated stuff. When they finally attend classes, they find it difficult to catch up with the rest of the learners. Chronic absenteeism could also roll-back the gain that men get from BALDP causing them to relapse into illiteracy.

Current findings are consistent with the study by Wanja (2012) who found that 30% of male students enrolled in the BALDP in Magumoni Sub-County attended at least 5 lessons per week as compared to 42.8% of female learners. Missing 5 lesson per week falls under the definition of chronic absenteeism. The findings by Wanja (2012)

indicated that chronic absenteeism among males is a widespread phenomenon in the country BALDP set up. The findings are also supported by the qualitative data gathered during interviews with the instructors. Most of the interviewees affirmed that the attendance of female students was quite good and that most were always available for class. Some also reported that female learners were more punctual than males. A few interviewees, however, gave differing views suggesting that gender difference in class attendance varies from one learning centre to the next.

The third indicator that was used to measure gender participation in BALDP is the involvement in class by male and female learners. Respondents were asked to give their views on several statements relating to this issue. Their views are summarised in Table 3.

**Table-3.** Class Involvement by male and female learners.

Key: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree					
Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
There is active involvement of both male female students in class activities including answering questions	9.9	3.8	5.3	29.0	51.9
Most male students usually complete all their assignments as instructed by the teacher	9.2	13.7	9.9	18.3	48.9
Most female students usually complete all their assignments as instructed by the teacher	8.4	3.1	13.0	28.2	47.3

Source: Field Data (2020).

Results in Table 3 show that majority of the respondents either agreed (29%) or strongly agreed (51.9%) that there is active involvement in class activities by both male and female learners. More respondents (75.5%) agreed that most female learners usually complete all their assignments as instructed by the teacher as compared to those who felt that male students also complete their assignment (67.2%). These findings imply that there is active involvement in classroom activities by learners of different gender but the level of involvement particularly when it comes to completion of assignment is higher among female learners. They show that female learners are more motivated than males to engage in classroom activities and are more committed to the learning process marked by completion of assignments given by teachers.

Class involvement has a major bearing on the quality of learning as well as on learning outcomes. The low involvement by male learners in BALDP is therefore a point of concern. The qualitative data also point to the fact that there is low class involvement by male learners in the BALDP. Most of the interviewed instructors indicated that female learners were more active in responding to questions in class, asking questions, engaging in discussions with fellow learners and completing their assignments. One instructor explained that:

*Female are involved in class activities more than male because they are influenced by the others and they want to improve their knowledge* (Instructor3, Female, 2020).

Gender differences in class involvement can be attributed to a multitude of factors including the structure of classroom, teaching strategy deployed by the instructor and learning motivation. The current study focused on the role played by socio-cultural factors. The final indicator that the study used to gauge gender participation in BALDP is programme completion rates of male and female learners. Respondents were given a set of statement relating to this issue and asked to give their views. Results are summarized in Table 4.



**Table-4.** Course completion by male and female learners.

Key: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree					
Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
The number of male and female students who complete the course in the centre is more or less the same	14.5	12.2	7.6	38.9	26.7
Many male students complete their course in this centre	13.7	13.0	8.4	38.9	26.0
Many female students complete their course in this centre	6.1	3.8	13.0	34.4	42.7

Source: Field Data (2020).

Results in Table 4 shows that 65.6% of the respondents either agreed (38.9%) or strongly agreed (26.7%) that the number of male and female students who complete the course in their respective centres is more or less the same. About 64.9% reported that many male students complete their course while 77.1% said that many female students complete their course. These results suggest that the completion rate of female learners is higher than that of males as the percentages of respondents who reported that many female students complete their course is higher than those who said that many male students complete their course. These findings are consistent with the study by UNESCO. (2017) who found that in Europe, women who were active in the labour force were more likely to participate and complete education and training programmes compared to their male counterparts. UNESCO. (2017) also found that majority of the individuals graduating from institutions of higher learning across the globe were women. The findings, however, relate to higher education rather than basic adult education, which is the focus of the present study.

#### 4.2. Socio-Cultural Factors Influence on Gender Participation in BALDP

The objective of the study was to examine the influence of socio-cultural factors on gender participation in BALDP. Three socio-cultural parameters were examined: gender stereotypes, family responsibilities, and family support.

#### 4.3. Gender Stereotypes Influence of Gender Participation In BALDP

The first parameter was gender stereotypes such as stigmatization of people attending BALDP, presence of learners of opposite sex in the classroom and the gender of the instructors. Respondents were asked to give their views regarding how these issues affected their participation in the BALDP. Table 5 presents a summary of the views expressed by both males and female learners.

**Table-5.** Gender Stereotypes affecting Learners Participation in BALDP.

Key: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree							
Statement	Gender	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	X <sup>2</sup> TestP-value
My class attendance has been hampered because I feel embarrassed due to stigmatization from the community	Male	47.2	15.1	0	17.0	20.8	0.085
	Female	39.7	14.1	3.8	6.4	35.9	
I am not able to effectively participate in learning at the centre because of the presence of members of the opposite gender	Male	58.5	17.0	1.9	7.5	15.1	0.432
	Female	66.7	20.5	2.6	3.8	6.4	
I am not able to fully engage in learning at the centre because of the tutor's gender	Male	43.4	30.2	3.8	1.9	20.8	0.046*
	Female	67.9	21.8	2.6	1.3	6.4	

Note: \*Significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Field Data (2020).

Results in Table 5 show that more female respondents (42.3%) than males (37.8%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their class attendance had been hampered because they felt embarrassed due to

stigmatisation from the community. The chi-square test ( $X^2$ ), however, showed that the difference in the number of males and females who either agreed or disagreed with this statement was not statistically significant ( $p=.085$ ). A study by UNESCO (2013) found that many people in Uganda were unwilling to join BALDPs because they were worried that their enrolment would confirm their illiterate status and portray them as inferior members of the community.

Current findings, however, suggest that this kind of stigmatization does not affect male and female learners differently and thus play a minor role in propagating gender differences in BALDP participation. This position is also supported by qualitative data where most of the interviewed instructors explained that both male and female learners experience stigmatization from other community members in equal measure. According to the instructors, all learners in the BALDP (both male and female) are ashamed of people finding out their low literacy status. They also have low confidence in their ability to learn leading to low engagement and persistence. One of the instructors expressed that:

*Many learners drop out and others feel ashamed of joining because of the stereotype that this is "Gumbaru" school, which is considered to be for the old uneducated people. (Instructor 14, Male, 2020)*

Similarly, more male respondents (22.6%) than female (10.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the assertion that they could not participate effectively in learning at the centres because of the presence of the members of the opposite gender. These results suggest that the presence of mixed gender in classroom has greater influence on male learners. Similar views were captured during the interview where most interviewees explained that many men at their centres come from communities where women are considered to be subordinate to males and are not supposed to sit together with males. These men thus find it offensive to sit in class with female learners. The situation becomes worse when the male learners are unable to perform as well as or better than the female learners. One of the instructors recounted that:

*Male students shy away from BALDP because of their ego. They feel embarrassed when they are unable to perform as well as or better than the female learners. (Instructor 13, Female, 2020).*

However, the chi-square test shows that the difference in the number of males and female learners who agreed that they are affected by the presence of opposite gender is not statistically significant ( $p=0.432$ ). This finding suggests that presence of mixed gender in a classroom does not have a significance influence on gender participation in BALDP. The results dispel the premise that low participation by male learners in the BALDP is attributed to active participation by female students leading development of a sense of intimidation among male learners. Previous studies such as Njeri (2011) and Ndegwa (2016) indicated that male learners tend to feel uncomfortable in the presence of female learners as their macho behaviour tends to lower their confidence to engage on equal footing with female learners. Current findings, however, suggest that this is not the case in BALDP centres in Nakuru West. The findings highlight a possible subversion of patriarchal attitude and culture in the BALDP centres in Nakuru West. They imply that men and women have become accustomed to sitting and learning together and interacting as equal, which is critical to eliminating gender inequality in the country.

In addition, more male respondents (22.7%) than females (13.7%) reported that they were not able to fully engage in learning at the centre because of the tutor's gender. This implies that the gender of instructors has greater influence on male students than female. The chi-square test showed that the difference in the number of male and female students who reported that their participation was influenced by the teachers' gender was statistically significant ( $p= 0.046$ ). These findings imply that teacher's gender has a significant influence on the differences in BALDP participation by male and female learners. The findings indicate that male learners' react

differently to the presence of tutors of the opposite gender. They suggest that male students are significantly affected by teachers' gender than females. These findings may also point to the possibility that tutors in the BALDP interact differently with male and female learners.

The findings are consistent with the study by Njeri (2011) who found that most communities have the stereotype that women are not supposed to be superior to men in any way. Therefore, most men refuse to attend BALDP with female tutors. The findings are also congruent with the study by Ndegwa (2016) who found that there was gender disparity in the teaching workforce in BALDP in favour of women in Nakuru County. This means that the heightened reaction by male learners to the presence of tutors of the opposite gender may be explained by the fact that the teaching workforce in most BALDP centres in Nakuru West is dominated by female tutors. This issue of the instructors' gender did not come up during the interview.

#### 4.4. Family Responsibilities influence on BALDP Participation

The second socio-cultural factor that was examined is family responsibilities. The study sought to determine whether the family responsibilities of male and female learners contribute to gender disparities in BALDP participation. Respondents' views on this issue are summarised in Table 6.

**Table-6.** Family responsibilities affecting learners participation in BALDP.

Key: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree							
Statement	Gender	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	X <sup>2</sup> Test P-value
My participation in the adult literacy development programme has been hampered by many family responsibilities	Male	47.2	18.9	3.8	9.4	20.8	0.040*
	Female	21.8	28.2	2.6	16.7	30.8	
The class schedules do not accommodate my responsibilities at home	Male	15.1	26.4	5.7	17.0	35.8	0.329
	Female	29.5	24.4	7.7	14.1	24.4	

Note: \*Significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Field Data (2020).

Results in Table 6 show that more female learners (47.5%) than males (30.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their participation in BALDP had been hampered by many family responsibilities. The chi-square test gave a p-value of 0.04, which indicates that the number of females who agreed with this statement was significantly higher than that of male. The findings imply that the number of family responsibilities disproportionately influence women participation in BALDP. These findings are consistent with the study by Severians and Dam (2012) which found that having children had a negative impact on women's persistence with education but had a positive impact on men academic progress. The study by Severians and Dam (2012) was, however, different from the current study as it focused on gender differences in higher education rather than in BALDPs.

The influence of family responsibility on male and female learners was also discussed with the instructors during the interviews. The overarching theme among the instructors' responses was that female learners bear most of the family responsibilities such as taking care of children and doing household chores. According to most instructors, it is the female learners who make compromises and adjust their learning schedules due to their familial responsibilities. One of the instructors stated that:

*Most women have to do laundry work, clean the house and cook for their children before they come to class. In the evening, they have the duty of preparing dinner for the family. It is worse for those who have small children as they have to take care of them the whole day. (Instructor 6, Female, 2020).*

On the other hand, more males (52.8%) than females (38.5%) agreed with the claim that the class schedules do not accommodate their responsibilities at home. Unlike the first question that focused on the number of responsibilities that men and women learners have at home, the second question sought respondents' views regarding the extent to which the class schedule are flexible enough to accommodate their duties and responsibilities. It was founded on the premise that most adult learners are not full-time students and thus are compelled to combine their studies with family and other responsibilities. Findings show that more men than women feel that the class schedules are not flexible enough. The difference between the percentage of men and women who felt that the class schedule did not accommodate their responsibilities was, however, not statistically significant as indicated by the chi-square test, which yielded a p-value of 0.329. This implies that the influence of class schedule on gender participation in BALDP is not statistically significant. The findings indicate that both male and female learners are equally affected by the inflexibility of class schedules and thus, this factor cannot provide a plausible explanation as to why the participation of males is lower than that of female in the BALDP in Nakuru West.

#### 4.5. Family Support influence on BALDP Participation

The final socio-economic factor that was examined is family support. The study had theorized that there is disparity in the level of family support extended to male and female learners which contribute to gender disparities in BALDP participation. Respondents' views on this issue are summarised in Table 7.

**Table-7. Family Support Influence on Learners Participation in BALDP.**

Key: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree							
Statement	Gender	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	X <sup>2</sup> Test P-value
My participation in the programme has been hindered by lack of support at home	Male	26.4	17.0	5.7	9.4	41.5	0.076
	Female	29.5	26.9	3.8	19.2	20.5	
My participation in the programme has been negatively affected because my family does not see the value of this programme	Male	9.4	5.7	13.2	22.6	49.1	0.024*
	Female	25.6	15.4	9.0	21.8	28.2	
My family does not support my participation in the programme because they see it as distraction to my family responsibilities	Male	26.4	17.0	28.3	11.3	17.0	0.029*
	Female	26.9	28.2	7.7	14.1	23.1	

Note: \* Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

Source: Field Data (2020).

Results in Table 7 show that more male respondents (50.9%) than females (39.7%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their participation in the BALDP has been hindered by lack of support at homes. These findings imply that lack of family support disproportionately affects male learners more than female learners. The chi-square test, however, shows that the percentage of male and female respondents who agreed with the statement was not significantly different ( $p=0.076$ ). This implies that both male and female learners are equally affected by lack of family support at home and thus this factor cannot explain why there is low participation of males in BALDP in Nakuru West.

The issue of family support was further interrogated by delving into some of the aspects that may contribute to high or low family support. One of the issues that were examined is the extent to which the learner's family values education. Findings in Table 4.9 show that more male respondents (71.7%) than female respondents (50.0%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the claim that their participation in the BALDP has been negatively affected because their family does not see the value of this programme. The chi-square test showed that the value that male learners' family places on their education was significantly different from the value that female learners' family places on

their education ( $P=0.024$ ). The findings indicate that the families of male learners do not assign high value on the BALDP education. Gill, Hayes, and Senior (2015) explained that a family may assign lower value to education of males if the education programme does not result in financial and material benefits. This may explain why a higher percentage of male learners in BALDP in Nakuru West have families that do not value the BALDP. It is probable that the families of the male learners perceive that the BALDP will not improve their breadwinner's economic capacity and thus view it as less important than other pursuits.

Another issue that the study presumed to have an impact on family support is family members' perception of the BALDP. Specifically, the study sought to examine whether family members perceive the BALDP as a distraction to the normal function of the family. Results in Table 7 reveal that more female learners (37.2%) than male learners (28.3%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the assertion that their family does not support their participation in the BALDP because the family sees this programme as a distraction to the learners' family responsibilities. This statement was founded on the premise that families are less likely to support a learner's participation in the BALDP if the learner's involvement in the programme leads to substantial disruption in the functioning of the family. The study theorized that families are likely to be opposed to BALDP participation if they feel that it will detract the learners from fulfilling their familial responsibilities. Current findings suggest that there is a statistically significant difference in how the family of males and female learners perceive the BADLP as a distraction in favour of the male learners ( $p=0.0029$ ). The findings therefore suggest that the perception that BALDP is a distraction is likely to lead to lower familial support for female learners. Consequently, this perception cannot explain why there is lower participation by male learners in the BALDP centres in Nakuru West.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study concludes that participation in BALDP in Nakuru West is greater among females than males. Women have high enrolment rate, class attendance, class involvement and programme completion rate. These findings led to the conclusion that there are elements within the BALDP in this area that discourage the participation of male learners. Findings also led to the conclusion that the gender of the instructor is the only socio-cultural factor that influences the participation of men in BALDP. The study has found that male learners are adversely affected by the gender of the instructor with most feeling uncomfortable of being taught by female instructors. The Directorate of Adult education needs to develop intervention for addressing this cultural issue.

Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that the Directorate of Adult Education in Nakuru West, and instructors in the various centres should incorporate intercultural education in the BALDP orientation sessions. The intercultural education should be used to prepare learners particularly the male learners on what to expect regarding the gender of the instructors and how they should interact in class. The intercultural education session should also focus on changing the learners' attitude towards the opposite gender and stereotypes regarding gender role.

Policymakers at the Ministry of Education should also make intercultural education part of the BALDP. Intercultural classes should be among the initial lessons that individuals are taken through when they enrol to the BALDP. The intercultural education class should focus on changing the learners' beliefs, stereotypes, and prejudices regarding gender roles. The Directorate of Adult Education in Nakuru West should also put in place measures aimed at promoting gender parity in the BALDP workforce. A study by Ndegwa (2016) found that there is gender disparity in the BALDP teaching workforce in favour of women. Current findings also show that there are

more female than male instructors in BALDP in Nakuru West. Promoting the recruitment of male teachers may therefore increase the enrolment, class attendance, class involvement and completion of males in the BALDP.

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