

GENDER STEREOTYPING AND INEQUALITY IN
DIALOGUES: A CASE STUDY OF MIXED
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UASIN GISHU

DISTRICT.

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ABSTRACT

The great debate on Language use and gender inequality has been going on for at least two decades and continues to intensify everyday. This is because in peoples speech

there are a lot of ideals associated with the incidents of stereotypic attitudes that give

rise to gender inequality, and particularly those that enhance supremacy in creating gender divisions.

In order to investigate linguistic aspects in dialogues that reflect gender imbalances, the study assumes that in Kenyan schools, gender stereotyping and inequality is often exhibited in language use. The study has thus used as a framework Sack's et al model (1974) (cited in Chambers 1995) and Elinor Ochs' language and gender model (1982) (cited in Miller 1993). The former explicates that in mixed-sex conversation, gender inequalities are created in reciprocal language use through the turn-taking system, while the latter supports the stereotyped attitudes in language use through the use of linguistic resources that index gender either directly or indirectly.

It is the endeavor of this study to identify linguistic elements and interactive techniques employed by students and teachers in speech that promote gender inequality in schools.

The study has used observation, interviews and administration of questionnaires to elicit raw data. However, observation and interviews were used on teachers and students, while the questionnaires were used on students only. The raw data was elicited from mixed rural and urban secondary schools. In the analysis, both qualitative, for example; quasi judicial method and quantitative, like use of spread

sheet, Likert scale, statistical computation of ratios and percentages, and Chi-square Test methods have been used in explaining and interpreting the relationships that hold in the data.

The study has found out that there exists gender inequality in schools, which has been perpetuated by the use of gender-biased language by both students and teachers, through their interactive techniques and stereotypic expressions in discourse.

The conclusion in this study is that there is gender inequality in schools. It is hoped

that this study will create awareness in the mainstream society on proper use of language and respect for one's right of expression. This study then is the point of

departure for further study especially on how we can bridge the gender gap in our

local schools by advocating gender sensitive language for both students and teachers.