

## **Social-Cultural Factors Influencing Female Under-Representation in the Management of Public Primary Schools in Rigoma Sub-County, Nyamira County, Kenya**

<sup>1\*</sup>Momanyi Ruth Moraa, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Esther Thuba and <sup>3</sup>Dr. Winfred K. Kithinji

<sup>123</sup>Department of Education, Kenya Methodist University

Corresponding author e-mail: rmomanyi714@gmail.com

**How to cite this article:** Moraa, M. R., Thuba, E., & Kithinji, W. (2022). Social-Cultural Factors Influencing Female Under-Representation in the Management of Public Primary Schools in Rigoma Sub-County, Nyamira County, Kenya. *Journal of Education*, 2(3), 21-30.

### **Abstract**

Various studies around the world show that the majority of public primary schools are headed by male teachers. Despite these observations, no systematic study has been conducted to identify the factors that contribute to this challenge, particularly in the sub-district of Nyamira. The purpose of this study was to investigate social-cultural factors influencing female under-representation in education management among teachers in Rigoma Sub-County. This study employs a descriptive research design. According to the study's findings, gender roles, culture, and conventional views all significantly contribute to the low presence of women in the field of education management. The study concluded that cultural problems led to the underrepresentation of women in education management among teachers. The study recommends increasing teachers' awareness of the impact of cultural factors in education to enable them to advance to leadership positions in schools.

**Keywords:** *Social-cultural factors, female, under-representation, management, public primary schools*

### **1.0 Introduction**

Female underrepresentation in school management is a global, regional and local challenge. In the US, according to a 1999-2000 study, data from schools shows an underrepresentation of women as principals. Girls continue to experience substantial inequality and exclusion in the educational system throughout their lives, notwithstanding recent improvements (Klein, 2018). In 2018, an estimated 32 million and 31 million girls of primary school age, respectively, discontinued their studies.

Women's role in the administrative hierarchy is viewed as being of the utmost importance. For instance, the Beijing Conference stated that although women are present on the economic stage, they do not hold positions in decision-making (Tachiwaa, 2018). The underrepresentation of women in public elementary school leadership is attributed to a variety of socio-cultural and economic causes, among others. The number of female primary school teachers considerably rose worldwide after World War II (Guerrero, 2007). In Greece, there were 46 percent of female primary school teachers from 1974–1975; this number rose to 55.8 percent from 2008–2019 (Greek Ministry of Education, 2019). This can be linked to the fact that women are in positions traditionally considered women's jobs, such as nursing and teaching in public schools.

In Korea, 14% of school administrators are women (Kim, 2005). China's trend is similar, at 73% (Su al, 2000). Female instructors are more prevalent at the lowest levels of the teaching profession in Africa. 36% of all teachers were male and 64% female, of which 59% were in managerial positions and 69% were in substitute positions. Women makeup 41% and 31%, respectively (Bell, 2005). The underrepresentation of women in education administration among teachers in these nations appears to be strongly influenced by culture and religion. The general public believes that women are emotionally unstable at work (Brown & Irby, 2013). Women's decision-making is influenced by this notion. Women have not benefited from achieving gender equality.

Many educated women in Africa are underrepresented in the management of educational institutions (Saitis, 2018). In 2019, 75 percent of women in Lesotho were educated, but only 10 percent headed educational institutions. In leadership positions in Zambia, there are 2% women and 89% men. Kenya had 4.6 percent in 2009; but, by 2018, things had improved to 18 percent. A study by Gdera (2019) in Burkina Faso revealed that it is a recent policy under the Presidential Decree of Burkina Faso 2017 that primary school teachers with less than eight years of teaching experience cannot apply for managerial posts. He seems to have received this managerial position taking into account his age and experience.

Chemjor (2013) demonstrates that despite having more women in leadership roles than males, Kenya still lacks the national infrastructure necessary to support the implementation of women's rights. The government's efforts to reduce public bias may fail if these differences are not addressed. Mwakavi (2020) investigates how Makueni District teachers feel about leadership. Even achievements are highlighted in the K.C.P.E. in female principals compared to male-headed. The performance of female managers can only be compared if there is an equal distribution of managerial positions between men and women. According to Pala (2020), old gender norms are still very much present in society. There is a perception that senior position promotions are unfairly prejudiced against women. Male instructors are more likely than female teachers to apply for promotions and be accepted into administrative positions (Saitis, 2020).

### ***Problem Statement***

There have been many gains made in female empowerment globally, however female underrepresentation in positions of leadership is still challenging in public primary schools in Kenya (MOEST, 2020). The female under-representation in decision-making positions had made female teachers remain stagnated as classroom teachers (MOEST, 2020). Despite this, the Kenyan government is working on several ongoing projects to close the gender gap at all levels of educational administration, including the hiring of qualified female managers, a gender-balanced intake of pre-service teachers, engendering the curriculum, and quality assurance officers on gender issues (Livingstone, 2020). According to Chege and Sifuna (2020), government documents such as; the Economic Recovery Strategy and the Ministry of Education Strategic Kenya Vision 2030, have also addressed gender issues in female education leadership/management to help in avoiding gender biases in the management of public schools. Additionally, other authors, such as Muthege (2018), have tackled the wider issue of female underrepresentation in Kenya's public elementary school management.

This tendency prevents female instructors from having a significant influence on decision-making in Kenya's state primary schools. This lack of representation has serious consequences for female teachers, as their needs and interests are not taken into account in decision-making. The young child who will become the future female leader lacks a mentor who can give her

confidence by serving as an example. Given this, the study, therefore, undertook to explore social-cultural factors influencing female under-representation in education management among teachers in Rigoma Sub-County.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

The Gender Relationship Theory by Ruth Pearson (1992) provides the foundation for this study. According to Pearson's thesis, society evaluates all activities depending on how men and women interact and play out their social roles. According to the framework, the idea of gender roles and behaviors in this situation is firmly ideological. Instead of the activities that men and women engage in, policies frequently reflect a fixed interpretation of the roles of men and women. According to this concept, society appears to have the greatest control over what men and women contribute, which ends up being discriminatory toward women (Pearson, 1992). These stereotypes have a negative impact on how well men and women succeed in practically every area of life, including leadership, education, and general development.

The framework for gender relations developed by Pearson is in line with the viewpoint that emphasizes the evolution of social distinctions between men and women over time and between cultures. The occupational mobility of women into managerial positions indicates their entitlement to managerial work as well as the fulfillment of their actual gender roles, making Pearson's framework for gender relations applicable for this study. The study "women are underrepresented in education" uses links to Ruth Pearson's ideology, because women's underrepresentation in education management is directly influenced by gender-specific social issues and negative perceptions that are learned and change over time. Over time, women are socialized to be submissive, and thus to be leaders and exhibit qualities such as self-confidence, determination, and directness that are considered socially unacceptable and stubborn (Brunner, 2000).

Researchers note certain weaknesses in Pearson's theory because society has ingrained perceptions and socializations that are difficult to eradicate. There are roles in society that are essentially feminine and unalterable. Because of the two natural responsibilities of reproduction and production, having children, for instance, needs more dedication on the side of women. Practical women's gender roles have several public perceptions.

### ***Empirical Review***

Designing, planning, and executing organizational goals and resources to achieve specific organizational goals is referred to as management (Okumbe, 2016). The means and objectives of an organization are decided by management. Both in industrialized and developing nations, women in leadership roles are quite uncommon (Gisholm, 2017). She claims that less than 5% of women hold high positions in the majority of Middle Eastern and North African countries, except Egypt, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and the Republic of Korea.

Momanyi (2018) points out that there is a lack of information regarding the quantity and caliber of career opportunities for women who have access to higher education. He goes on to point out that women are few university professors, despite the visible achievements in the humanities faculty. Female graduates lack employment, promotion, and advancement opportunities due to discrimination and their role as housewives. This situation requires changing cultural attitudes and gender stereotypes in the workplace to increase women's representation in education management.

The culture of Indonesia is one of the main barriers that prevent its women from achieving leadership positions. In Indonesian culture, men are given precedence over women. Women

are socially constructed to believe that their job is only necessary to complement that of men and that their contributions to the family are insignificant. The husband is accepted as the primary breadwinner of the family in a society where marriage is considered more as a religious belief in raising the next generation than as a shared economic advantage (Yulai, 2018).

This culture has had an impact on how competitive men and women are. Many women avoid competing with their spouses. They think men should get priority because they provide the family with more financial benefits. Men are given additional rights and benefits in this social environment so they can obtain positions more easily.

The conquest of women took place in harmony with the conquest in the family, as well as in women's organizational and socio-political life. Given that there are twice as many males as female principals, it is obvious that men dominate the field of education. Following the quotation from Acker and Fauger (2018), education is a patriarchal institution that invariably favors men. Because of their authority and masculinity, male leaders are preferred in Indonesian educational institutions. Men have a more authoritative demeanor (Airin, 2010). Because it implies that women are less involved and less assertive, the Kenyan definition of professional involvement is not favorable to women. According to Wardhani (2020), many Kenyan women leaders are hard to verify because of their subservience. Women find it difficult to exert themselves because of this. As a result, few women have access to positions of leadership or decision-making. And this leaves a hole in the research on the reasons why males are still overrepresented in leadership roles in public primary schools, especially in Kenya's Rigoma Sub-County.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study employs a descriptive research design. The target population comprised; 4 curriculum support officers, a sub-county education director, 280 female teachers, 200 male teachers, 24 schools, and a sub-county quality assurance and standards officer. The schools were selected using a cluster sampling design, a purposive sampling design for head teachers, simple random sampling procedure used to sample teachers from sampled schools. The sample size was; 18 head teachers, 54 male teachers, and 54 female teachers. The research tools are; Guide to interviews, observations, document analysis, and questionnaires. The validity of the research tool was tested by providing two professionals to guide the researcher for validation. The test-retest approach was then employed to establish reliability. The researcher gathered both primary and secondary data, which we then quantitatively and qualitatively assessed. The data were frequently analyzed using descriptive statistics. Tables and figures are used to present the analyzed data.

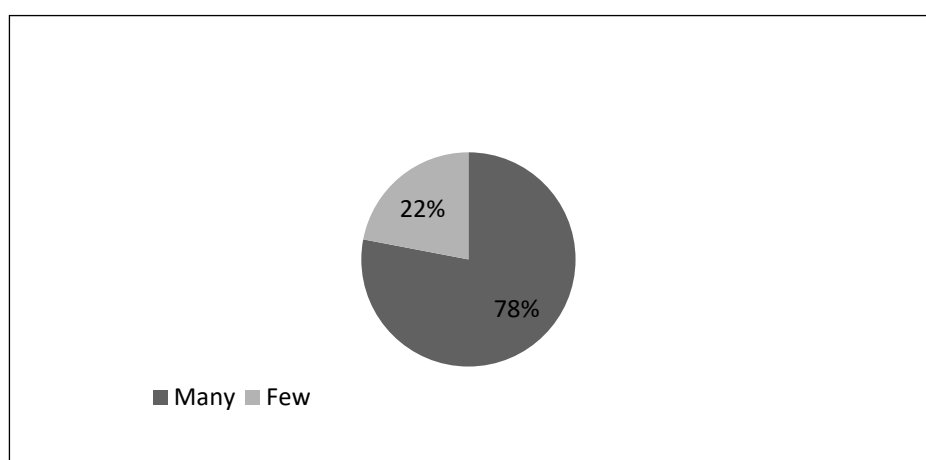
### **4.0 Results and Discussion**

The study sought to discover the influence of social-cultural issues on female under-representation in education management as provided in Table 1. The findings indicated that 65 of the respondents were men and 61 (48%) were women. 11 male school principals (9%), 54 male and female teachers (43%), and 7 female principals (5%), respectively. The willingness of male instructors to accept administrative jobs when given the opportunity can be used to explain this disparity.

**Table 1: Gender**

Category of respondents	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Teachers	54	43	54	43
Headteachers	11	9	7	5
Total	65	52	61	48

According to Figure 1, there were 78% fewer and 22% more female answers when asked about the proportion of women in leadership roles in schools. This indicated female under-representation in a management position which was the interest of the researcher. The under-representation was attributed to family roles played by females.



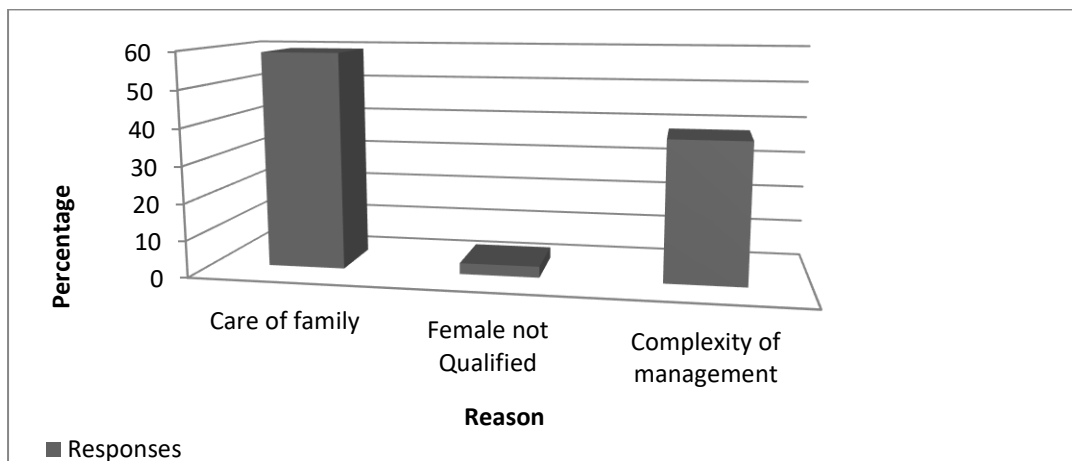
**Figure 1: Representation of females in management positions**

**Table 2: Difference between male and female administrators according to male teachers**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	65
No	19	35
<b>Total</b>	54	100

According to Table 2, 35% of men and 65% of women who responded to the survey claimed there was no difference. The conventional view that women are expected to be more accountable for their families can be used to explain those who exhibit disparities. This is consistent with Celikten's perspective, which holds that women should maintain intimate relationships with their husbands, children, and extended families (Celikten, 2005).

The polled male teachers backed up their response by claiming that men had more experience than women in enhancing infrastructure frameworks and that men were authoritative while women were emotional and subjective. They also indicated that working with women was easier because they were less authoritarian than men who were authoritarian in terms of giving orders and delegating tasks.



**Figure 2: Female teachers' responses to female under-representation in management positions**

Figure 2 demonstrates that 59% of respondents said that women prioritize taking care of their families. Only 3% of respondents claimed that women were unqualified for the job. The fact that women are directly responsible for caring for their families can be used to explain this. This is in line with the findings of Adikson (2011), who found that women's ideology and views about the ideal family have an impact on how they view work and professional life, the careers they choose, and how satisfied they are with their roles as wives, moms, and unemployed workers.

**Table 3: Female Teachers' Reasons for non-acceptance of a promotion involving a transfer**

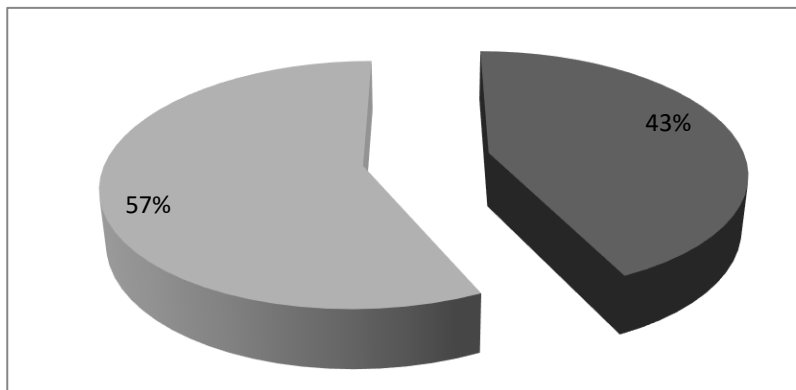
	Frequency	Percentage
Family responsibilities	22	71
Inconvenience of migrating	6	19
Spouse cannot agree	3	10
Total	31	100

According to table 3, 71% of instructors were unable to accept a promotion that would have required them to leave their current job to be closer to their family because of other obligations. This can be explained by the fact that having children as a gender role necessitates having a stable job and staying put. This is in accordance with Hewitt, who emphasizes that the social assumption that women follow males to their employment prevents women from choosing to work in administration. This supports Kochan's research, which found that women are more likely to migrate into male-dominated occupations than vice versa (Kochan, 2000).

**Table 4: Acceptance of position requiring long working hours by female teachers**

Acceptance of positions	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	24	44
No	30	56
Total	54	100

According to the survey, 56% of participants stated they would not accept the role, while 44% said they would. People who said they wouldn't accept the position were also asked to give a justification for their decision. They claim that taking care of family obligations bothers them. This agrees with Shakeshaft's conclusions that women's professional success is influenced by their family commitments. Women who want to be in leadership positions are constrained by family obligations or those who employ them feel this is the case (Shakeshaft, 2005).



**Figure 3: Female teachers' Response to Promotion involving a transfer**

According to the survey, 43% of participants would accept the transfer while 57% would not. This is explained by the fact that a woman's decision to move is influenced by things like family responsibilities and her husband's approval. This seems to support Spencer and Kochan's observations that women were less likely than males to relocate to a new neighborhood far from their current residence. Women consider security in an established relationship to be a key factor in their decision to remain where they are. Gender socialization entails a change from male to female employment (Specer & Kochan, 2000).

**Table 4: Reasons for Non-Acceptance of Positions requiring long Working Hours by Female Teachers**

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Family responsibilities	27	84
	4	14
Complexity of administration		
Lack of spouse support		
Total	32	100

Table 4 shows that 84% of the women surveyed were against working long hours. They claimed family responsibilities as the explanation for the reduction. This can be attributed to the high time and attention demands that women face from caring for their families. 2% of the women polled claimed that their deterioration was brought on by their husbands' lack of support. This may be related to men's socialization of the idea that women should be caregivers and refrain from taking on more demanding roles like administrative employment. This is consistent with

UNESCO's conclusions that males earn income while women care for the home (UNESCO, 2013).

**Table 5: Commitment to administrative work**

Level of Commitment	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very committed	8	15	19	35
Committed	42	78	30	56
Not committed	4	7	8	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the survey, 365% of female supervisors were not involved, compared to 78% of participants who reported that male managers were. The poll also revealed that 7% of respondents stated male responses were not active in administrative tasks, as opposed to 9% of respondents who said the same about female teachers. Women perceive themselves as leaders less positively than males do, and they feel that they need to further develop their leadership identities (Brunner & Grogan, 2005). They lack a leadership identity as a result of having low self-esteem and self-confidence, which has an impact on their job involvement and mobility.

To test how women perceive their promotion to a managerial position, a four-point Likert scale was used, with 1 for "strongly agree", 2 for "agree", 3 for "disagree" and 4 for "agree". "

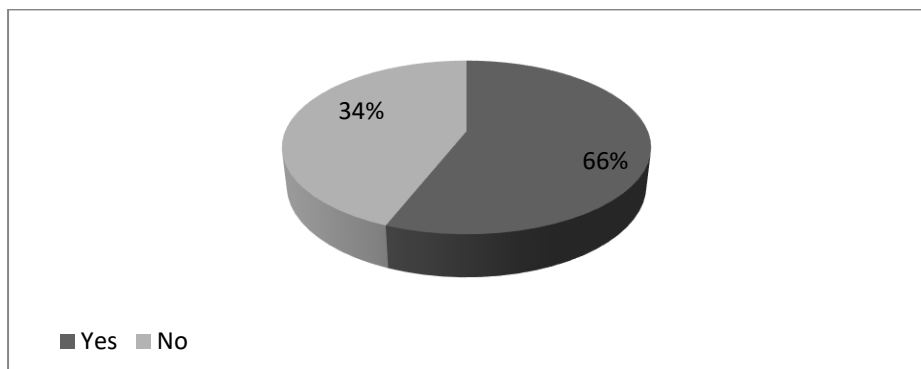
"Strongly agree" scores range from 0 to 1, "agree" scores range from 1.1 to 2, "disagree" scores range from 2.1 to 3, and "disagree" scores range from 0 to 3. I vehemently disagree" has a range of 3.1 to 4.0. A significant variation in the responses of the respondents is indicated by a standard deviation greater than 1.

**Table 6: Male and Female teachers' views on the need for more female school managers**

Response	Male teachers		Female teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Yes</b>	35	65	30	56
<b>No</b>	19	35	24	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>

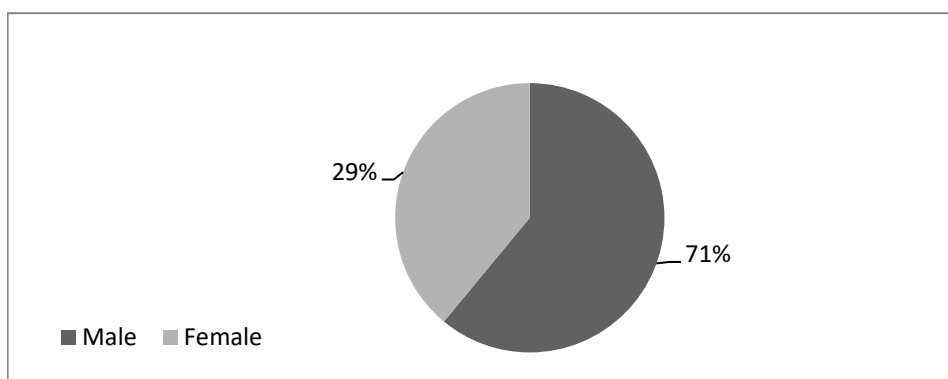
According to the survey, 65% of males believed there should be more female teachers in school leadership roles, while 35% of men believed there was no need for women in similar positions. 44% of the women surveyed thought there was no need for more teachers in leadership roles, while 56% agreed. The survey results show that the majority support the promotion of female teachers to school leadership positions. This is an indication that traditional beliefs and stereotypes influence leadership and management. This is supported by Hart's findings, which show that traditional beliefs and stereotypes present women as socially unacceptable leaders (Hart, 2015).





**Figure 4: Female teachers' view on support by local community to rise to management positions**

According to the study's findings from interviews, 66% of women stated society supports female teachers in leadership roles, while 34% said society does not. This can be explained by permitting female instructors to work in urban settings with progressive societies free of gender-oppressive sociocultural norms. Women are encouraged by society to take on leadership roles, but because of constant cultural messages of inferiority complexes, they are unable to reach the top levels of school leadership (Braithwaite, 2005).



**Figure 5: Respondents' view on reasons for the Non-support by local community**

According to the survey, 71% of participants were familiar with male leadership. This is a result of some women working in rural environments, which are culturally different. This has an impact on public perception of women in leadership. This is in line with Johnson's results, according to which school board members lacked faith in women's capacity to manage the erection of new structures. He finished the job, surprising the board (Johnson, 2013).

## 5.0 Conclusion

According to the study's findings, gender roles, culture, and conventional views all significantly contribute to the low presence of women in the field of education management. This means that to have more time for administrative duties, instructors must share gender roles with their husbands. This study also demonstrates how socialization and gender preconceptions contribute to the low participation of women in education administration among female instructors. To dispel ingrained stereotypes about how male and female teachers should behave, gender sensitivity is crucial in educational settings.

## 6.0 Recommendations

The community needs to be made aware that there are no professions that are specifically targeted at men and women, and that gender role must be allocated fairly at the home level so that girls can grow up with cultural influences. The young girl will be aware that she is capable of performing the same tasks as men, including administration and leadership.

Education policymakers should take steps to create special positions for female teachers, including in boys' schools, to address the under-representation of women in education administration. This can be accomplished by instructors serving as principals in schools for boys as well as girls.

Policymakers should design curricula that include gender issues to sensitize the public to socio-cultural issues that lead to the under-representation of women in government. As a result, female teachers can alter their perception of themselves and come to identify with their male counterparts as managers.

## References

- Airin, R. (2010). Influencing Factors of Female Underrepresentation as School Principals in Indonesia. *Online Submission*.
- Brown, G. H., & Irby, B. (2013). *Handbook of educational theories*. IAP.
- Chemjor, S. J. (2013). *Factors affecting women participation in microfinancing programs in Kenya: a case of micro and small enterprises in Garissa County* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).
- Grogan, M. (2005). Echoing their ancestors, women lead school districts in the United States.
- Mwakavi, B. M. (2020). *Influence of information and communication technology integration on quality of education at primary schools in Makindu Sub-County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).
- Saitis, C. (2018). *Initiation of educators into educational management secrets*. Berlin, Germany: Springer International Publishing.
- Spencer, W. A., & Kochan, F. K. (2000). Gender-related differences in career patterns of principals in Alabama. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8, 9-9.
- UNESCO, (2013). *Facts on Education for All (EFA)*. Nairobi: UNESCO. Childhood Care and Education. Paris: UNESCO.
- Wardhani, L. K. (2020). *Gender in global agreements and national arguments: The Indonesian Experience* (Doctoral dissertation, The Australian National University (Australia)).