A Study of Children's Perceptions of Gender Identity and Stereotype in Public Pre-Primary Schools in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

Pre-primary education is a critical period when children develop, understand and express their gender identity and stereotype. Thus, pre-primary teachers should provide a rich learning environment with materials and equipments to guide and support children as they continue to explore their gender identity and stereotypes. The current study explored ways in which children perceive gender identity and stereotypes. In depth interviews were used with 20 children (10 boys and 10 girls), randomly sampled from 10 public pre-primary schools in Nairobi County. Data was analysed using themes in line with the study objectives. Findings reveal that the influence of teachers and mothers has an impact on how both boys and girls perceive their gender identity and stereotype. In particular, masculine and feminine characteristics, play materials and equipments, enhances children's gender identity and stereotypes. In conclusion, it is important to note that in order to bridge the gender gaps experienced by boys and girls, it is critical to deal with gender bias, stereotype and discrimination during the early years of a child's life. Relevant policies and programmes should be put in place especially in teacher education in order to empower teachers to help children deal with gender stereotypes.

Keywords: Gender Identity, Gender Stereotype, Feminine, Masculine, Perceptions, Pre-primary, Preschool Children

Full text:
https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/006e/4fc486bd59e3756cef80b6a5b374ff6a128f.pdf?_ga=2.189112482.804149426.1593499147-842750630.1590476504