CONSTRAINTS MASTERS' STUDENTS FACE AS THEY MAKE THEIR CHOICE TO STUDY GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AT THE MASTER'S LEVEL IN NAIROBI COUNTY

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Abstract

Purpose: The study aimed at identifying constraints masters'students face as they make their choice to study gender and development studiesat the master's level in Nairobi County.

Materials and methods: The study employed a case study design. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents for the study. Interview guides and open ended questionnaires were the main data collection instruments for the research. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques guided by the research objectives and research questions were used to analyze data. Qualitative data was analyzed by use of themes and the coding technique while frequencies and percentages were used in the analysis of quantitative data that was collected.

Results: The study noted that the major constraint faced was the lack of adequate career supports. The men in the study had challenges in obtaining unbiased career information while women had access to this career information but said they still lacked of its comprehensive application. The researcher notedif sufficient career counsellors and mentors could be availed, men could benefit from in-depth explorations of their choice and women could familiarize themselves with the diverse application contexts of gender and development studies.

Recommendations: There should be awareness, sensitization and outreach programs by the university that discuss gender unresponsiveness during the choice-making process. Pre-career talks by role models who are in gender and development studies can help to create clarity as to what the students will experience once they choose gender and development studies.

Key words: *Constraints, gender and development studies*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Career choices in education are made every day; the way these choices are made and implemented depends on the attitudes and perceptions of the society and their decision makers. An individual's education helps to form these attitudes and priorities during the career choice process. An educational career choice is important because of its potential to promote social change and of its role as defender of prevailing norms and values (De Groot& Maynard, 1993). Career choice is not only a question, of which institutions one chooses to attend but is also inclusive of a broad range of forces influencing the development of individuals, their educational experience and their later working life (Young, 1992).

According to Millet (1970) gender and development studies as a career choice ensures that education has a positive impact on improving the status and roles women and integrates men into the gender discourse. In furtherance the author argues that gender and development studies has the potential to challenge stereotypes about male and female roles, offer alternative ideas and to equip women and men to pursue a range of possibilities. Thus as a career choice this area of study is associated with power and control as gender has been and is a system of oppression.

This system of oppression has been demonstrated in the career choices that women have made since the 1970s. It's been noted that women's employment has been in the services. Women's career choices are geared to this sector which confines them to lower levels of pay and responsibility: in health, education and social services; banking and insurance; hotel and catering; the retail trade; and personal services such as hairdressing and domestic work. Women typically make up the majority of sales staff, cleaners, kitchen assistants, nursing auxiliaries, secretaries and primary-school teachers. Overall, more service jobs are part time, casual, temporary or 'informal' than are jobs in other sectors, posing a great disadvantage to women in these jobs (ILO, 2016).

The fact that women predominate in certain career choices that are characterized by lower levels of skill, responsibility and pay leads to job segregation. This implies that the career choices that women and men make differ leading to segregation and concentration in the fact that women are overrepresented in a limited number of careers (ILO, 2014). What is important in the gender system is the impact of women's career choices, their lack of opportunities in both formal and informal careers that increases competition between them and keeps wages low.

There are two types of segregation that women face when they make their career choices; the first is horizontal segregation where they find themselves in careers clusters that are dominated by women such as the services sector, especially in the personal and caring services. The second is vertical segregation where by a career choice is mixed with women and men; however women are usually in the less responsible, less secure and less well paid careers. Even when the career is predominantly female, men are still found in the management positions (ILO, 2016).

Gender and development studies as a career choice is of importance as it seeks to examine the issues of structural disparities of the gender system that influence women and men when making their career choices. Of importance to note is that women do not enter the labour market be it formal or informal on the same basis as men, nor do they operate within it on equal terms. The social and economic roles allotted to women and men limit women's access to the means of

production from credit to training opportunities- and result in crowding of women into a limited number of careers and markets (ILO, 2014).

Gender and development studies has revealed that the lower wages and prices that women command and the pressure on their time from their unpaid domestic activities, means that women everywhere are working longer hours than men for considerable less income, and with less control over the decision- making processes that affect their lives and careers (Fragniere, 1990). Gender and development studies is thus of importance as it reveals career choice dynamics and their implications that affect both women and men.

Gender studies emerged as an academic discipline of the social sciences as a result of the UN Women's Conferences (Mexico-1975, Copenhagen-1980, Nairobi-1985, Beijing-1995) that sought for an approach that integrated men and women, their needs and concerns in the development process. Former development approaches such as the Women in Development approach (WID) prevalent in the 1970's exclusively focused on women without account of how their lives were shaped by their relations with men (Young, 1993).Globally gender studies seeks to address the structural relations of power and inequality in a wide range of political, economic, social and cultural spheres in which equality needs to be realized(De Groot& Maynard, 1993).

Gender studies in higher education seeks to draw out interconnections of relationships associated with power and meaning in different sites both between men and women, boys and girls. According to Unterhalter (2012), gender studies explores how universities and processes of learning operate to reproduce and transform inequalities. This is important because among others it highlights the process of choice whereby there are subjects defined as either those which women or men are "good" at or those which they are not. Gender studies in higher education is therefore,an academic discipline aimed at naming and changing the relationships of inequality that sets the conditions and processes that allow people to critically view their well being. The term gender studies flourished in the mid-1980s in research and publications which substituted the word 'gender' rather than 'women' as their area of focus (De Groot& Maynard, 1993).

The use of the term gender in the West led to the increased interest in the study of masculinity and the development of men's studies alongside women's studies. This was due to the perception that there was little direct focus on the social construction of 'men'. Gender studies in higher education examine ideas like 'masculinity' and 'femininity' and the processes involved in the reproduction of gender relations (Thomas, 1990). Thomas (1990) additionally notes that process plays a crucial role in the creation and reproduction of gender difference and that to understand this process; we have to look at the experiences of students themselves and the meanings they give to the choice on whether to study gender studies. The goals of gender studies include the balancing of the curriculum by providing a place for both a male and female perspectives and second educating for social change (Coyner, 1983).

Women who have reached higher education are not deemed to be successful by virtue of having done so, on the contrary the choices they make on what to study is deemed to exclude and marginalize them, pushing them further into 'female' jobs or marriage and family, however the university is a system that prepares men to take up roles of power in the man-centered society(White, Cox & Cooper, 1992).Radical feminists argue that higher education curricula are biased towards male experience as secondary education curricula. Alison Jagger and Paula

Rothenberg argue that sexist prejudices contribute to women's suffering qualitatively as well as quantitatively, leading to an oppressive environment for women (Tong, 1992).

In Africa owing to the implementation by national governments of gender policies both long and short term programmes in gender studies are offered in many universities (National Policy on Gender and Development, 2000). The gender policies main objectives are to build capacity by creating a pool of qualified personnel to serve as researchers in gender-focused studies or as trainers and practitioners to work with various sectors and NGOs. These trained women and men are supposed to be change agents either through generating gender-disaggregated information if they are researchers or through training others and showing good examples through gender sensitive practice(Kasente, 1996). In East Africa, Makerere University offers gender studies at the degree level its mission being to bring change in the socialization of men and women in Uganda through understanding their lives, and encouraging development of policies and programmes that are sensitive to the fact that women's and men's lives are structured differently(Ibid. 1996).

Gender studies have also been introduced at the Gender Studies Institute at the Cape Town University in South Africa, its vision is to promote an Africa free of patriarchal domination in which men and women are respected as equal and socio-economic justice is a reality for all. In other cases specific courses on gender have been introduced or a gender perspective adopted in the mainstream curricula at African universities. At the University of Dar-es-Saalam for example, gender studies courses have been introduced in the Institute of Development Studies and Sociology while a gender perspective has been adopted in some courses in the faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, Law and Education. Such integration has been beneficial in the articulation of gender issues and has raised the awareness on the significance of gender issues for both staff and students (Mlama, 1998).

Gender and development studies in Kenya were started as an effort to situate gender equality issues at the center of policy decisions and they entail bringing out the perceptions, experience, and knowledge of women as well as men to bear on the development agenda (National Policy on Gender and Development, 2000). Gender and development studies examine the status and conditions of women and men in developing economies.

Kenya has made efforts to promote gender equality in higher education in various policy documents such as the Constitution; article 27 states that "women and men have the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres". International agreements also underscore the importance of achieving gender equality in education such as the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the Dakar Education for All(EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals(MDGs).

According to Onsongo (2006), universities are expected to play a role in leadership and transformation of the society with regard to gender relations and women's participation in particular. These goals adhere to one of the Gender and Development approach (GAD) key propositions, that a focus on women alone was inadequate to understand the opportunities for women for agency or change (Young, 1993).Gender and development studies goals and objectives in Kenya are directed by the National Policy on Gender and Development (2000) and

Sessional Paper no.2 of 2006 on Gender Equality and Development which among others seek to address two key priority areas relevant to this study.

The first is the removal of impediments to equal access to economic employment opportunities for men and women and second, the elimination of gender disparities in education and training to enhance and sustain gender parity in access, retention, transition and performance in education for boys and girls, women and men.

The contemporary gender approach in development requires in its process that gender is mainstreamed, this involves ensuring that attention to gender equality pervades all interventions such as gender and development studies programmes at the university (UNDP, 2000). Gender imbalances or unresponsiveness in career choice have been deemed to be an impediment to inclusivity and representation of students, as both women and men are not participating and benefiting equally from the developmental policies put in place to ensure their equal access to gender and development studies.

This study therefore examined selected universities in Nairobi County that offer gender and development studies at the master's level. Socio-cultural factors were investigated in the study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Nairobi County, almost all public and some private universities in response to international and local gender policies that aim to establish gender equity and equality have sought to offer gender related courses. Gender and development studies is of importance as it accommodates both women and men's perspectives in its classes, benefiting the society by examining the structures that keep women and men in separate spheres. These structures occur on the social, political and economic levels and shape values and attitudes throughout the society.

While making subject choices it has been noted that even if men and women have the same opportunities available to them, several factors condition their choices in different ways. This leads to gender imbalances in terms of gender representation despite interventions by universities which are aimed at ensuring gender inclusivity. Subsequently, misperceptions about certain subject choices continue to flourish, affecting enrolments in certain departments. Even though subject choices made by both men and women are personal, patterns emerge as some courses are dominated by a specific gender leading to a gender unresponsive *status quo* in universities. However there exist few studies that address subject choice of gender and development studies from a gender and socio-cultural perspective.

Additionally imbalances in enrolment patterns in career choice go against Kenyan Constitutional efforts to promote gender equality and equity as enshrined in Article 27 of the Kenyan Constitution which states that: women and men have the right to equal treatment including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.

Therefore the purpose of this study was to identify constraints masters'students face as they make their choice to study gender and development studiesat the master's level in Nairobi County.

1.3 Objective of the Study

To identify constraints master's students face as they make their choice to study gender and development studies at the master's level in Nairobi County.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Constraints in Choice-making inGender and Development Studies at the Master's Level

Basic subject choice constraints are presented as being the same for men and women, but they make different choices because structural opportunities are different. White, Cox and Cooper (1992) argue that even when women make the required changes in sex-role beliefs and behaviours and expect to include active participation in both occupational and family roles, the problem of societal structures still arises. Issues such as sex discrimination and the structures of opportunities may have altered the patterns of women's subject choice from that of men (Ibid. 1992). Therefore not only do we need to consider family and competing demands which are external to subject choice as constraints, but we also need to account for phenomena within the university which may distinguish men from women. Phenomena within the university that may provide constraints to women's subject choice in higher education includes: institutional patterns and norms about women's "place" in gender and development studies, systematic undervaluation of women's contributions to scholarship, ghettoization of gender and development studies within universities and systematically sexist processes of sponsorship in higher education (Dubois,Kelly, Kennedy, Korsmeyer & Robinson 1985).

Adult women studies in the United States have revealed the impact of gendered identities in creating constraints on subject choice, the distinctively "feminine" orientations that women hold prior to entering higher education affect gender relationships and interpretations in educational settings (Kleinman, 1985). When it comes to choosing a subject women do not simply absorb the usual pattern of subject choice rather they draw selectively from their personal experiences transforming their roles to fit into pre-existing core values of their subject choice (Ibid. 1985). Whereas women who choose to enter male-dominated occupations are viewed as making a positive career move that offers increased opportunities for pay, advancement and status, the same does not apply for men who enter female-dominated or non-traditional occupations (White, Cox &Cooper,1992).

Men who enter traditionally female occupations face lower status and lower financial rewards and they may find their abilities, masculinity and even sexual orientation questioned (Lease, 2003). With male students', Gottfredson's (1981) model indicates that constraints in subject choice may emerge from their gender self concept which interacts with one's understanding about the subject choice. Thus men who have less constricted ideas about their own gender and gender-related characteristics of subject choice would be more willing to choose gender and development studies than would men with more strongly held traditional gender-related beliefs. Differences in gender role beliefs and attitudes may then influence a man's openness to pursuing gender and development studies. This study sought to investigate the extent to which gender role beliefs acted as a constraint for both male and female students' when they chose gender and development studies at the master's level in Nairobi County.

There is sufficient evidence (Lemkau, 1984; Hayes, 1989; Lease, 2003; Jomeet al., 1998) that homophobia and traditional masculinity ideology (antifemininity and toughness) can act as subject choice constraints for male students. From the above evidence it has also been noted that men choosing fields such as gender and development studies are not impacted by the above constraints and have reported lower masculinity and higher androgyny scores. For male students' the result of these traditional attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and the societal pressure to conform while choosing subject can lead to high levels of internal conflict and conflict with others.

Such conflict occurs when "rigid, sexist, or restricted gender roles learned during socialization, result in the personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self" (Good, Robertson,O'Neil,Fitzgerald, Stevens & De Bord, 1995). What Ibid. (1995) does not address is the various cultural contexts from which this traditional attitudes, beliefs, behaviours arise. Culture, tradition and norms are intertwined therefore understanding the cultural underpinnings of the respondents can give a clearer picture of the nature of the conflict. This study assessed African gender role beliefs and how the conflict or role strain affected student's choice on whether to study gender and development studies at the master's level in Nairobi County.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the rational choice theory (Goldthorpe, 1996) which posits that individual choice is the foundation of action and inaction, the theory explores how individuals react to and seek to structure the varying constraints on action that occur, whether they are sets of institutions, patterns of group interaction or constellations of socio-economic structures. In particular the rational choice theory seeks to focus on individual choice making as influenced by social factors making it relevant to explain how master's students in Nairobi County made their subject choices.

Rational choice according to Goldthorpe, (1996) deploys some distinct tenets about human nature that are important for this study; the first is that human beings have preferences that are for the purposes of analysis, that is individuals are purposive entities rather than just vehicles for wider social and economic forces. They are as such, are capable of choosing their own projects and preferences. Second rational choice theory assumes individuals act in their self-interest rather than for the interest of others.

People are instrumental rather than expressive and they seek to maximize their personal utility rather than to give life to their personal and collective identities. Personal utility is maximized through an optimization process whereby individuals maximize their income or balance out a number of preferences such as between current and future benefits.

Third, people express their preferences as clear goals. Fourth, rational choice theorists often assume individuals have information about the preferences available to them. Fifth, when individuals examine the information available to them they select the course of action that satisfies their preferences and are able to modify their courses of action when the benefits and costs of choices change (Goldthorpe, 1996).

In this study, the rational choice theory was applied to explain master's student's process of choice making as influenced by socio-cultural factors. Goldthorpe's argument that individuals are purposive entities seeks the individual student's preferences of choice before those of the society. This was significant to this study as when the society's socio-cultural beliefs played a

role in influencing the student's choice of master's program before their own preferencescould lead to conflict.

In addition, the posit that individuals act out in their self interest rather than the interest of otherswas applied in the study. According to the rational choice theory the interest of the individual comes first before that of society thus making the student's attitudes and beliefs free from socio-cultural encumbrances. Goldthorpe argues that even though the society may have certain expectations for a student's choice the prime motivator for the student to act should be their own individual preferences.

Therefore Goldthorpe approaches choice making as an individual process which emerges as rational when the chosen alternative is primarily based on the student's individualpreferences. Applied to this study the theory provided the opportunity to achieve gender responsiveness in subject choice by focusing on the student's individual preferences.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a case study design, in collecting information from the sample population in order to assess gender and development as a subject choice for master's students in Nairobi County. This research was carried out in selected universities in Nairobi County that offer gender and development studies at the master's level. Public and private universities were targeted because the study sought diverse views from students from different parts of the country who were mostly found in public universities and students from Nairobi County who were mostly found in private universities. The universities in Nairobi County had an approximated total postgraduate student population of 240,000 registered for various courses (KNBS, 2015). The target population for this study comprised of master's students in both public and private universities taking gender and development studies and development studies. The County has a total of seven public universities and fifteen private universities out of which only eight (four public and four private) offer gender and development studies or courses with a gender and development component such as development studies. The eight universities had approximately a total 250 master's students registered in the gender and developments studies departments for years 2013/ 2014 to 2014/2015. The researcher purposively selected four universities that offered gender and development studies or courses with a gender component. The four universities were inclusive of public and private universities. A sample of 54% from the total population of the students taking gender and development studies in the four universities (which was 122 students) in the years 2013/2014 to 2014/ 2015 was chosen which translated to a total sample of sixty six students. Lecturers, chairpersons and gender and development master's students were purposively selected to act as key informants. The study used both primary data and secondary data. Primary data was collected from the study respondents in the form of open-ended questionnaires and interview schedules. While secondary data was collected from libraries in the form of information form textbooks, journals and research theses and publications.

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

4.1.1 Gender distribution of the respondents

In this sub-section the study sought to establish the gender distribution of the respondents to enable a clear gender analysis of the findings. The total number of students of gender and development and development studies departments for the years 2013/2014-2014-2015 is shown in table 1 below. The total number of students who participated in the study was 51(77%) women and 15(23%) men making a total of 66 respondents as shown in table 2. Of the 20 key informants, 10 were women and 10 were men. This study purposively sought the views of both men and women taking gender and development studies to ensure inclusivity and representation of both. It was also crucial to get the views of both to make the study more meaningful from a gender and development perspective.

Table 1: Total registered students per department for years 2013/2014- 2014/2015

Institution	Men	Women	Total per University for years 2013/2014-2014/2015
Kenyatta University (gender and development studies)	10	45	55
University of Nairobi (gender and development studies)	7	43	60
Mount Kenya University (development studies)	15	20	35
St.Paul's University (development studies)	12	14	26
Total	**44**	**122**	

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Table 2: Total number of respondents per university

Institution	Men	%	Women	%	Total per University
Kenyatta University	7	46	15	29	22
University of Nairobi	4	27	20	39	24
Mount Kenya University	3	20	10	20	13
St.Paul's University	1	7	6	12	7
Total	**15**	**100**	**51**	**100**	

From table 1 and 2 above it is noted that the student distribution is asymmetrical with there being more women than men both in terms of those registered for gender and development studies and those who participated in the study. Flabbi (2011) attributes this to a variety of reasons such as women acquire a little more tertiary education than men, are the majority of graduates in humanities and perform better than men in the humanities. In the World Development Report (2012), it is noted that there are gender differences in tertiary education across the world where women are overrepresented in arts and humanities, health and education and underrepresented in engineering, manufacturing, construction and science.

Additionally the report notes that in tertiary education women are more likely to participate than men a difference that increases with overall participation rates. The report further notes that between 1970 and 2008 in Sub Saharan Africa, the number of female tertiary students increased more than sevenfold (from 10.8 million to 80.9 million) compared with a fourfold increase among males. The researcher notes that this trend of more women participating and enrolling could be a factor contributing to the above asymmetry in the enrolment for gender and development studies in Nairobi County.

4.1.2 Marital status of the respondents

The study sought to establish the marital status of the respondents at the master's level pursuing gender and development studies to get a clear understanding of the findings. As shown in Table 3 of the 16 men students, 4 (25%) of the men interviewed were married, 10 (62%) single and 2 (13%) in a come we- stay- relationship. Out of the 50 women students interviewed, 11 (22%) were married, 35 (70%) single, 2 (4%) divorced and 2 (4%) in a come we- stay- relationship.

Table 3: Marital status of male and female students

Marital Status	Number	Men (%)	Number	Women (%)	Total
Married	3	20	11	22	14
Single	10	67	36	70	46
Divorced	0	0	2	4	2
Separated	0	0	0	0	0
Come we-stay-relationship	2	13	2	4	4
Total	**15**	**100**	**51**	**100**	

In identifying this variable, the study took note of the fact that gender and development studies as a career choice for women and men students is based on the notions of gender equality and how these are defined and perceived in or outside the marital context (Klasen & Francesca, 2009). The findings showed the highest number of women and men students that made the choice to pursue gender and development studies were single as compared to those who were married or in a come we –stay- relationship. This suggests that gender and development studies was more appealing to single students as they did not as yet have fixed notions of gender issues such as equality whereas those in marriage and come we-stay relationships were influenced by how the society perceived gender issues as having a detrimental role in families (Amin and Islam, 2015).

4.1.3 Age of the respondents

Age of the students was thought to be a crucial component, as it reveals the age categories of those pursuing gender and development studies at the master's level. Scholars have noted that, the age may influence individual values which in turn influences the student's choice (White, Cox and Cooper, 1992). The findings are presented in table 4.

Table 4 Age of the male and female students

Age	Number	Men (%)	Number	Women (%)	Total Number
20-29	8	54	28	55	36
30-39	5	33	17	33	22
40-49	2	13	3	6	5
50-59	0	0	3	6	3
60-69	0	0	0	0	
Total	15	100	51	100	

From Table 4 the group aged 20-29 years had the highest number of men 8 (54%) and women 28 (55%) students followed by the group aged 30-39 years with 5 (33%) men and 17 (33%) women. The possible explanation for more younger and literal no older students pursuing the master's degree could be the fact that in Africa consumption of education is higher among the younger age groups and consumption of healthcare higher among the older groups (Canning, Raja &Yazbeck, 2015)

There were fewer older people choosing gender and development studies with 2 (13%) for men and 3(6%) for women for the age bracket of 40-49 and 3(6%) women for the age group 50-59. This decline in choice by the older people could be attributed to the maintenance and decline stages in the career development, which did not allow them to make new choices (White, Cox and Cooper, 1992).

4.2 Constraints on student's master's choice of gender and development studies

The objective of the study was to establish the constraints on student's master's choice of gender and development. This section examines constraints which are important to examine as when students perceive constraints it affects their subsequent career decision-making. The study posed open-ended and closed ended questions to the respondents, whose options were sought as to what constraints played a role during their choice-making process. Table 5 below presents the findings.

Table 5: Constraints on student's master's choice of gender and development studies

	Women		Men	
	No.	%	No.	%
Career Information	15	29	5	35
Career Counseling	12	24	3	19
Career Mentors	11	22	2	13
Career Role Models	6	12	2	13
Supportive Career Policies	7	13	3	20

The study found that career information at (35%), supportive career policies at (20%) and career counseling at (19%) were the major constraints that male respondents experienced during the choice making process. Female respondents were mainly influenced by career information at (29%), career counseling at (24%) and career mentors at (22%). The results are discussed below:

4.2.1 Career information

The study findings revealed career information as one of the factors as a major constraint for men at, 35% men and 29% women. Career information in the study was construed to mean academic details explaining the course curriculum and its application. Owing to perceptions based on gender stereotypes and bias many male respondents had insufficient information coupled with wrong notions about the curriculum content of gender and development studies. In this regard one male respondent noted:

I had insufficient information on the curriculum of gender and development studies. I came to learn after I had made my choice of gender and development studies that men's issues were also addressed in the curriculum. I was not aware of this as the word gender studies seemed synonymous with women's studies (O.I. Mark, 7/08/2015).

Several of the men respondent's in the study noted similar views as the above. There was a variance in these views from the men respondents who had in their undergraduate studies taken units with a gender and development component. However it must be noted that even those with a gender and development undergraduate component were not also fully informed on the course curriculum. Concerning this one male respondent noted:

Although I did a unit in my undergraduate studies of gender and development, we did not cover the course content in sufficient depth. I therefore did not know much of what the curriculum of gender and development studies entailed. I chose gender and development studies at the master's level primarily for its promising career prospects with scant information on what its curriculum comprised of(O.I. Kevin, 5/08/2015).

There were also those men respondents who had undergraduate degrees in gender and development studies who were not influenced by gender stereotypes and bias as to the

curriculum of gender and development studies. These men respondents however had problems in articulating the curriculum they had learnt and they could not express gender concepts clearly in stark contrast to the women respondents.

The women respondents could clearly articulate the gender and development studies literature and fluently express the concepts however they had challenges in contextualizing the career information in real day to day contexts. In this regard one female respondent opined:

When choosing gender and development studies I was aware of its curriculum content and concepts. However I lacked additional information on its diverse application contexts such as to which specialization suited my career background. What I felt was lacking in the career information was the practical application element(O.I. Lillies, 12/08/2015).

Other women respondents echoed similar sentiments and attributed this to a weak career academic structure that lacked adequate career supports such as career mentors, lecturers and career resources which were available to give reliable career information. Reardon et al. (2000) underscores the importance of career information prior to career choice as helps in the development of self knowledge and knowledge of the chosen career.

The author further notes that most career education programmes embody objectives that endorse the acquisition of career information related to both the self and career options. The researcher notes that in this study the women respondents had a higher degree of self knowledge but lacked sufficient constructive realism on their career options while it was the opposite with the men respondents. This according to Julien (1999) could show that men rely more on the outer or rational information seeking systems which are characterized by systematic information seeking and logical and objective decision making. While women rely more on the intuitive information systems which are characterized by little search for purposive information, reliance on self awareness and emotional factors to make career related decisions.

4.2.2 Career counselling services

The study findings revealed career counselling services as a factor that constrained the career choice of gender and development studies for men at 19% men and 24% women. Career counselling in this study meant the establishment of academic services based within the university that inform, advice, guide and direct students during their choice making process. The respondents in the study felt that career counselling was important before choice making as it integrated all aspects of their individual needs (including family, work, personal concerns and leisure) with their career choice.

Most of the respondents in the study were not aware of the location of career counselling offices within the university. The respondents in the study were aware that they needed prior briefing on their career choice before making their choice but did not know a specific person or place within their chosen university to seek such services. A lecturer within the gender and development studies department, aware of lack established mechanisms career counselling commented:

In most university departments career counselling services are non-existent. These services would act to debrief and introduce new students to curriculum content and the practical career options. When students lack such services, some make their career choices having unclear notions on the nature and outcomes of gender and development studies. This leads to some

students changing to other degree programmes whereas if they had prior career counselling they would be well informed about what career they were choosing(O.I. Mark, 26/08/2015).

Some of the lecturers in the study agreed with the above view while other's said that career counselling was existent in the departments in form of the entire department briefs with the new students by form of introductions into the curriculum. It must be noted that most contacts with the lecturers and introductions into the curriculums took place after the choice had been made instead of before the choice making process. In this regard a male respondent noted:

Prior to making my career choice in gender and development studies, I felt that I needed someone such as a faculty member or lecturer to sit with me and to discuss my prospective choice. I however did not know how to go about getting such a person to counsel me as I was new to the university. It was only after I had paid the fees and registered that I met the faculty members and even then there was discussion or debriefing to introduce me to gender and development studies. I would have found useful if there was an office within the department where students could seek career counselling prior to making their career choice (O.I. Daniel, 26/08/2015).

The advantages of career counselling have been highlighted by Reardon et al. (2000) who hold that career counsellors help students in developing coherent plans, identifying the steps that can be taken to achieve their goals and connecting their often vague ideas about their future work life to actual educational and career paths.

The researcher notes that career counselling can benefit women by incorporating constructive realism that is: realism that is not based in intuitive information seeking. Constructive realism is advantageous to women as it will not only address the constraints on the choice (job requirements and availability) but also the ways to expand choice options (actions one can take to become more competitive for a preferred job) (Julien, 1999).

The researcher is of the view that men on the other hand, who are likely to base their choices on rational information seeking can benefit from career counselling in the exploration phase where they can sample a broader menu of the curriculum content prior to their choice making. For men this sampling can take place in the form of interacting with and listening to faculty members experiences so that they can better discover and develop their career interests and values

4.2.3 Career mentors

The study findings revealed career mentors were a factor that constrained the career choice of gender and development studies for men at 13% men and 22% women. Career mentors in this study meant people who were professional in the field of gender and development in various capacities such as gender and development studies lecturers, gender specialists or professionals in local or international NGO's dealing with gender related issues and concerns. Both the women and men respondents felt that when making their choice they were not sufficiently exposed to career mentors who would have given them feedback and realistic advice on their choice. In this regard one female respondent noted:

I would have especially benefited before I made my career choice to have had a career mentor to discuss with my career aspirations. When I made my choice I knew that I had made the right choice but I needed affirmation, encouragement and strategic tips and advice from a mentor so

as to know how to strategically position myself in a competitive field. I sometimes feel that trying to navigate the professional field without a mentor is being like a ship without a rudder (O.I. Milka, 21/08/2015).

Other women respondents in the study also underscored the importance of having a career mentor during the choice making process because the importance of the career exploration phase. During this phase the respondents took part in expressing a primary career choice and mentorship sessions provide the optimal conditions to explore the career choice.

Whereas the women respondents in the study needed mentors to explore with them their choice, the men respondents in the study mostly saw the need for mentors to assist them to familiarize with the career environment that they were going to enter into after they had made their choice. The men respondents viewed the mentor more as a resource instead of a guide. The men respondents were also more likely to choose a male mentor as opposed to a woman mentor as this dispelled the notion that they were entering into a female concentrated field.

Concerning this a male respondent noted:

I would have found a career mentor to be useful during my choice making process so that they could familiarize me with the gender and development field. Although I knew that gender and development studies was a marketable course, I needed to relate to the hands on experience of career mentors who were experts or specialists. Conversing with such specialists as mentors would have given me more certainty in my choice especially if they were men like me(O.I. David, 23/08/2015).

There exist gender differences in terms of the benefits that men and women derive from mentoring relationships. Women feel that their mentors are important to teaching them on the benefits and potential outcome of a particular career, while men felt that they benefit from just observing their mentors (Arnold and Davidson, 1990). Encouragement and the greater need for affirmation from mentors are linked as one of the characteristics important to women. In contrast the role of the mentor for men is linked with their association of career benefits (Ehrhart& Sandler, 1987).

The researcher noted that the above observation by Arnold and Davidson (1990) differed with the findings of this study as the men in the study were more interested in the benefits and potential outcome of gender and development studies derived from mentorship. The women in the study were more interested in exploring the choice which has been related with the development of self efficacy (Lent et al., 2000).

4.2.4 Career role models

The study findings revealed career mentors were a factor that constrained the career choice of gender and development studies for men at 13% men and 12% women. As compared to mentors who were taken by the respondents to guide, advice and explore their career options, role models in the study were taken to be individuals the students knew personally or knew of that had influenced their career choice by being admirable in one or more ways. Role models in this study were of importance due to the visibility that role models take in the society showcasing a person worthy of imitation and dispelling misperceptions a student may have about the determinants of his or her own success (Fried &MacCleave, 2009).

Some of the men respondents felt that they had few role models in the field of gender and development as the focus was mainly on women empowerment which used women as role models leaving out men. Other men in the study also felt that they also lacked men as role models in gender and development studies as they were not sufficiently available and visible as role models. In this regard one male respondent noted the following:

When making my choice to pursue gender and development studies, I was not aware of male role models in the field who I could look up to. Men seem to shy away from being role models in a female concentrated field and the few that are available in the field are unsure of themselves. I think there are few male role models in this field as men do not want to doubt or to have their sexuality questioned because it is a sensitive issue (O.I. Charles, 4/08/2015).

The men respondents in the study however agreed that when it came to the availability of women role models, that they were available and sufficient, though some noted that the successful women role models in the field such as gender activists were controversial and thus would not approach such role models.

Women respondents on the other hand agreed that there were sufficient women role models in the field of gender and development. What they however found as a constraint with these role models is contacting them and meeting them as most these role models happened to be busy professionals. One key informant who was working with an international NGO noted:

I am in the field of gender and development working as a gender specialist. I meet with many university students during university open days and mentorships sessions, however these are usually too brief to make an impact. Although I know that I inspire many women and men with my work. However I have insufficient time owing to my busy schedule to play a greater role, in dispelling bias and stereotypes during the career choice process. I also acknowledge that role models would be useful during the career choice process as they are actually practicing and can answer the technical aspects of the career (O.I. Teresa, 4/08/2015).

According to Perrone et al. (2010) role models have been described as important decisional influences as they offer affirmations and encouragement that support students to overcome career challenges and to feel hopeful, confident and courageous in the pursuit of career goals. However as some of the male respondents noted above they would not approach female role models or look up to them. Ragins (2007) has attributed this stance to gender differences in perceived power whereby male role models are perceived to be more powerful than female role models.

The author further notes that these perceived gender differences when it comes to role models, makes male role models appear to have more power and ability to provide career development functions than female role models. The researcher notes that such perceptions in this study may stem from perceiving female role models as offering more of friendship, counseling and acceptance psychosocial roles. This can be contrasted with male role models who are perceived as sponsoring, coaching, protecting and offering challenging assignments and exposure (Ragins, 2007).

4.2.5 Supportive gender policies

The study findings revealed that supportive gender policies were a factor that constrained the career choice of gender and development studies for men at 20% and 13% women. The

respondents felt that in order for them to make an ideal career choice in the field of gender and development studies there needed to be a gender friendly environment already present at their universities. There were policies that respondents said that they were of and felt that they could provide a backdrop or enabling environment to make career choices. In this regard one male respondent had the following to say:

My awareness of the Kenyatta University Gender Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy, made me choose gender and development studies. I felt that there were visible efforts being made by the university to try and create a conducive environment between men and women that is based on gender equalitythat sometimes lacks in our society(O.I. Anthony, 17/08/2015).

The respondents in the study agreed that career education that encompassed career counseling and consisted of career information, making use of mentors and role models to achieve these aims was a product of supportive university policies. When asked why for instance they were not aware of existence of role models within their universities, the respondents in the study attributed this to the lack of established structures such as specific offices where they could go and directly contact these role models. In this regard one female key informant had the following to say:

Career education is available at most universities offering gender and development studies, however the only challenge is that it is not well structured. By this I mean the onus is left to the students to find out where the career offices are, and when they find the offices the staff is not well organized. Availability of role models and mentors is another challenge prospective student's face, most of these mentors are busy most of the times and others ignore picking their phone calls (O.I. Judy, 12/08/2015).

The theme of established structures within which to carry out career education kept recurring when discussing the constraints the respondents experienced during choice-making. Some of the men respondents said that they were aware of gender policies but felt that these policies addressed women inclusion and support mainly and did not see how these policies addressed their needs. Most of the men in the study were however not aware of the existence of the gender policies and that they could access supportive career education if they wanted from staff like lecturers. Concerning this one male respondent noted:

Policies promoting career education would particularly be useful for men respondents like me in the process of making career choices. The gender policies that currently exist in my university focus on mainly on women's concerns and do not address how to integrate men in the development process. I think that if these policies could also include aspects of career education to increase the men choosing gender and development studies, gender balance in classrooms would be achieved (O.I. Kevin, 5/08/2015).

Women respondents on the hand seemed more aware of the existence of the university's gender policies; however they found these policies too broad as they did not narrow down on the specifics of how they would implement career education. Both men and women felt that the implementation of career education in gender policies was a challenge their universities faced. This is because the respondents in the study felt that if there was low implementation of existing university gender policies it would also be a challenge to implement career education policies.

Kasente (2002) and Odejide (2002), note that the emergence of gender and development studies has lead to the mainstreaming of gender in African universities in the form of university policies.

The mainstreaming of gender equity concerns in African universities include affirmative action programs, strengthening women's presence and research status, addressing sexual harassment problems, lobbying national policy makers and maintaining liaisons with the wider women's movement (Bennett, 2002).

Such gender equity concerns shape university gender policies and gender and development studies curricula making the choice of gender and development studies to be viewed as a tool to transform a gender unequal society. The researcher notes that mainstreaming policies in African universities mention that there exists unresponsive gender enrollments with regards to women's underrepresentation in the sciences and other male dominated career choices but scant attention is given to men's underrepresentation in female dominated careers.

The researcher notes that this needs to change as gender equity needs to be responsive to both men and women's needs. Such gender policies need also to address how men can make balanced career choices through the assistance of career education without necessarily conforming to career choice stereotypes.

5.0 DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The objective of the study was to identify the constraints master's students faced as they made their choice to study gender and development studies. The study noted that the major constraint faced was the lack of adequate career supports. The men in the study had challenges in obtaining unbiased career information while women had access to this career information but said they still lacked of its comprehensive application. The researcher noted if sufficient career counsellors and mentors could be availed, men could benefit from in-depth explorations of their choice and women could familiarize themselves with the diverse application contexts of gender and development studies.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that since women and men while making their choices are conditioned by different factors, there needed to be the implementation of career education that incorporated these factors such as exploration with career counsellors and provision of career resources by mentors and role models. This career education needs to factor in the context specific constraint elements on students masters choiceof gender and development studies in the Kenyan society, such as career information, career mentor, career role models, career counselling and supportive career policies.

5.3 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for achieving gender responsiveness in enrolment interventions in gender and development studies in Nairobi County:

1. Universities in the county should implement career education in the form of career counselling and mentorship programs for the students. This can be a good avenue for self exploration with students during choice-making where they can be administered tests to ensure that they make their choice free of gender bias and stereotypes.

2. To make known about the underrepresentation of men in gender and development studies, universities in the county should hold talks in the media and disseminate information about gender responsiveness in the university campuses through posters, pamphlets and in career choice materials.
3. There should be awareness, sensitization and outreach programs by the university that discuss gender unresponsiveness during the choice-making process. Pre-career talks by role models who are in gender and development studies can help to create clarity as to what the students will experience once they choose gender and development studies.
4. To narrow the chances of gender unresponsiveness there should be equal participation of women and men in gender roles implemented in educational curricula at all levels. This will prepare women and men for a career in which they do not experience underrepresentation thus being productive to their employers and enjoying their career choice.

5.4 Areas for further research

This study focused on identifying constraints masters'students face as they make their choice to study gender and development studiesat the master's level in Nairobi County. A study should also be undertaken in other urban counties to establish other determinants of career choice in gender and development studies.

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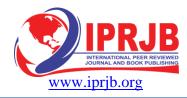
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