

# An Exploration of the Understanding of Gender Responsive Researching Among Selected Researchers in Kenya

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## Abstract

This exploratory qualitative study sought to establish what researchers in Kenya understood about disciplines requiring gender analysis in research, how the gender dimension should be applied in research and how empowerment of women was related to exclusion of men. The study utilized a gender balanced sample of 60 informants from three universities and three research institutions that were purposively selected. The informants were researchers in education and social science, medical and health sciences, environmental studies and engineering and technology, sampled using stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected by use of open ended questionnaires, in-depth interviews and content analysis of relevant research reports. Among other findings, this study shows how the concept of gender responsive researching is already being widely understood, though not necessarily being applied at all stages of research, by researchers in Kenya. Among other things, the paper recommends some of the already existing gender analytic frameworks that researchers may use to effectively incorporate the gender dimension in their work.

**Keywords:** Gender, Researching, Intersectionality, Diversity, Women Empowerment

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## 1. Introduction and Background

Gender Responsive Researching is useful in understanding gender inequalities because it focuses on the needs of both men and women in the context of the study at hand. An effort is made to disaggregate data by sex from the time it's being collected, carry out proper gender analysis and provide recommendations that would promote achievement of measurable gender equality outcomes (Dingley, 2018). While some researchers still perceive gender responsiveness as mere constitution of gender balanced research teams, addressing the gender dimension in research and Innovation through effective integration of gender analysis is a key component of gender responsive researching that ought to be understood by all researchers (European Commission Video, 2019).

Government of Canada (2019) conceptualizes Gender Analysis as the variety of methods used to understand the relationships between men and women, their access to resources, their activities, and the constraints they face relative to each other. In research and/or development, gender analysis would be a useful tool in exploring and highlighting relationships between women and men in the society, the inequalities in those relationships and the pathways to effectively promote and realize gender equality and equity in the society. Researchers should go beyond ensuring women participation and also focus on experiences, knowledge and interests of both men and women in the research process (Philippine Commission on Women Video, 2021). Accordingly, at every stage of a research project, researchers ought to consistently and consciously ask key questions to ensure that the gender aspect is taken care of. For instance: Who, between men and women, is doing what in terms of roles and responsibilities in the context of a particular study? Who owns what property? Who makes decisions on useful relationship, family and organization matters where both men and women are involved and why? How are different things happening for or being done differently or similarly by men and women within the context of a particular study? Who is gaining in cases where certain benefits are being enjoyed in the context of the study? Who loses where something has to be lost? A gender responsive researcher will ask critical questions as exemplified above as they analyze where and how their answers are pointing to similarities, differences and inequalities between men and women in various aspects being considered in a particular study (European Commission Video, 2019; March, Smyth & Mukhopadhyay, 1999).

One of the areas where gender analysis becomes paramount in research is when looking at the division of work or labour. March, Smyth & Mukhopadhyay, (1999) highlights two categories of work or labour that researchers often come across, hence should differentiate between which category is being done by men and which one by women. The categories constitute productive and reproductive work and/or labour. Productive work, on one hand, includes production of goods and services for income or subsistence. This is what is mainly recognized and valued as work by individuals and society. Accordingly, productive work is often included in the national economic statistics and performed by both men and women. However, it may not be valued or rewarded in the same way when performed by women as it happens when it is performed by men. Gould, Schieder and Geier (2016) confirm the existence of gender wage gap, with women mainly earning approximately 80 – 83 cents for every dollar that is paid to men. They argue that this gap is often assumed to be okay since women are

associated with lower levels of education and being in occupations considered inferior as compared to those of men even when that is not necessarily the case. This assumption partly contributes to and reinforces inequalities between men and women. Blair (2018) argues that gender non-conformity is also a reality given the fluidity of culture. Men and women do not always have to behave in certain 'masculine' and 'feminine' ways expected of them or comfortably fit into 'white' or 'black' boxes assigned to them by the society. Accordingly, researchers should seek to know, for instance, how women are remunerated as compared to men, after performing the same measure of productive work. While doing this, Gould, Schieder and Geier (2016) points out, that precise questions have to be asked regarding how race and ethnicity affects women's wages, whether women could close wage gap by getting more education, changing careers and joining unions, among other considerations in the context of a particular study.

Reproductive work, on the other hand, encompasses the care and maintenance of the household and its members. It includes cooking, washing, cleaning, nursing, child bearing and rearing, among other things. While reproductive work is necessary, it is rarely considered as being of the same value as productive work. Many times productive work is not paid and not recorded in the national accounts and economic statistics, yet it is mainly done by women. EIGE (2016) demonstrates that reproductive work should be considered economically important given that it is the essential basic of productive work. It is through reproductive work that the actual and future workforce of the family is cared for and maintained by women. Yet the women do not stop there. They sometimes have to move a step higher and also participate in productive work that is dominated by men given that women shoulder economic burdens in the family and society. Further, women are also expected to play the community managing role. The participation of women in reproductive and productive roles and the community managing role is what EIGE (2016) refers to as women's triple role. Unless researchers open their eyes to these interconnected roles played by the women they are researching with, ways in which women are disadvantaged may not be fully understood. Consequently, research may not sufficiently address developmental issues due to low scientific quality that translates to waste of time and financial resources (European Commission Video, 2019).

Equally important in gender responsive researching is the allocation of resources among members of the community under study. Researchers may find it necessary to take note of who, between men and women, has access to and/or control over resources in the context of their studies. Having access to resources, on one hand, concerns the opportunity to make use of resources. On the other hand, one who has control over resources holds the power to decide how a resource is used and who has access to it, among other useful decisions (March, Smyth & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). In the African community, for instance, women may have access to land since they are responsible for numerous farming activities, however, research demonstrates that title deeds for approximately over 90% of the land on which women are farming, in Kenya alone, are held by men. Notably, only 5% of title deeds in Kenya are held by women jointly with men and just 1% are held by women alone (FIDA KENYA, Undated). Clearly, women are still highly discriminated in regard to land ownership. Yet the Constitution of Kenya 2010 gives men and women equal rights. The Matrimonial Property Act addresses the foundation of equality between men and women in marriage and recognizes them as equal property owners while taking care of the rights of women to land ownership while in marriage, during separation and divorce. Traditions and customs that favor patriarchal land ownership makes it difficult to eradicate discriminatory behavior against women (Mayer, 2020). Other factors hindering women from enjoying land rights include lack of awareness of land rights by women, and discrimination against women by government officers handling land issues (FIDA KENYA, Undated). Ownership of the title deeds puts decision making on important land matters such as utilization of the farm produce and selling of the land squarely in the hands of men. Many times, the society tends to forget that the burden of feeding families is on the shoulder of women whether or not they own land. Researchers need to ask precise questions that will unearth details of property ownership by men and women and whether such ownership has been legalized. FIDA KENYA (Undated) points out that where the women owned land is not legally registered, the possibility of disinheritance of women in case of divorce, widowhood or legal technicalities cannot be ruled out.

When researching to influence policy, researchers need to look at the gender responsiveness of the policies that are in existence and recommend improvement. While gender blind policies do not put the needs of men and women into focus, gender aware policies are clear on how to address gender specific needs (March, Smyth & Mukhopadhyay, 1999).

### 1.1 Gender, Intersectionality and diversity in research

Some researchers often assume that the men and women constituting their research subjects form homogeneous groups. They may argue for example, that all women are disadvantaged and/or all men are privileged in the context of their research while remaining blind to the various categories on men and women being studied. Yet gender analysis ought to provide information that recognizes that gender, and its relationship with race, ethnicity, culture, class, age, disability, and/or other status, is important in understanding the different patterns of

involvement, behaviour and activities that women and men have in economic, social and legal structures (Government of Canada, 2019). Other factors that singly or collectively interact with gender to produce different results and experiences for men and women in various contexts of research, and which every researcher ought to be aware of include religious beliefs, geographical location, level of education, employment status, language, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and political affiliation. These factors are what constitute diversity that every researcher should put in mind as they ask precise questions about which men or women are disadvantaged, privileged, portray certain characteristics or are affected in a certain manner in the context of their study (Gould, Schieder & Geier, 2016; March, Smyth & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). Is it black or white women, for example, who are less represented in certain careers in the United States of America? Is it urban or rural men, who have the financial ability to provide for their families in the Kenyan society? Is it Christian or Muslim women who feel uncomfortable interacting with male researchers in a Kenyan refugee camps?

A researcher who belongs to a privileged category of men or women is more likely to be blind to other members of their gender who are negatively affected by these diverse factors. The only way to avoid this anomaly is purposing to include gender analysis in the research project. In one of her lectures, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian author, talks of having considered herself as an Igbo woman when she lived in Nigeria, but later on become aware that she was a black woman when she moved to the United States of America. This awareness came with the realization that women were first disadvantaged because they were women and then faced further discrimination as a result of their race. This is what Likoye (2022) refers to as double marginalization. It points to the complexity of diversity in situations where some categories of people in the society are disadvantaged in numerous ways as a result of the various factors that interact with gender to produce different results. Unless researchers ask precise questions that provide the understanding of diverse categories of men and women, developing gender aware policies will remain difficult to achieve in many countries around the world.

A researcher who is alive to the fact that gender influences or is influenced by diversity of factors in the context of their study must take 'intersectionality' into account in order to sufficiently address ways in which inequalities manifest themselves between men and women and propose practical interventions for gender equality and equity. The term 'intersectionality' was coined by Kimberle' Crenshaw over 30 years ago to describe how discrimination against different facets of person's identity can overlap and impact their lives (World Economic Forum, 2020). Accordingly, gender is one such facet that often overlaps with other facets such as race, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation and geographical area of residence to produce different results. This means that, with intersectionality in mind, the researcher must not only ask questions about the relevance of their findings to men and women but also shade light on the question of which men or which women with reference to the various facets of their identities that overlap with gender. World Economic Forum (2020) puts it more plainly:

The color of your skin, your gender, disability and sexual orientation all interact to affect your lived experience and contribute to unequal outcomes in ways that cannot be attributed to one dimension alone.

A good example of a research report that puts intersectionality into consideration is the '2022 State of the Gender Pay Gap'. The analysis of this research not only focused on gender, but also facets of human identity such as race, occupation, level of education, age and occupation, among others. One of the study's findings that exemplify diversity indicates that:

Race and gender intersect to result in wider pay gaps for women of color. For the uncontrolled gender pay gap, American Indian and Native Alaskan women (who make \$0.71 to every \$1 white men make) and Hispanic women (who make \$0.78 for every \$1 white men make) have the widest gender pay gaps. When data are controlled for compensable factors, Black women have the widest gender pay gap (\$0.98) (Payscale, 2022).

## 1.2 Gender Policy and Legal Framework in Kenya

Kenya has a progressive gender policy and legal framework. The sessional Paper No. 2 of 2019 on National Policy on Gender and Development is well aligned to the Constitution of Kenya 2010, especially in consideration of Chapter 4 on the Bill of Rights. It also puts into consideration the pieces of legislation aligned to the constitution, functions of national and county governments, Kenya Vision 2030 and the 'Big Four Agenda' that focuses on healthcare, food security, housing and manufacturing. Also addressed by the gender policy in Kenya are the International and regional treaties such as the CEDAW and Maputo Protocol, the Agenda 2063 of the African Union, Lessons Learnt from MDGs and Relevant SDGs. Accordingly, Kenya scores 81(out of 100) on the women, business and the law 2020 index and ranks 109 out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 (USAID, 2020).

Despite the progressive legal and policy framework on gender in Kenya, gender inequalities remain an issue of concern. Girls and women bear the brunt for the discrimination and vulnerability as a result of huge historical

injustices against them. Some of the areas with glaring inequalities include representation of women in politics. Currently, only 1 fifth of women occupy elective positions despite of the legal requirement of two thirds 'either' gender as outlined in article 27 of the Kenya constitution. When women are under-represented in political leadership, issues affecting women would not be well articulated and addressed. This could be partly the reason why 1 in 42 women still die of pregnancy related complications in Kenya. Education attainment also raises concern with only 39% of girls finishing secondary education (Borgen Mag., 2020). Other areas where women are grossly affected include poverty, health outcomes, control over resources and labour market.

This paper is based on research whose main objective was to explore the understanding of gender-responsive researching among selected researchers in Kenya. Particularly, the study set out to establish what the researchers had to say about disciplines requiring gender responsive researching, what they understood about integrating the gender dimension in research and their views concerning how women empowerment was related to exclusion of men.

## 2. Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

This paper is derived from findings of an exploratory study that took a qualitative orientation with an aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of how selected researchers in Kenya understood gender responsive researching in regard to:

- (i) The disciplines that require gender analysis in research.
- (ii) How the gender dimension should be included in research.
- (iii) How the empowerment of women and girls is related to the exclusion of men.

Three public universities and three research organizations based in Kenya were purposively sampled to provide a research population with mixed characteristics including; rural and urban locations and a mix of fields of studies, particularly; education and social science, environmental studies, medical and health sciences and engineering and technology.

A gender balanced sample of 60 researchers was sampled from the selected universities and research organizations to participate in this study as informants using stratified random sampling technique. To begin with, four different areas of research/study at the university and research organizations were identified to constitute four strata as follows: education and social sciences, environmental studies, medical and health sciences and engineering and technology. Gender specific lists of all researchers in each stratum were made and a predetermined number of researchers randomly selected from each list to give a total of sixty researchers of balanced gender who participated in this study.

Data was collected from 42 of the 60 informants by use of open ended questionnaires. In-depth interviews were done with the remaining 18 so as to understand the question of gender responsive researching from the perspective of the researchers better. Additional data was obtained through documentary analysis of existing research reports in Kenya, especially for studies done in the past ten years. The analysis was based on factors such as gender composition of the research teams, gender responsiveness of the language used in the research reports and analysis and presentation of the various research findings. Some of the research reports analyzed included *Wasichana Wote Wasome* (Let All Girls Learn) WWW (2015-2019), a Girl Education Challenge (GEC) study that aimed at improving enrolment, retention, attendance and learning outcomes of over 8000 girls in 7 counties in Kenya (Limboro, *et al.*, 2018); Value Based Education in Kenya (Wamahiu *et al.*, 2015) study that involved 13000 participants from schools across all the 47 counties in Kenya.

Data from the interviews was recorded electronically and transcribed into text data. The qualitative data was analyzed thematically based on the objectives of the study and some verbatim quotes identified for use in the research report. Quantitative data was analyzed by use descriptive statistics.

## 3. Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This section discusses findings from interviews and questionnaires on gender responsive researching with researchers from universities and research institutions in Kenya as well as documentary analysis of existing research reports. The findings are presented in three sub-sections including: Disciplines requiring gender analysis in research, including the gender dimension in research and the understanding of women and girl child empowerment in relation to exclusion of men.

### 3.1 Disciplines requiring gender analysis in research

The informants in this study were asked questions in regard to what disciplines they thought needed to include the gender dimension in their research. Clearly, there were mixed views and perspectives in regard to this question. On one hand, some informants looked at gender dimension as necessary in research across all the disciplines as illustrated by the excerpts below:

The gender dimension is already being included in research in almost all the discipline. I cannot think of any single discipline where only one gender can work. Men and women are

working side by side and companies and organizations are mainstreaming gender in their policies. The same is also expected in research (Male researcher, research institution, education and social science, December 2022).

Gender should be a consideration not just in every discipline but also in every aspect of life. There is no special world for men only or women only, hence the two genders must learn how to exist at home, work and even in research. Issues affecting them must also be understood from a gender perspective for us to arrive at solutions that would work (Female researcher, university, medicine and health sciences).

To others, gender was no longer an important consideration in research or was only useful in certain disciplines and not others as exemplified by the following voices:

I don't think that gender is even an issue in the field of medicine. In fact, we already have so many female students joining the field unlike twenty years ago where male students dominated the course. Medicine is no-longer a masculine thing. Even among the lecturers we also have a good number of women and by virtue of teaching at the university they form part of the research community (Male researcher, university, medicine and health sciences, December 2022).

I personally don't understand why people are making a big deal out this gender thing. Who does not know that both boys and girls are already going to school and getting into all kinds of professions? Do we need research to understand that? (Male researcher, university, environmental studies, December 2022).

In this faculty we do not focus much on issues of gender given that we specialize in engineering and technology. There are departments such as sociology and others in social science which research in the area of gender and could have answers to all your questions (Female researcher, university, engineering and technology, December 2022).

The above excerpts confirm that there are researchers who still believe that gender is only about participation of women and once the women are on the table there should be no need of asking more questions. Yet there is need for researchers to seek further understanding of what is happening to the women at the table in relation to their male counterparts (Ohide, 2020). The excerpts also demonstrate how some researchers perceive 'gender' as a content area that should only be understood by researchers in given disciplines in social science. However, the literature review done in this study demonstrates that there is no research discipline that does not lend itself to gender analysis. The following are some research areas and disciplines which some researchers have viewed as not requiring gender analysis when in really sense they readily lend themselves to gender analysis:

(i) Transport and vehicle manufacturing:

While noting that transport is one of the sectors that has been male dominated for many years, the United Nation Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE, 2022) acknowledges the key role that transport can play in the efforts to achieve gender equality around the globe. The UNECE further argues that transport directly influence the success of a number of other key areas where gender equality and equity need to be realized. The sectors include employment, economic growth and access to health and education services, among other areas where inequalities between men and women are still rife. Accordingly, it would be reasonable to argue that strengthening policy in the transport sectors would go along away in bridging the gender gaps in the society. Gender aware transport policies will be informed by gender responsive research which clearly identifies the needs of men and women in the transport sector.

A good example is where research in vehicle manufacturing seeks to understand the specifications necessary for cars that will be driven by women and those that will be driven by men. Assuming that all cars would be driven by men and failing to test them on women would be unfair to women who would also like to comfortably use such cars. There are more questions that could be asked by researchers in the transport sector. For instance, who, between men and women, is using public transport and who is using private? Which men or women are using public or private transport? This way, the needs of the diverse categories of men and women in regard to transport services would be understood. Consequently, development of evidence-based gender aware policies would be made easy and the gender aware recommendations would inform interventions such as designing roads, footpaths and footbridges that would serve men and women to their satisfaction, among other things (European Commission Video, 2019).

(ii) Medical and health sciences research

Gender responsive researchers would have plenty of questions to ask in the field of health and medicine. According to Bottorf *et al.*, (2011), gender relations could be linked to research not just in regard to findings but also research design including conceptual frameworks that guide studies. For instance, researchers may ask questions about what medical conditions affect men and women differently and why. For a long time, cancer is one of the conditions that was mainly thought of as affecting women only. This was due to the fact that it was

easier to diagnose cancer of the breast and other female reproductive organs. However, the mid-twentieth century came with increased accuracy of diagnosing cancer of the internal organs which led to the understanding that men were also being affected by cancer (Löwy, 2013). With increased disaggregation of medical data by gender, it is becoming clearer that men and women are affected differently by various types of cancers; hence gender experts may want to establish the socio-cultural reasons that may be linked to such differences among other factors. Kim, Lim and Moon (2018) observe that men recorded 20% higher incidence than women in cancer and 40% higher mortality rate than women in the United States of America. Additionally, they pointed out that certain cancers have been found to affect certain sexes more than others. For instance, while breast cancer is 100 times more common among women than men (Hook, 2017), the American Cancer Society (2021) has reported prostate cancer to lead among men. Notably, women cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group when analyzing the impact of cancer due to these differences. Some two out of three women with invasive breast cancer are 55 years or older. In addition, white women are more susceptible to breast cancer than African-American women who are more likely to die from breast cancer (Hook, 2017). Similarly, older men, especially age 65 and above, with the African American and Caribbean ancestry are more likely to get prostate cancer than other men. This shows that age is also an important factor that should be analyzed alongside gender on health matters.

When data in the health and medical field are segregated by sex and analyzed with diversity in mind as demonstrated above, it becomes easier for researchers to understand which men and women are affected by certain cancers or any other health condition under study. The researchers can then easily move a step higher to ask the question why, so as to generate data that can enable them recommend practical interventions for the various groups of men and women.

Another health condition that has been linked in gender inequality in numerous ways is HIV and AIDS. Ochieng (2010) observes that girls and women are often more disadvantaged than men in the context of HIV. Gender related factors such as the fact that women may have less information about HIV, less resources and less power to negotiate safe sex, among other things put the women at a disadvantaged position.

Gender analysis in medical and health science research strongly interplayed during the spread and management of Covid-19 pandemic. In Kenya, for example, more men than women were being infected and/or suffered severe disease. This gave researchers a chance to ask questions in regard to the differences with some arguing that the hygiene status of women was better than that of men and others suggesting that women had better health seeking behavior, hence managed to avert the condition before it worsened among other arguments. These arguments were not new. Bottorff et al., (2011) point out the association of masculinity with risk taking behaviour that compromise health in numerous ways. At the global level, UN Women undated policy brief number 18, in regard to Covid-19, observed that:

Women are Heads of State and Government in only 21 countries worldwide, but their leadership has been lauded for its greater effectiveness in managing Covid-19 health crisis. Women Heads of Government in Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand and Slovakia are being recognized for the rapidity of the response they are leading, which has not only included measures to ‘flatten the curve’...but also transparent and compassionate communication of fact-based public health information.

### (iii) Architectural Research

ACSA (2014) survey found almost half of all graduates of accredited courses in architecture being women yet only around 15% were licensed to practice. When questions were asked regarding where the rest of the women trained in architecture were, it turned out that there were huge wage gaps between men and women who practiced in the field that caused women to leave. Additionally, the absence of female mentors in the field contributed to failure by younger women to stay in the profession. Without such gender analysis of those who practiced architecture, researchers would be tempted to assume that since there appears to be gender parity at the college level then the same case applies to practice.

## 3.2 Including the gender dimension in research

Majority of the informants who participated in this study (95%) clearly understood that the inclusion of both men and women in any research endeavor was an important aspect of gender responsive researching. This gave the researcher an opportunity to seek a deeper understanding of the views of informants on when and how the gender dimension should be included in research and their experience of gender analysis in research.

Some 5% of the informants were of the view that gender responsive researching was about including women in research teams. This kind of understanding could be interpreted in two ways: One is that the informants in question still believed that gender was purely about women. Yet it would still be unreasonable to work with women and exclude men. Research problems need to be understood from the perspectives of both men and women. Two, it could be the assumption that all research projects and environments are already dominated by men hence it is always women who are under-represented hence should be brought on board. This

is not always the case because there are instances where majority of researchers would be women and the inclusion of men would be necessary to balance out the gender equation. Documentary analysis of recent studies done in Kenya, for example, revealed that majority of researchers were women in studies done by one of the research organizations that participated in the study, and deliberate efforts were made by the organizations to bring in men at all times so as to remain inclusive (Limboro, et al. 2018, Wamahiu *et al.*, 2015).

Informants in this study pointed out the fact that the research world was still experiencing challenges in regard to inclusion of women both as researchers and informants in many research projects. They observed thus:

Most research teams are still dominated by men except in a few cases such as where the research projects focus on topics such as gender and women empowerment is when you find women dominating (Male researcher, university, medical and health sciences, December 2022).

When you look around the universities, you will discover that even where there are gender balanced research teams, the PI and CO-PIs still tend to be men. There is still a culture, among researchers, of assuming that leadership has to be taken by men and that women should deputize (Female researchers, research organization, education and social science, December 2021).

The findings of this study further revealed that where research teams composed both men and women, sometimes women have turned down the offer to lead the research teams citing reasons such as their busy schedule at home, believing that the men in the teams could do it better or just being shy. However, the informants argued that women were performers. Accordingly, where the women accepted to take up leadership of research teams, it has generally been observed that such teams performed well in terms of beating deadlines, research logistics, and general research output.

The informants pointed out that there was a renewed energy by researchers across disciplines to include girls and women in their research as informants or participants in the last one decade. They also observed that inclusion of women as participants was facing diverse challenges especially in communities that still marginalize women and look at them as not being knowledgeable or wise enough to respond to research questions. This argument is exemplified by the following excerpt from an interview with a female researcher, in the area of education and social science, from one of the research organizations that participated in the study:

Sometimes we do everything that it takes to include girls and women in research as informants because we understand the significance of their views. However, where such women are from low socio-economic backgrounds or not well educated, men still want to speak on their behalf. The men insist on hanging around such women to listen to what they are telling the researcher and even attempt to answer interview questions on behalf of the women. In some cases, men even deny women permission to speak to researchers. Sadly, some women in marginalized communities also believe that men understand the situation of women better and should therefore speak on behalf of everyone in the family (December, 2022).

The informants were required to explain the point at which they introduced gender in their research projects, if at all they did. Around 35% of the informants pointed out that they often did not remember to address the gender dimension of the study especially when the study was not specifically addressing gender issues. Some 40% of the informants confessed that they had always began working on their research project without gender in mind. However, on some occasions they have found themselves having to address the gender component midway the study due to one reason or another. Such reasons included a member of the research team raising the need to address some gender issue or the donor demanding to see the disaggregation of data by gender. It was observed that such researchers were still getting used to the idea that even studies that do not focus on gender as a topic need to incorporate in them the gender dimension. Only 25% of the informants reported that they always purposed to include some form of gender dimension in their research from the planning stage. However, not all researchers in this category planned to incorporate gender at all the stages of their work. Some only did it in terms of ensuring gender balanced research teams and participants, others focused more on disaggregation of data by gender and only a few addressed gender from the planning and proposal stage, through data collection, report writing, dissemination of findings and monitoring and evaluation. Yet this kind of gender analysis is what every researcher should begin focusing on regardless of their discipline.

Literature review indicates that gender and diversity ought to form part of the entire research framework rather than being introduced into an ongoing study unplanned after the donor or other actors point out a gender gap. This means that researchers should focus not only on equal participation of men and women in research and issues affecting both gender, but also address the question of which men or women? This should be done with aspects such as disability, race, religion, socio-economic status, level of education, among others in mind. Below are some of the ways that gender responsiveness could be ensured at various levels of a research project:

(i) Proposal writing stage

Researchers should work in gender balanced teams, where possible, from the conceptualization of a study and

writing of the proposal. It is at this point that questions should be asked about which men and women would constitute the research team at all levels. For instance, it would be useful for both men and women to be represented among the PIs and Co-PIs of research projects since these are the people likely to influence decision making in the entire research process. Researchers, including data collectors should also include both genders in consideration of the view that some information can only be freely given to women and some to men, depending on the nature of the study. For instance, teenage girls may find it easier to discuss questions to do with menstruation with female rather than male researchers. The researchers should also ensure that right from the proposal stage, questions are asked about the gender of informants. The proposal should be clear on the various categories of men and women that would respond to certain research questions. It goes without saying, for example, that women would understand their own experiences in families, work place and communities better than men would do. It would therefore be fair to give the women a chance to talk about their own experiences as informants in the study and get additional information from men to support or corroborate what women would have said about themselves (Chepkemoi, 2022).

Another useful consideration at the proposal writing stage in gender responsive researching is to ensure that the study is asking questions that address the needs of both men and women in the context of the research problem. As researchers do this, they will need to ensure that they use a gender responsive language at all levels of the research project. For instance, it would be good to talk about interviewing police officers where men and women are involved rather than referring to them as policemen, which blacks out the women among them or assumes that they are inclusive of men. A gender responsive language would help the reader to become conscious of the gender specific nature of the informant and get thinking on the nature of gender specific interventions where necessary.

#### (ii) Data Collection Stage

There are various areas where gender needs to be put in mind during data collection. First and foremost is the question of seeking informed consent. The researcher must understand who, between the man and woman in a given community, is free to give consent so as to facilitate acceptance and smooth research operation in the field. Chepkemoi (2022) shares experiences on how women in the marginalized communities in which she worked in Kenya were denied the right to give consent to researchers who wanted to collect data from them. This meant that the researchers had to first of all obtain such consent from the men in the families before engaging in any meaningful conversation with women. While one may argue that grown up women have a right to give consent to the researchers, it would be useful to realize that respecting societal norms and culture is necessary for researchers to gain entry and obtain useful information from women and about women so as to use the same information for practical interventions that would lead to the liberation of women including gaining the power to give consent. Insisting to obtain consent directly from women in such communities may lead to endless fights, with men who feel disrespected, to the extent of delaying or curtailing generation of useful data.

During data collection, gender responsive researchers should pay attention to the information being given by research participants about men and women, as well as what is being said by men and women. To arrive at the reality about gender, it pays for qualitative researchers to triangulate information that men and women give about themselves with what other men and women say about them.

Researchers who carry out observation should do it with their gender eye open. A good example is where classroom observation ought to take into consideration and document the behavior and participation of both boys and girls differently. For instance, the classroom observations done during WWW studies that were analyzed in this study (Limboro, *et al.*, 2018) did not only record how many times boys and girls participated in classroom activities but also described the kind of activities and nature of participation that happened. Questions were asked, for example, on who, between boys and girls, was asking or answering questions in class, who was raising their hand or waiting to be called upon by the teacher before they could talk, among other observations. Accordingly, raising one's hand to speak may be an indication of greater empowerment as compared to keeping quiet until one is asked by the teacher to speak. The question of what textbooks and other teaching and learning material (TLM) communicate about boys/men and girls/women should also not be ignored when making observation in the context of education. Mandela (2021) argues that where books show students that are contacting experiments, it is always useful to take note of the gender of the one holding the equipment to perform the experiment and the one watching the process.

#### (iii) Data analysis and report writing

The data analysis process should take care of the needs of men and women just like the rest of the research process. Researchers should avoid writing gender blind reports and clearly record the voices of men and women where possible. Any quantitative data used to back up arguments should be disaggregated by sex so that readers can clearly see the difference between men and women and ask the question why? This kind of analysis would be possible especially where a piece of research has utilized mixed methods. Looking at the findings of the Value-Based Education in Kenya study that was led by Women Educational Researchers of Kenya (Wamahiu, *et al.*, 2015), for example, one is able to see the trend of girls deputizing boys in school leadership. Accordingly,



the study asked questions that help the reader understand why the girls were deputizing boys. In the same study, the voices of teachers encouraging girls to work hard so that their education can help them in case they fail to get husbands are captured. This is then followed up with an observation that girls could easily interpret the teachers' advice to mean that marriage is the ultimate thing for women, and that, education is only an alternative plan should marriage fail to work.

(iv) Monitoring and evaluation

Where monitoring and evaluation form part of a given programme, gender responsiveness should still be put into consideration. According to EIGE (2016), gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation, also referred to as 'gender-specific monitoring and evaluation' would be useful in checking how a programme is taking care of the needs and priorities of men and women, and addressing gender relations, as well as determine the aspects of gender that should be integrated in the programme. The strength of the gender accountability of the study is also determined by its planning and designing where gender equality is put in mind from the beginning and when developing the objectives and indicators of the piece of the study as well as its methods of obtaining data. Inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative data that measure the impact of gender relations contributes to the effectiveness of gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation. This is because sufficient sex-disaggregated data is necessary in facilitating researchers to analyze the impact of gender equality in a meaningful way (Simister & Hayman, 2021).

While observing gender responsive researching is necessary during designing and conducting studies as well as monitoring and evaluation, it becomes even more significant when results and recommendations obtained from such research are used in a meaningful way. To begin with, gender responsiveness must be maintained when writing reports and disseminating findings in journals, conferences and other settings. This will help in opening the eyes of data consumers to the fact that different issues affect men and women differently and it would be necessary to deal with such issues with gender in mind. Failing to disaggregate data by sex, while also putting into consideration the question of diversity, during dissemination of findings may further conceal the gender inequalities and/or reinforce the misunderstanding that men and women form homogeneous groups. Yet it is the differences that come with diversity among men and women that lead to the challenges that researchers are seeking to understand and help address (Rushston, *et al.* 2019). Accordingly, data that is presented and disseminated in a gender-responsive manner would contribute to designing effective interventions for men and women. In fact, researchers who care to influence policy should aim at developing evidence-based gender aware policy briefs from their work and disseminating them with stakeholders who influence or play a role in policy development and implementation.

### 3.3 Understanding of women and girl child empowerment in relation to exclusion of men

One of the key questions of discussion in the study that informed this paper was whether women and girl child empowerment translated to exclusion of men. Accordingly, 100% of female researchers interviewed, who formed 50 percent of the informants for the study, believed that women and girl child empowerment did not in any way exclude men. They argued that women empowerment was good for men because empowered women made positive contributions to the economy of the home and community at large. However, the male informants were divided on the question of whether women empowerment led to exclusion of men and how. On one hand, 50% of the male informants were positive about women empowerment and did not see it as a threat to men as illustrated in the excerpts below:

When girls and women are empowered, families are happy and healthy. Empowered women not only make the right dietary and nutrition related decisions for their children and the larger family, but can also afford good healthcare hence they raise healthy families. Healthy families translate to healthy nations (Male researcher, university, education and social science, December 2022).

The question of whether women empowerment is necessary should not even be debatable. When empowered women are in leadership positions, organizations generally tend to do better than when men are in top management positions. Look at the performance of universities that have been led by women Vice Chancellors within the last decade in Kenya. They have done better in all aspects including infrastructure, financial management and academic matters (Male researcher, research organization, social science, December 2022).

On another hand, 50% of male informants thought that empowerment of women and girls disadvantaged men in one way or another. They argued as exemplified by the voices below:

There is a problem with overemphasize on women and girl child empowerment. The boys are slowly getting forgotten in the process and this will only serve to reverse the problem from women marginalization to men marginalization. No one is talking about boys and men anymore even when it is clear that girls are already doing well in all aspects of life. This will soon become a huge problem. Instead of talking about girl-child empowerment, why can't we

just emphasize empowering all children equally? The majority of students in my medical class are currently girls and they are even performing better than their male counterparts (Male researcher, university, medicine and health sciences, December 2022).

What I have observed is that even when women are economically empowered, they still want men to take care of all their financial needs at the family level. One wonders how women empowerment is useful when they are refusing to even pay school fees for their own children and expecting the men to carry the burden unaided. I know that a few of them make a strong contribution economically but the majority have not adjusted accordingly in that area. This way, we may begin feeling that women empowerment is actually disadvantaging us in a way (Male researcher, university, environmental studies, December 2022).

There is a tendency for women to leave their marriages when they become empowered. This happens especially when they begin doing better than their husbands economically and establish strong networks with men who are equally strong. I think men should focus more on supporting empowerment of their daughters rather than their wives (Male researcher, university, environmental studies, December 2022).

The above finding is not new. Silberschmidt (2001) reviews studies that look at the roles and identities of men as being challenged and undermined by the socio-economic change that promote women empowerment. Yet, the studies argue, that the roles and identities of women are strengthened in the process.

Capturing the voices of men on the issue of women empowerment in a way demonstrates how this paper partly fills a research gap identified by Includovate (2020) who observes that the concept of 'empowerment' tends to be associated with women more than men hence men are rarely given a chance to share their views concerning women empowerment. The study on which this paper is based gave both men and women an equal chance to respond to the various questions and their voices were captured accordingly. Unfortunately, many studies are still far from doing this. In this connection, Hanmer and Klugman, (2016) note that literature on women empowerment mainly contain information obtained from women aged 14-49. The absence of rich data from men on the topic of women empowerment should be of great concern in the research space given that men have a key role to play in promoting and/or hindering women empowerment as noted by Includovate (2020) and Silberschmidt, (2001). It is only through understanding the role of men as partners in women empowerment, that the society can achieve reasonable gains in women empowerment.

This paper argues that when men are excluded from women empowerment projects, the men not only miss out on a chance to share useful information that could lead to positive change but also fail to gain a deeper understanding of arguments surrounding women empowerment. This is partly the reason why some men have tended to undermine empowerment of women, especially as considered in regard to their wives rather than daughters (Hanstad, 2014). Such men feel threatened every time they hear about concepts such as feminism, affirmative action or gender equality. To them, women empowerment is about fighting and disempowering men. This fear is unfounded. In fact, research has demonstrated that gender responsive companies, families and institutions which have achieved on women empowerment, are actually happier. In this connection, Hanstad (2014) argues that empowering women is a societal rather than a women's issue. Accordingly, when a woman is empowered, the net effect is that men, children, families and the larger society benefit in numerous ways, hence gain higher levels of happiness and productivity.

In this study, one male informant argued that sometimes opportunities are unfairly taken from men who qualify and given to women who don't qualify just because they are women. He argued that such 'mistakes' happen especially when those in leadership abuse the idea behind affirmative action to give offices to their 'lovers' as has been seen in the political space in some countries around the world. This paper argues that when properly done, women empowerment should promote fairness to all rather than used to undermine men and boys. Affirmative action can be used as a temporary measure to close the wide gaps between men and women that have been brought about by historical injustices. However, long term strategies should be designed to ensure that men and women in a given society can eventually compete at the same level without either gender having to deal with numerous obstacles (Ohide, 2020).

It should be understood that empowerment of one gender is not about taking something from the already 'empowered' gender to give to the less empowered one, usually women. Rather, Hanstad (2014) sees women empowerment as bringing on board a gender that has been underutilized socially and economically, to the benefit of everyone. In order to understand women empowerment better, Includovate (2020) emphasizes the need to have plenty of data on both men and women to make comparisons possible, whenever there is doubt, and ensure that men are not being emasculated in the process of empowering women. This is a gap that researchers, the world over, can endeavor to fill through carrying out gender responsive research. According to Ochieng (2010), gender equality and empowerment are comparative concepts. Consequently, one can only understand how empowered women are in a given society when they weigh such empowerment against that of men under similar conditions.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study, this paper makes the following conclusions:

- (i) The concept of gender responsive researching is already being understood widely by researchers across universities and research institutions around Kenya. However, there is still some level of misunderstanding among some researchers which ought to be addressed.
- (ii) There is no discipline that does not lend itself to gender responsive researching.
- (iii) The researchers who are already applying gender responsiveness in their work are not necessarily doing it all stages of their research. While some begin and finish with ensuring equal participation of both men and women in their research, others forget about gender until they are reminded to do so midway their work.
- (iv) There are various ways in which a researcher may begin applying gender responsive researching. For instance, by asking the right relevant questions at every stage of their study, ensuring that research teams are gender balanced and doing gender analysis at all the stages of their research project. A researcher may or may not need a gender-analysis framework depending on how clear they are with aspects of analysis in ensuring gender equality through research.
- (v) There are numerous challenges being faced by researchers who are already trying to apply gender responsiveness in their work.

This paper recommends as follows:

- (I) Researchers who are experiencing challenges in gender responsive researching need not give up on this important aspect of research. Gender responsive researching remains a necessary component in every discipline. If well observed, it will contribute greatly towards producing research findings and contributions that will lead to development of gender aware policies hence achievement of a gender equal society.
- (II) Clearly, there is need for researchers to encourage a conversation with men around women and girl child empowerment. This way, the views of men will be factored into the efforts and interventions to promote a gender equal society. Additionally, men will be helped to better understand issues surrounding women empowerment where necessary.
- (III) Researchers who may not be sure of how to incorporate gender in their work may begin by reading about and using existing gender analytic frameworks. They include: Harvard Analytical Framework, People-Oriented Planning Framework (POP), Moser Framework, Gender Analysis Matrix (GAM), Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis Framework (CVA), Women's Empowerment (Longwe) Framework and Social Relations Approach. Each one of these gender analytic frameworks can be used independently or combined with others depending on the issue under investigation, the expertise of the researcher and the resources at hand (March, Smyth & Mukhopadhyay, 1999; UN Women Training Centre, 2017).
- (IV) Gender responsive researching should continue being actively encouraged in every discipline.

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