**Original Research Article**

**Contributing Factors for Low Male Enrollment in Gender Programmes in Higher Learning Institutions: A Case of Tengeru Institute of Community Development in Tanzania**

ABSTRACT

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| --- |
| Gender consideration in undertaking of gender studies is crucial for the development of gender specialists for the community development arena. The study objectives were; to determine the socio-cultural and institutional factors for low male enrollment in gender programmes, The study adopted cross sectional research design with a sample size of 170 students from three Bachelor Degrees Programmes in TICD. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to obtain respondents. Data collection methods involved questionnaire survey and Interview to collect primary data. Analysis involved descriptive statistics and content analysis for quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The study revealed that, lack of role models and social stereotypes about gender roles, peer influence, fear of being judged, lack of education and awareness about gender and students’ perceptions affect male enrollment into Gender Programmes. Also, findings showed that lack of adequate gender-related marketing, lack of an inclusive curriculum design in gender programmes focusing solely on women’s experiences, shortage of male gender specialists and role model facilitators contributed to low male enrollment in gender programmes. It is concluded that, low male enrollment in gender programmes is hampered by lack of education among parents and male students themselves, peer and family influence. Also, this study concludes that Lack of market strategies that incorporate gender specific promotion intervention as well lack of well-designed curriculum contributes to existing gender disparities in these programmes. It is recommended that the institutes should promote career benefits and relevance, allocate sufficient fund for gender department, promoting partnership with community organisations, curriculum reform, embracing better gender sensitive marketing strategies and educate parents and the public in general about the values of gender programmes in the society. |

**Keywords:** Enrollment, Gender, Gender Programmes, Higher learning Institutions, curriculum, perceptions.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globally, the origins of gender studies emerged during the late 19th century when early feminist like Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, and Emma Goldman laid the foundation for gender studies by advocating for women’s rights and challenging traditional gender roles, (Tong, 1989). Their writings and activism contributed to the emergence of feminist theory, which examined power dynamics between genders and criticized societal norms, [1]. In the early 20th century witnessed the rise of the women’s suffrage movement, which aimed to secure voting rights for women. This movement further propelled the fight for gender equality and paved the way for broader social change, [2].

The first Women’s Studies program was launched at the University of California and Los Angeles in 1969, setting a precedent for similar programmes to be established across the United States and eventually globally, [3]. The programmes of this nature normally tend to focus in integrating gender perspectives into traditional academic disciplines and explore gender-related issues across various fields of study, [4]. During the 19th century, gender studies expanded to include not only women’s experiences but also the experiences of men individuals. This led to the emergence of sub-disciplines such as Men’s Studies and Queer Studies within the field of gender studies, [5]. By the 21st century, gender studies became an established academic field with programmes offered worldwide, [3]. It continues to evolve and address contemporary gender-related issues such as women’s rights, inter-sectionality, masculinity studies, queer theory, and more[6].

In African, the emergence of gender studies was found in the 1960s, a time when the idea of studying women was considered radical, and initially was known as Female Studies, where later was renamed Women’s Studies to emphasize the importance of women’s perspectives and experiences in shaping knowledge, [7]. In the 1970s, Women’s Studies began to gain prominence in African universities. The movement was fueled by the desire to challenge the patriarchal structure of academia and to make knowledge about women more visible. The Women’s Studies field was grounded as a platform for women to explore their own experiences and perspectives, rather than simply studying the male-dominated narratives that had previously shaped the academic discourse, [8]. The field of Women’s Studies evolved into a more comprehensive discipline known as Gender Studies. This shift reflected the growing recognition that gender is a complex social construct that intersects with other factors, such as race, class, and sexuality where it began to explore the diverse experiences of individuals who did not fit neatly into traditional binary categories of male and female[8].

* 1. **Tanzania Context**

Gender studies in Tanzania emerged as a means to address women’s issues and promote gender equality in various sectors of society. The movement gained momentum in the late 1970s and has since made significant paces towards advancing gender equality and women’s rights. In the late 1970s, feminist groups were formed at the University of Dar Es Salaam (UDSM) with the aim of studying feminist writings and raising awareness about gender issues. These groups provided a platform for discussions on women’s rights, feminism, and gender inequality [9]. As the feminist movement gained power, the Women Study Group (WSG) was established in 1980 at UDSM. This group focused on conducting research, organizing seminars, and publishing articles on women’s issues. The WSG played a crucial role in promoting gender studies within academia. In 1982, the Women’s Research and Documentation Project (WRDP) was formed to further advance gender studies in Tanzania, [9]. The WRDP aimed to document women’s experiences, conduct research, and provide resources for scholars interested in gender-related topics. By 1996, UDSM had witnessed significant growth in women’s organizations on campus. Fourteen (14) women’s organizations were established, each focusing on different aspects of women’s empowerment. These organizations included Women Education Development, Women in Science and Technology, and Women Campus Group[10]. While there was a lack of dedicated gender or women-focused programmes in certain faculties such as Education, Commerce, Law, and Science, efforts were made to mainstream gender issues into existing programmes.

The Law faculty incorporated gender-related topics into its curriculum, ensuring that legal education addressed women’s rights and gender equality. Similarly, the Foreign Languages and Linguistics department integrated gender perspectives into its programmes, fostering a deeper understanding of language and gender dynamics. The Political Science department recognized the importance of gender issues in politics and incorporated them into its curriculum. The Art, Music, and Theatre department explored gender representations in various art forms, contributing to a more inclusive artistic dialogue. Even in traditionally male-dominated fields such as Engineering and Sciences, efforts were made to integrate gender perspectives [11]. This ensured that future professionals had an understanding of the impact of gender on their respective fields.

At Tengeru Institute of Community Development (TICD), the emergency gender studies or gender programmes is dated in 2003. These programmes were developed alongside other fields of study such as Participatory Project Planning and Management as well as Community Development. The main objective was to produce experts with advanced skills in their respective fields where this initiative builds upon TICD’s earlier operations in the 1960s when programmes were offered to extension officers, equipping them with the necessary skills to support community actions, (TICD, 2023). Primarily, the field was known as Gender and Development, and it emerged as a response to the introduction of formal training programmes in the early 1980s which included community development awards at the certificate level and advanced diploma programmes. Over time, the field of gender and development continued to evolve, leading to the establishment of the Gender and Community Development department in 2003. This department ensured that gender and development programmes aligned with the institute’s mission and vision. It also provided opportunities to contribute to research, document best practices, and participate in national and international forums for information sharing and learning. As a significant milestone, the establishment of the Gender and Community Development department laid the foundation for upgrading the Gender program from a Diploma in Gender and Development to a Bachelor’s degree in Gender and Community Development. To date, Gender and Community Development has evolved into a distinct field of study that train professionals to advocate for and advance equality within communities. This study selected the socio-cultural and the institutional related factors as the determinants for low male enrollment due to the facts that socio-cultural factors tend to shape an individual’s perceptions on the programmes to be pursued by students. Also, the institution related factors may facilitate or hinder students’ choices of gender programmes depending on how gender-sensitive the institution is oriented.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The enrollment of male students in gender programmes in higher learning institutions has been consistently questionable. Despite the progress made in the field of gender studies and the increasing awareness of gender-related issues in society, male students remain significantly underrepresented in these programmes [12]. [13] documented that male enrollment in gender programmes accounted for only 20% of the total enrollment, with the majority of students being female. This gender disparity in enrollment raises concerns about the inclusivity and diversity of perspectives within gender studies programmes.

However, the low male enrollment in gender programmes suggests a lack of understanding or interest among male students regarding the relevance and importance of gender studies in their academic and personal growth [14]. The predominant perception on gender programmes are solely focused on women’s issues or that they are not relevant to male students triggered by societal norms and stereotypes that associate with femininity, the lack of visibility of male role models in the field of gender studies, discouraging male students from enrolling in these programmes [15]. Moreover, a studies revealed that gender programmes tend to have significantly lower enrollment rates among male students compared to their female counterparts [16]. This gap highlights the existence of barriers or factors that discourage male students from being enrolled in gender programmes and in turn resulting gender imbalance within these programmes.

### 1.3 Study Objective

The study was guided by the objective; to determine the socio-cultural and the institutional factors for low male enrollment in gender programmes in higher learning institutions.

### 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section covers conceptual framework and theoretical literature review. In conceptual framework, the study presented the important variables of the study and their relationship. Theoretical review presented the theory relevant to the study.

**2.1 Conceptual Framework**

This conceptual framework reflects the relationship between socio-cultural & the institutional factors and low male enrollment in gender courses. Socio-cultural factors such as education level of parents, family influence, social stereotype, and peer influence have direct influence to students’ choices of the programme to undertake. Professional role models factors includes role model career and sensitization career. Whilstly, individual factors involves perception, attitudes and knowledge on gender courses. Further, the institutional factor falls in curriculum design, institutional culture, incentives and marketing.

 **INDEPENDENT VARIABLES DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

|  |
| --- |
| **Socio-cultural factors*** Education level of parents
* Family influence
* Social stereotypes
* Peer influence
* Professional role models
 |

**Male Enrollment**

* Number of Male students enrolled in Gender Programmes

|  |
| --- |
| **Institutional factors*** Curriculum design
* Marketing strategies
* Awareness creation programs
 |

###

**Fig .1. Conceptual Framework**

### Source: Researchers’ own construction, 2024

### 2.2 Theoretical Review

This study adopted Gender schema theory that was developed by Carol L. Martin, Charles F. Halverson, and Sandra L. Bem in 1981. Gender schemas refer to mental structures that organize incoming information according to gender categories and in turn lead people to perceive the world in terms of gender. According to Gender Schema Theory, individuals internalize gender roles and stereotypes from a young age through socialization processes, and these schemas then shape their understanding of what is appropriate and expected for their gender. Gender Schema Theory was suggested as a framework for assessing factors influencing low male enrollment in gender programmes in higher learning institutions as it offers valuable insights into how individuals develop and maintain gender stereotypes and how these stereotypes influence their behavior and decisions.

According to the study conducted by [18], on “Gender Stereotypes and College Students’ Perceptions of Professor Expertise: Does Professor Gender Matter?”. This study found that students tend to hold gender-stereotyped beliefs about professors’ expertise, such as perceiving male professors as more knowledgeable in science-related fields and female professors as more knowledgeable in humanities-related fields. These stereotypes may influence students’ course enrollment decisions, leading to lower male enrollment in gender programmes.

Nevertheless, the study on “Gender Schemas among Male Undergraduates and the Implications for Academic Achievement” by [19]. This research explored the relationship between gender schemas and academic achievement among male undergraduate students. The findings suggested that individuals who strongly adhere to traditional gender schemas may be less likely to engage in activities or enroll in programmes that are stereotypically associated with the opposite gender. Thus, by applying Gender Schema Theory, researchers will gain a deeper understanding of the role that gender stereotypes and schemas play in influencing male enrollment in gender programmes. This theory helps identify potential underlying factors contributing to the low male enrollment and provides a foundation for implementing strategies to address this issue. Also, researchers will explore how gender schemas influence male students’ perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors related to gender programmes. It will also allow researchers to address research questions properly including how gender schemas influence male enrollment in gender programmes and the factors contribute to the low male enrollment in gender programmes.

Moreover, the theory will provide a deeper understanding to test and measures the variables related to gender schemas, attitudes towards gender programmes, perceptions of masculinity or femininity, awareness of gender disparities, and socio-cultural factors that may influence enrollment decisions. It will also be vital in testing the hypothesis by understanding how male students with stronger adherence to traditional gender schemas are less likely to enroll in gender programmes due to perceived inconsistency with their gender roles and societal expectations. On the other hand, understanding how male students who have more flexible and unrestricted gender schemas may be more open to enrolling in gender programmes.

**2.3 Research Gap**

Different studies cover the influence of socio-cultural and institutional factors to the male enrolment into gender programmes in academic institutions but this study has specifically targeted Tengeru Institute of Community Develeopment (TICD) which is a methodological gap. So, this study has filled this gap especially for this institution which produces Community Development professionals within which gender programme is part of it.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Area of the Study

The study was conducted at Tengeru institute of community development (TICD) Meru district, Arusha religion. The area was selected due to convenience access of data from respondents on research problems that intends to assess factors influencing low male enrollment in gender programmes in high learning institutions.

### 3.2 Research Design

Research design, refer to the overall strategy and analytical approach that chosen by researcher in order to integrate, coherent and logical, to ensuring research problem will be thoroughly investigated, [20]. The study employed a descriptive research design to assess factors influencing low male enrollment in gender programmes. The design involved collecting data through interviews and questionnaires, then data was transcribed in major themes and contents to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, socio-cultural factors, perceptions towards gender studies and their awareness on institutional factors leading to low male enrollment.

### 3.3 Target Population

This study targeted first year students enrolled in 2024 from three degree programmes available in the TICD namely Community Development (BCD), Gender and Community Development (GBCD) and Project Management for Community Development (BPMCD). Also, One Admission Officer responsible for matters related to Degree Programmes such as enrollment, marketing just to mention some. The enrollment statistics indicated that the three degrees had 96, 53 and 147 respectively (TICD Registrar office records, 2024). This make it a total of 296 students from three programmes. According to [21], defines population, as an entire set of units that exhibit a variable characteristic under investigation and which research findings can be generalized.

### 3.4 Sample Size

The study employed a sample size of (n=170). Sample size is the total number of people of a given population, [21]. The sample size was obtained from the whole population of all students undertaking First Year bachelor degree programmes (2024) at Tengeru Institute of Community Development (TICD), using sample size determination by Taro Yamane [22] as presented hereunder;



Whereby,

= sample size

= number of population (296)

 = precision (Marginal) error (0.05)

 = 296

 1+296 (0.05)2

Therefore,  = 170 Students

**3.5 Proportionate sample**

Because of differential number of students per degree programme, then, for fair representation in the proportionate sample was computed as follows;

Therefore, the formula used is shown hereunder;

Whereby;

*n =* the sample size in one Degree [BCD/BGCD/BPMCD]

*n* () = the sample size of the study [170]

N()= Population of one Degree Programme [53/96/147 for BGD/BPMCD/BCD respectively]

N (*all schemes*) = Study area population [296]

**Table 1. Bachelor Degree sample categorization**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Participants** | **Total enrolled Students** | **Proportionate Samples**  |
| 1 | BCD | 147 | 84 |
| 2 | BGCD | 53 | 30 |
| 3 | BPMCD | 96 | 55 |
|  | **Total** | **296** | **170** |

**Source:** *Researchers, 2024*

**3.6 Sampling Procedures**

This study employed cluster sampling to obtain three degree programmes (Table 1) and then simple random sampling technique was used to select 170 students from three programmes in which 84, 30 and 55 students were randomly selected from BCD, BGCD and BPMCD their classes. However, One admission officer was purposively selected. Sampling procedure is the process through which individual or sampling units are selected from the sample frame. Is the selection of a subset of the population of interest in a research study, [23].

### 3.7 Data Collection methods

Primary data for this were collected using questionnaire survey and interview methods to exhaust information from respondents related to socio-cultural and institutional related factors for low male enrollment in the institute. The questionnaire survey was used to collect information from 170 students with the help of a questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions administered to students. Also, Key Informant’s (KI) interview was conducted with admission officer using interview checklist. However, the Secondary data was obtained from existing documents on enrollment records from the registrar’s office. These secondary data sources provided spatial students enrolment per degree programme.

### 3.8 Data Analysis methods

Data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics whereby frequencies and percentage were used. For, qualitative information, content analysis was conducted in which themes related socio-cultural and institutional factors were developed and KI responses were captured and grouped accordingly.

**4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**4.1 Socio-Cultural for Low Male Enrollment in Gender Programmes**

The data shows (**Table 2)** that, a significant proportion of respondents (58.0%) reported fear of being judged discourages male enrollment, while Social stereotype (57.0%) pointed that gender programmes are more aligned with femininity, lack of education (50.0%) also revealed that some students are not aware of the importance and relevance of gender courses to their carreer. However, 44% of all respondents said that family influence had impact on male enrolment in the sense that, some male students are discouraged by their parents perceiving them as less important. Lastly, 31% of all respondents indicated that peer influence is a barrier to male enrollment meaning that ome male students are discouraged by their peers portraying as courses for female students. These factors suggest that many students are hesitant to enroll in gender programmes due to fear of being judged, the perception that gender studies are aligned with femininity, and discouragement from parents. Indeed, fear of being judged is the most significant factor, indicating that many students are concerned about how others will perceive them for taking a course focused on gender issues. On other hand, social stereotype and family influence also suggests that societal and family expectations play a great role in shaping male students’ decisions not to enroll in gender programmes.

**Table 2. Socio-cultural factors for low male enrollment in gender courses**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Variables | Level of agreement |
| **Agree** | **Strongly agree** | **Neutral** | **Disagree** | **Strongly disagree** |
| **f %** | **f %** | **f %** | **f %** | **f %** |
| 1. Fear  | 28.9 17.0 | 98.6 58.0 | 8.5 5.0 | 11.9 7.0 | 22.1 13.0 |
| 2. Social stereotype | 45.5 27.0 | 96.9 57.0 | 22.1 13.0 | 1.7 1.0 | 3.4 2.0 |
| 3. Lack of education and awareness | 6.8 4.0 | 85 50.0 | 23.8 14.0 | 37.4 22.0 | 17 10.0 |
| 4. Family influence | 51 30.0 | 74.8 44.0 | 28.9 17.0 | 8.5 5.0 | 6.8 4.0 |
| 5. Peer influence | 44.2 26.0 | 52.7 31.0 | 18.7 11.0 | 42.5 25.0 | 11.9 7.0 |

Also, the interview with Admission Officer indicated that; ‘…*Gender studies have been potential to develop careers preferred by women than men*.’ (Admission Officer Interview, TICD, 18/12/2024).

This reluctance highlights the traditional perceptions of masculinity, which usually associate the field with femininity and, by extension, with feminist ideologies. As a result, many male students feel that pursuing gender programs is not aligned with societal expectations of their gender. Additionally, the influence of peers and family expectations significantly influences their decision-making hence results to low male enrolment in gender programs.

[24] study found similar results, with male students perceiving gender studies as irrelevant to their lives and careers, which is influenced by societal norms and expectations related to masculinity, stereotypes about gender studies, and the belief that these programmes may not offer practical or career-oriented knowledge. Also, [25], which found that societal expectations regarding masculinity and femininity can discourage male students from engaging with gender studies content.

**4.2 Institutional Factors for Low Male Enrollment in Gender Programmes**

The findings indicates that 42.0% of respondents strongly agree that lack of adequate gender related marketing strategies for promoting gender programmes create a limited visibility and promotion of gender programmes discouraging male students from enrolling in gender programmes. Also, 42.0% of all respondents strongly agree that the absence of inclusive curriculum requirements for gender studies in academic programmes contributes to male students reluctance to take these programmes. On other hand, 39.0% of the respondents said that there is a shortage of male gender specialists and role model facilitators in the institute (**Table 3).** This suggests that institute is less promoting gender programmes to male students, which lead to a lack of awareness and interest among males in the respective programmes. Also, lack of representation discourage male students from enrolling in gender programmes, as they may not fell the value of gender programmes.

Table 3. Institutional factors for low male enrollment in gender courses

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Variable | Level of Agreement |
| **Agree** | **Strongly agree** | **Neutral** | **Disagree** | **Strongly disagree** |
| **f %** | **f %** | **f %** | **f %** | **f %** |
| 1. Inadequate gender related marketing strategies for promoting gender courses. | 57.8 34.0 | 71.4 42.0 | 23.8 14.0 | 10.2 6.0 | 6.8 4.0 |
| 2. Curriculum design in gender courses solely focuses on women’s experiences. | 39.1 23.0 | 71.1 42.0 | 25.5 15.0 | 17 10.0 | 17 10.0 |
| 3. Shortage of male gender specialized and role model facilitators. | 42.5 25.0 | 66.3 39.0 | 23.8 14.0 | 15.3 9.0 | 22.1 13.0 |
| 4. Limited opportunities and lack of gender specific incentives and rewards. | 49.3 29.0 | 47.6 28.0 | 39.1 23.0 | 15.3 9.0 | 18.7 11.0 |
| 5. Institutional prioritization of other fields of study over gender studies,  | 18.7 11.0 | 44.2 26.0 | 23.8 14.0 | 11.9 7.0 | 71.4 42.0 |

 **Source:** *Research data, 2024*

However, Admission Officer reported that; ‘…*Institutional factors such as curriculum structure, male dominance in faculty representation, and inadequate program marketing significantly impact male enrolment in gender programs. Often, gender studies are not adequately emphasised in CD programs, limiting exposure. Additionally, the absence of sufficient targeted outreach for male students reinforce gendered stereotypes, leading to lower enrolment from male students in gender programs’* (Admission Officer Interview, TICD, 18/12/2024).

This is consistent with the findings of [26], who emphasized the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives, including those relevant to men’s experiences, in curriculum design to attract male students to gender studies programmes. Also, a study by [27] who found that the lack of representation and visibility of men in gender studies can be a major constraining for male students’ enrollment in gender programmes.

### 5.0 CONCLUSION

This study conclude that, mainly the low male enrollment in gender programmes would be manifested by lack of education among parents and male students themselves, peer and family influence to take a more masculinity field of study rather than gender programmes.

Lack of market strategies that incorporate gender specific promotion intervention as well lack of well-designed curriculum especially for master’s degree contribute to this gender disparities in these programmes.

### 6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Collaboration with Parents and Community

To address the lack of education and awareness about gender programmes among parents and the broader community, institutions should engage in outreach programmes that promote the importance of gender studies to both parents and to the entire community. This can be achieved through seminars, and trainings that pinpointing the benefits of gender studies for both male and female students in the society.

### 6.2 Curriculum Reform

To address the lack of representation of men in curriculum design, institutions should work towards incorporating diverse perspectives, including those relevant to men’s experiences, into gender programmes. This can be achieved by incorporating case studies, research papers from male gender specialists and role models. This will help create a more inclusive and diverse learning environment that caters to the needs and interests of both male and female students. A 60% of respondents strongly agreed that curriculum design focuses solely on women’s experiences, which hinders male students’ representation.

### 6.3 Marketing Strategies

To increase male enrollment in gender programmes, institutions should implement targeted marketing strategies to raise awareness about the importance and relevance of gender studies to male students. This can be achieved by using social media platforms, flyers, posters, and other promotional materials that pinpoint the benefits of gender programmes, such as career opportunities and personal growth. Respondents strongly agreed that lack of adequate gender-related marketing strategies is a major reason for low male enrollment.

### 6.4 Sufficient funds

The study suggests that a lack of adequate gender-related marketing strategies is a major reason for low male enrollment in gender programmes. To address this, institutions should allocate sufficient funds to develop and implement targeted marketing intervention that effectively promote gender programmes to male students. This could include social media advertising, carrying out gender related intervention such as seminar and trainings.

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