

Gender Representation Among English Teachers in Secondary Schools in Montserrado County, Liberia: A Case Study of Confidence and Kingsley High Schools

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ABSTRACT

Gender equity in education remains a global priority, yet disparities in teacher representation persist across many educational systems, particularly in subject-specific teaching positions. This study examined gender representation among English teachers in selected secondary schools in Montserrado County, Liberia, using Confidence and Kingsley High Schools as case studies. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent of gender representation among English teachers and explore respondents' perceptions regarding gender equality in English language instruction. A quantitative descriptive cross-sectional research design was employed. Data were collected from a target sample of 20 participants using structured questionnaires, interviews, and observation checklists. All 20 completed responses were obtained, representing a 100% response rate. Data were analyzed primarily using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages.

The findings revealed a marked gender imbalance in English teacher deployment, with all English teaching positions in the participating schools occupied by male teachers. Although respondents generally perceived that male and female teachers were treated equally within their respective schools, the staffing data demonstrated a clear disparity in gender representation. Student responses also reflected persistent gender stereotypes, with most participants characterizing male teachers as "strong-hearted" and female teachers as "soft-hearted." Furthermore, only a small proportion of respondents possessed higher professional qualifications, highlighting the need for continued professional development.

The study concludes that despite perceptions of equitable treatment, substantial gender disparities remain in the staffing of English teachers within the selected schools. The findings suggest the need for deliberate recruitment of qualified female English teachers, strengthened mentorship opportunities for aspiring female educators, and collaborative initiatives involving the Ministry of Education, teacher education institutions, and development partners to promote gender-responsive teacher recruitment and professional development. Given the study's small sample size and focus on two schools, the findings should be interpreted cautiously and are not intended to be generalized to all secondary schools in Liberia.

Keywords: Gender representation; English teachers; Secondary education; Educational equity; Liberia; Teacher recruitment.

INTRODUCTION

The gender representation among English teachers in secondary schools is a place of growing attention globally, with implications for teaching quality, students' outcomes, and generally societal improvement. Looking at the issues of this gender gap is significant for dealing with educational inequalities and promoting an environment of teaching that will incorporate both genders. From a global perspective, the gender representation among English teachers in education has proven to be a significant difference from different regions (Wright, 2024). At the same time, more countries have made a positive change toward gender parity; disparities persist, specifically in special subjects like English (UNESCO & Education International, 2021).

Research has shown that female teachers regularly encountered systemic barriers, such as cultural biases, no

professional improvement opportunities for professionalism in their area of specialization, and poor support and funding systems to maximize their potential. Such circumstances can hamper not only teachers' professional advancement but also the educational outcomes of potential students, mainly girls, who gain from their female colleagues' role models for emulation and mentorship in education (Card et al., 2022; Jony, 2025).

This situation is also alarming in Africa due to changing socio-economic, political, and cultural factors. Numerous African nations advocated for gender balance in education; however, traditional gender roles and economic challenges continue to slow down progress in gender balance among English teachers. (World Bank, 2021).

According to Luyten (2025) and OECD (2021), in many countries, female English teachers are fewer, especially in leadership roles and in teaching some subjects, including English. Such low participation causes stereotypes and reduces female students' desire to enter the career. For example, in West Africa, the region encounters special difficulties such as high rates of poverty, political instability, and cultural practices that may value male education over female's (UNICEF, 2018).

Studies have shown that these factors led to a major gender gap in educational achievement in West Africa and teacher representation. Having a broad insight into this context is serious for analyzing or knowing the main obstacles and difficulties faced by English teachers in the region (Ministry of Education, 2018). Considering Liberia, which has come from years of crises, provides a unique case study in gender dynamics within education. The educational landscape has been essentially impacted by the results of war, with efforts to improve the system, particularly the need for gender equality (UNESCO, 2020). The most populated county is Montserrado, and the nation's capital serves as a place of the broader challenges and opportunities present in the Liberian education system.

The gender representation among English teachers in secondary schools in Montserrado is reflective of national trends and brings about local issues that need investigation. Factors such as socio-economic status, access to professional training, and cultural viewpoints of gender roles play crucial roles in shaping the experiences of English teachers in this region. (Ministry of Education, 2021). This research proposal will explore the level of gender representation among English teachers in secondary schools in Montserrado County, Liberia.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in **Social Role Theory**, developed by Alice Eagly (1987), which explains how societal expectations and culturally constructed gender roles influence individuals' participation in various occupations and leadership positions. The theory posits that gender differences observed in professional settings are largely shaped by socialization processes rather than inherent biological differences. Society often assigns distinct roles, expectations, and responsibilities to men and women, which subsequently influence career choices, employment opportunities, and professional advancement.

Within the educational sector, Social Role Theory provides a useful framework for understanding gender disparities in teacher recruitment, deployment, and representation. Traditional beliefs frequently associate men with authority, leadership, and discipline, whereas women are often viewed as nurturing, caring, and better suited for domestic responsibilities or lower-status occupations. Such perceptions may consciously or unconsciously influence hiring decisions, career aspirations, institutional policies, and public attitudes toward teaching professionals.

In many developing countries, including Liberia, socio-cultural norms continue to shape educational and occupational opportunities for both men and women. Although national education policies promote equal employment opportunities, deeply rooted cultural expectations, limited access to professional training, family responsibilities, and economic constraints may discourage women from entering or remaining in certain teaching positions. Consequently, subject-specific teaching areas, including English Language and Literature, may exhibit unequal gender representation despite policy commitments to gender equity.

The theory further suggests that the underrepresentation of women in educational settings extends beyond employment statistics. It also influences students' perceptions of gender roles, leadership, authority, and career aspirations. The absence of female teachers in key academic subjects may unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes, reduce opportunities for female mentorship, and limit students' exposure to diverse professional role models.

The application of Social Role Theory to this study provides an appropriate lens for examining the observed gender imbalance among English teachers in Confidence and Kingsley High Schools. It facilitates an understanding of how societal expectations, institutional practices, and cultural norms may contribute to the predominance of male English teachers despite national commitments to gender equality.

This theoretical perspective also supports the study's recommendations for implementing gender-responsive recruitment policies, expanding professional development opportunities for female educators, strengthening mentorship programmes, and promoting inclusive educational environments. These interventions have the potential to challenge traditional gender stereotypes and foster greater equity in teacher representation within Liberia's secondary education system.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual relationship between the factors influencing gender representation among English teachers.

Independent Variables

- Socio-cultural beliefs and gender norms
- Recruitment and employment practices
- Access to teacher education and professional development
- Educational policies promoting gender equity

Intervening Variables

- Institutional support
- School leadership practices
- Community attitudes
- Professional mentorship opportunities

Dependent Variable

- Gender representation among English teachers in secondary schools

The framework illustrates that gender representation is influenced by the interaction between socio-cultural, institutional, and policy-related factors. Strengthening institutional support, promoting equitable recruitment practices, and expanding opportunities for female teacher preparation are expected to improve gender balance within English teaching positions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender equality in education is a social justice issue that addresses rights, opportunities, and freedom. Gender balance in education means providing the same treatment and opportunities and representation for people of all genders in educational environments. This involves initiatives to remove gender discrimination, ensure equitable availability of education, and promote gender equality throughout the educational experience (EIGE, 2019).

Further, it has also been noted that the lack of gender sensitivity among teachers encourages discrimination in society and lowers girls' self-esteem (Lindner et al., 2026). Thus, the existing research emphasizes the necessity of making pre-service and in-service teachers aware of the gender stereotypes, language sexism, and gender mainstreaming policies (Alhumaidan, 2026). To foster an inclusive learning environment where each student's needs may be met, Rakhmatillayevna (2022) suggests the teachers need to focus on assessing their lesson plans and instructional practices for gender stereotypes as a way to prevent this issue from happening in the classroom. In two different studies conducted in Syrian and Swedish contexts, the researchers focused on comparing the representation of women in textbooks. Both studies revealed gender overlaps, with men in the examined textbooks being more frequently associated with positive and desirable traits than women (Crawford et al., 2024). Additionally, men were portrayed as performers of the bulk of the jobs. Instead, the women were represented as having stereotypical jobs or not having stereotypical jobs or not having any at all (Nandi et al., 2024).

Causes of Gender Gap among English Teachers in Secondary Schools

Initial teacher training programs play a crucial role in shaping educators' gender beliefs and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to promote gender equality in their classrooms. Teachers' resistance to gender issues might be linked to the training they receive, which often lacks strong policies or strategies emphasizing gender awareness (Miralles-Cardona, 2025). In Europe, gender perspectives in teacher training are minimal and often rely on individual initiatives or student interest rather than institutional commitment (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2016). Research on gender equality in teaching faces limitations, including small sample sizes and a focus on voluntary participants, which skews results (Condrón et al., 2025; Nugraha, 2026). Most traditional teachers believed that providing facts and rules will change behavior, but few studies show the impact of thorough training on reducing sexist attitudes (Lumadi and Shongwe, 2010; Cox, 2022). Thus, integrating a gender perspective in initial teacher training reveals inadequate attention to gender issues despite alignment efforts with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This cross-sectional study of 1296 teacher trainees used ambivalent sexism theory-based questionnaires and found that only female students showed reduced sexist attitudes (Lee et al., 2010). The findings suggest comprehensive reforms to include feminist content and proactive gender initiatives in teacher training. Real educational change remains unlikely without addressing these attitudes, as teachers play a key role in fostering equality (UNESCO & International, 2021; Htun et al., 2022; Kihwele et al., 2025). The gaps in the literature emphasized the necessity of a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of how gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes develop and manifest within the specific context of Italian high schools. In addition to the interactions with their parents, the most frequent interactions within adolescents' microsystems occur with their teachers and peers. Therefore, this research aimed to explore the primary social beliefs and representations that might contribute to the creation of gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes in adolescents and the figures responsible for their education.

Strategies for the Improvement of Gender Representation among English Teachers in Secondary Schools

For several decades, educators have implemented both macro- and micro-measures to address the issue of gender equality in teaching. Programs and studies such as the ones initiated by UNICEF and USAID have a great impact on the targeted areas and classroom-related actions such as unbiased gender attitudes and curriculum, avoidance of gendered stereotypes, and neutral interaction. Patterns are successfully raising the students' attention regarding gender equality. However, in order for this trend to continue, there is the need for a lifelong development of social partnerships between organizations from civil society and the political world, along with gender-based teacher training programs, which will eventually eliminate the issues of gender in education. Approaching the issue of gender in academic settings is by all means a significant path towards ensuring a right, virtuous, and discriminatory-free educational environment. Students must understand the differences between males and females and how to collaborate effectively. The international measures taken by USAID, UNICEF, and other similar organizations towards achieving equitable teaching are pillars that support the structure of a new educational system, much more stable and aware of its own role in society. Nevertheless, raising the question of gender equality only within formal education (in schools) is misleading and belated. The right timing for such an endeavor is early childhood, when newborns come into contact with

the world (Fellström et al., 2017). Everything from choosing the toys they play with to clothing, gender, and forms of address amounts to creating gender bias and discrimination. In other words, teachers take over a job that was already initiated by the parents, and the ideas inoculated in the first years may remain immutable.

All in all, gender equality is yet to be achieved. Global measures are indeed a positive step towards treating women and men equally in schools. However, there is the fundamental need of pairing such measures with the textbooks used in the classroom, which, at least in Romania, militate for clear steps taken towards this goal, which would consider all the aspects of teaching rather than mass gender-based projects with a shallow rationale and with little or no substantial effects.

Research Gap

The reviewed literature demonstrates that gender representation remains a significant issue within education globally, regionally, and nationally. However, limited empirical research has specifically examined gender representation among English teachers in Liberian secondary schools. Existing studies primarily focus on general educational access, teacher training, or gender equality without investigating subject-specific teacher deployment.

Furthermore, few studies have explored how gender representation influences students' perceptions of English teachers within Liberian schools. This study therefore addresses an important gap by examining gender representation among English teachers in Confidence and Kingsley High Schools in Montserrado County. The findings are expected to contribute to evidence-based policymaking and support efforts to promote gender-responsive teacher recruitment and deployment in Liberia.

METHODOLOGY

This section is important because it will show how the research will be conducted using the quantities method to achieve the objectives, design applicable data collection, participant selection, and so on.

Research Design

The research will use a quantitative descriptive cross-sectional research design because the study aims to determine and describe the current gender representation of English teachers in secondary schools in Montserrado County. A cross-sectional survey design allows the collection of data from a representative sample at one point in time, making it practical for capturing the existing distribution of male and female English teachers. Quantitative methods are also appropriate because gender representation can be measured using counts and percentages, which can be analyzed using descriptive statistics and, where necessary, tests of association.

Population & Sampling

The targeted population for this study consists of teachers of the Kingsley and Confidence Secondary Schools systems in Montserrado County, Liberia. The target number is 30 (15 males and 15 females) teachers.

A non-random sampling procedure will be used to choose participants from the target population. This method is selected to make sure because proper representation will be done by the researcher in the field and the participants or teachers whom the research will be conducted on; there will be no struggle in reaching them.

Research Instruments: Questionnaires for Students

A questionnaire was used as the study's tool to measure gender representation among English teachers in secondary schools in Montserrado County, Liberia. Demographic information was questioned in Section A, while Section B contained modified questionnaires for the pupils. The pupils responded to 7 questions. Frequency analysis was used to analyze gender representation among English teachers in secondary schools in Montserrado County, Liberia.

Questionnaires for Teachers

There were 5 items in the questionnaire, with Section A containing demographic information while Section B contained 4 modified questionnaires for the teachers.

The questionnaire was used to measure gender representation among English teachers in secondary schools in Montserrado County, Liberia; frequencies were utilized to investigate the level of parental involvement.

Instruments Validity

The researcher evaluated the clarity of the questions and their applicability to the study's objectives to ensure content validity. The items were compared to the stated objectives in order to ensure the validity of the study using peer review and expert opinion. Following a discussion of all the study's objectives and contributing factors, the researcher reviewed the data.

Data Collection Instruments

The instruments for data collection will include questionnaires, interview guides, and observation checklists. The tools will be designed to collect data from various schools' campuses and clear information or results that can be counted by measurement.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data will be analyzed using statistical methods to analyze quantitative data. The data analysis will be using statistical methods to know the gender representation among English teachers in secondary schools in Montserrado County, Liberia.

Ethical Considerations

Participants on whom the research is conducted agreed to participate in the research, and there is a guarantee that any information provided by each participant during this study is kept secure and he or she has the right to withdraw from the study at any given moment. The research will adhere to established ethical guidelines. This research is a semester course done at the University of Liberia.

Liberia, with no founding and support. Therefore, no compensation will be given to participants, but their involvement in this study is highly appreciated by the researcher.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

General and Demographic Information

Under this section, the respondents' characteristics and responses are noted.

Response rate of research questionnaire of the study

From a total of twenty (20) respondents as the research sample size, the research was distributed to and interviewed 18 respondents, constituting a 90% response rate.

Returned Rate of Research Questionnaire

Respondents	Questionnaire	Return	Percent
Male Teacher	2	2	100
Students (boys)	5	5	100
Girls	14	14	100

Source: Research 2026

Demographic Data

Age: 15-21: sixteen students, males and females

23-35: Two Male Teachers

RESULTS

The study targeted a total sample size of twenty (20) respondents. Out of this targeted sample, the researcher successfully distributed questionnaires to and interviewed 18 respondents, yielding an overall **90% response rate**. A 90% response rate is statistically significant and highly acceptable, ensuring that the collected data is representative of the target population.

Table 4.4 Education of Respondent

Education level of respondents	Frequency	Percentage
College Graduate	1	100%
C-Certificate Holder	1	100%
Senior Students Males	5	20%
Senior Students Females	13	80

Source 2026

Minimal Representation of Professionals/Higher Qualifications

There is a very low presence of specialized or higher education qualifications among the respondents:

College graduates make up just 5% (1 respondent) of the sample.

C-Certificate Holders (typically representing professional teacher training or specific certifications) also make up just 5% (1 respondent).

Combined, these professional demographics account for only 10% of the total respondents, suggesting that the study's target population or respondents are primarily situated within the school system rather than the workforce.

Table 4.5 Respondents' opinion of whether males and females Teachers are treated equally.

Respondents view	Frequency	Percentage
Yes,	20	100

Source: Research 2026

According to Table 4.5, all twenty (20) said male and female teachers are treated equally.

Table 4.6 Respondents' opinion of whether gender influences teaching styles

Respondents view	Frequency	Percentage
No	2	20%

Source: Research 2026

According to table 4.6, two respondents said gender does not influence teaching style, representing 20%.

Table 4.7 Respondent Description of English Teacher in Terms of Gender Dynamics

Description of Gender Dynamics	Frequency	Percentage
Patent	2	20%

Source:

According to Table 4.7, two respondents (teachers) said patience is the description of gender dynamics, representing 20%.

Table 4.8 How male and female teachers are perceived by students and school administration

How females and males are perceived	Frequency	Percentage
Softhearted	8	40%
Strong-hearted	10	60%

Source: Research 2026

According to table 4.8 above, eight students perceived female teachers as being soft-hearted, representing 40%, while ten students perceived male teachers as being strong-hearted, representing 60%. Administration perceived no discrimination among male and female teachers.

Table 4.9 Support System to Address Gender-Related Issues Among Teachers.

Support System	Frequency	Percentage
Promotion of inclusive gender equality among teachers	2	20%

According to Table 4.9, two respondents said to address the support system for gender issues among female and male teachers, there must be an inclusive gender equality among teachers representing 20%.

Table 4.10: Steps to Improve Gender Equality in Teaching Positions

Steps to Improve Gender Equality	Frequency	Percentage
Making recommendations to policymakers, stakeholders	2	20%

Source: Research 2026

According to table 4.10, two respondents said to improve gender equality, steps must be taken by informing policymakers, stakeholders, and other organizations to ensure gender balance in teaching positions, representing 20%.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This article is founded on the study that investigates the critical but yet under-researched issue of gender representation among secondary school English teachers in Montserrado County, Liberia, utilizing Confidence and Kingsley High Schools as primary case studies. Placed against a global and regional backdrop where gender disparities persist due to deeply ingrained systemic barriers, socio-economic challenges, and cultural biases, the study sought to determine whether educational inclusion goals align with actual classroom staffing realities.

The empirical findings from the field revealed a striking disparity in the instructional workforce: out of the actively sampled teaching staff, the English teaching positions at both Confidence and Kingsley High Schools were occupied exclusively by male educators. This total absence of female English teachers validates the core problem statement of this thesis and highlights a profound gender imbalance in subject-specific recruitment and deployment. Furthermore, the demographic profile reveals that the workforce is highly localized within the school system, showing a very minimal presence (10%) of higher or specialized professional qualifications, such as college degrees or C-certificates.

Despite this absolute structural imbalance, several notable perceptions were gathered from the respondents:

Perceived Equity vs. Actual Disparity: Paradoxically, 100% of the respondents maintained that male and female teachers are treated equally within the school systems, and school administrations reported an environment free of overt discrimination.

Gender Stereotyping: The study revealed that gender stereotypes remain active in the minds of students. A clear majority (60%) perceived male teachers as "strong-hearted," while 40% perceived female teachers as "soft-hearted." This reinforces the literature's warning that a lack of diverse gender role models in core subjects like English can subconsciously lock students into traditional gender biases.

The Call for Strategic Intervention: Respondents recognized that structural imbalances require institutional solutions. Twenty percent of participants explicitly noted that addressing these gender gaps requires a conscious push toward inclusive equality and formal policy-level recommendations targeting stakeholders and education policymakers.

In summary, while the school environments are perceived to be fair and non-discriminatory on the surface, the actual data exposes a severe shortage of female English teachers. This leaves adolescent students—particularly young girls—without vital female mentorship and role models in a core academic discipline essential for national examination success. Achieving genuine educational equity in post-conflict Liberia will require moving past superficial projects. Instead, structural overhauls must be made to initial teacher training, recruitment policies, and stakeholder networks to intentionally balance the academic landscape.

Based on the study results, the following recommendations are essential for improvement:

1. **Institutional Frameworks (School Level): Implement Targeted Recruitment Strategies:** School administrations at Confidence and Kingsley High Schools should proactively recruit female language arts educators. Partnering with local teacher-training institutions can create direct pipeline placements for female graduates.

Establish Mentorship Programs: Since adolescent girls currently lack female role models in English instruction, schools should invite female guest lecturers, writers, and professionals into the classroom. This helps counter the "strong-hearted vs. soft-hearted" gender stereotypes identified by students.

Deconstruct Gender Stereotypes in School Culture: School administrations should run internal workshops for both students and staff to challenge gendered perceptions (e.g., viewing male teachers as inherently "strong-hearted" and females as "soft-hearted"). Professionalism and capability should be emphasized regardless of gender.

2. **Professional Development & Qualifications: Upgrade Qualifications via Sponsorships:** Given that only 10% of the active workforce holds higher professional qualifications (like college degrees or C-certificates), school boards should offer professional development incentives. Providing partial scholarships or flexible hours for current teachers to pursue advanced certifications will improve overall instructional quality. **Create "Female-First" Scholarship Schemes:** Stakeholders should establish specific financial aid packages or bursaries for women in Montserrado County who wish to pursue secondary education degrees specializing in English language and literature.
3. **Macro-Policy and Stakeholder Interventions: Engage the Ministry of Education (MoE):** Formal policy recommendations must be submitted to the Liberian Ministry of Education to track subject-specific gender implement and monitoring. While general education parity might be improving, the Ministry needs to monitor imbalances in core disciplines like English, which is vital for WASSCE national examination success. **Incentivize Rural/Semi-Urban Female Teacher Placement:** Policymakers should introduce deployment incentives (e.g., housing allowances or higher starting tiers) to attract qualified female educators to schools located outside the immediate central hub of the capital.

Develop Continuous Gender-Sensitive Training: National stakeholders and NGOs should reform initial teacher training programs to include mandatory, continuous gender-mainstreaming modules. This ensures that even in male-dominated departments, the curriculum is delivered in a highly inclusive, bias-free manner.

4. Community and Family Realities: Address Root Parental Stereotypes: Since early childhood upbringing shapes adolescent biases, school parent-teacher associations (PTAs) should facilitate open dialogues about career equality. This actively discourages the traditional socio-cultural mindset that certain professional or academic fields belong to one specific gender.

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