

Influence of Gender Equality on the Employment of TVET Graduates in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality has increasingly become an important issue in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) due to its influence on employment opportunities, economic empowerment, and social development. Despite increased efforts to promote equal participation in technical training and employment, gender disparities continue to affect the employability of TVET graduates in Kenya. This study investigated the influence of gender equality on the employment of TVET graduates in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The study adopted a mixed-method research approach and descriptive survey research design guided by the Human Capital Theory. The target population comprised TVET graduates, industry experts, and TVET institutions in Uasin Gishu County. Stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain the study sample. Data collection instruments included questionnaires, interview schedules, and document analysis. One hundred eighty-five questionnaires were distributed to the TVET graduates. However, 168 (90.8%) were filled in and returned. Also, out of the 78 questionnaires distributed to the industry experts, 71 (91.0%) were filled and returned, while 69 (88.5%) were interviewed. The collected data Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings established that gender equality significantly influences the employment of TVET graduates. Regarding the proportion of male and female TVET graduates, the total percentage of male TVET graduates (65.9%) was more significant than the total percentage of female participants (34.1%); this indicates that enrolment of females in TVET institutions is low. The study found that gender stereotypes, discrimination, unequal access to opportunities, cultural perceptions, and occupational segregation negatively affected employment opportunities among female TVET graduates. The study concluded that promotion of gender equality enhances access to employment opportunities, participation in technical occupations, and economic empowerment among TVET graduates. The study recommended formulation and implementation of policies that promote equal employment opportunities, gender-sensitive training environments, and elimination of discrimination in technical occupations.

Keywords: Gender Equality, TVET, Employment, Employability, Gender Discrimination, Technical Education, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has become an important strategy for producing skilled human resource capable of promoting industrialization, economic growth, and technological advancement. TVET institutions equip trainees with practical competencies, technical skills, and employability attributes required in industries. However, despite the important role played by TVET in socio-economic development, gender inequality continues to affect participation, training, and employment outcomes among graduates.

Gender equality refers to fairness, justice, and equal access to opportunities, responsibilities, and benefits for both men and women. In the context of TVET, gender equality involves ensuring that both male and female trainees

have equal opportunities to access training, participate in technical courses, acquire employability skills, and secure employment.

Globally, governments and stakeholders have emphasized the need to promote gender equality in education and employment. Gender equality contributes to economic growth, poverty reduction, social inclusion, and sustainable development. Equal participation of men and women in technical occupations increases labour productivity and enhances national development.

Despite global efforts to promote gender equality, women remain underrepresented in many technical and vocational occupations. Gender stereotypes, discrimination, cultural beliefs, and negative perceptions regarding technical careers continue to limit women's participation in TVET and employment.

Studies conducted in different countries indicate that female graduates often face discrimination and unequal opportunities in technical occupations. Many industries perceive technical careers as male-dominated, making it difficult for female graduates to secure employment in engineering, construction, mechanical, and industrial sectors.

In Kenya, the government has introduced policies aimed at promoting gender equality in education and employment. The Constitution of Kenya emphasizes equal opportunities and non-discrimination in education, employment, and access to resources. TVET institutions have also been encouraged to provide inclusive and gender-sensitive learning environments.

However, gender disparities continue to exist in many technical fields in Kenya. Female trainees remain underrepresented in engineering, building construction, automotive engineering, welding, and other technical courses. Similarly, many female TVET graduates experience challenges in accessing employment opportunities due to cultural stereotypes and workplace discrimination.

In Uasin Gishu County, industries require competent graduates capable of contributing effectively to industrial development. However, concerns have emerged regarding unequal employment opportunities between male and female TVET graduates. This study therefore sought to investigate the influence of gender equality on the employment of TVET graduates in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Employment is an important factor in socio-economic development because it contributes to income generation, poverty reduction, industrial productivity, and improved living standards. TVET institutions were established to equip trainees with practical competencies and employability skills required in industries. However, despite increased investment in TVET institutions in Kenya, gender disparities continue to affect employment outcomes among graduates.

Many female TVET graduates experience challenges in accessing employment opportunities due to discrimination, cultural stereotypes, occupational segregation, and negative perceptions regarding women in technical occupations. Employers often prefer male graduates for technical jobs, especially in engineering, construction, and industrial sectors.

Gender inequality in employment negatively affects economic empowerment, social inclusion, and national development. Although the government has introduced policies promoting equal opportunities, many female graduates remain disadvantaged in technical occupations.

Previous studies in Kenya focused mainly on practical skills acquisition and curriculum relevance, leaving limited information regarding the influence of gender equality on employment of TVET graduates in Uasin Gishu County. Therefore, this study sought to establish how gender equality influences employment among TVET graduates in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of gender equality on the employment of TVET graduates in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

Objective of the Study

To find out the influence of gender equality on the employment of TVET graduates in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

Research Question

Does gender equality influence the employment of TVET graduates in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Equality and Employment of TVET Graduates

Gender equality is an important aspect of social and economic development because it promotes fairness, inclusion, and equal participation in education and employment. In TVET, gender equality ensures that both men and women have equal access to training opportunities, technical skills development, and employment.

Studies indicate that women remain underrepresented in many technical and vocational occupations globally. Cultural beliefs and stereotypes often discourage women from pursuing technical careers such as engineering, construction, automotive engineering, and industrial technology.

Murgor (2017) established that gender disparities affect participation and employment outcomes among technical graduates in Kenya. Female graduates often experience discrimination and limited access to employment opportunities despite possessing relevant competencies.

Awosusi and Shaib (2020) noted that unemployment and socio-economic challenges disproportionately affect women due to unequal access to opportunities and labour market discrimination. The study emphasized the need for policies promoting inclusion and equal employment opportunities.

Tull (2019) observed that employment contributes significantly to improved living standards, social cohesion, and economic empowerment. The study further noted that gender equality in employment enhances labour productivity and national growth.

Kamau and Wamuthenya (2021) established that women in Africa continue to experience challenges in accessing employment opportunities due to social and economic inequalities. The study emphasized the need for governments to promote gender-sensitive policies and equal access to training and employment.

In Kenya, the government has introduced affirmative action policies and legal frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality in education and employment. TVET institutions have also been encouraged to support female participation in technical courses traditionally dominated by men.

Despite these efforts, many female trainees continue to face challenges such as lack of mentorship, inadequate support systems, negative societal attitudes, and discrimination during recruitment. Occupational segregation remains common in many industries where technical jobs are considered masculine.

Studies further indicate that industries often perceive male graduates as more competent in physically demanding technical occupations. As a result, female graduates are underrepresented in construction, mechanical engineering, welding, and manufacturing industries.

Promotion of gender equality in TVET institutions and employment sectors is therefore necessary to improve participation, confidence, and employment opportunities among female graduates.

Human Capital Theory

The study was guided by the Human Capital Theory. The theory argues that investment in education and training improves productivity, competence, and employability of individuals regardless of gender.

Human Capital Theory emphasizes that both male and female trainees who acquire relevant competencies and practical skills should have equal opportunities for employment. Gender equality enhances utilization of human resources, labour productivity, and socio-economic development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed-method research approach and descriptive survey research design. The design enabled the researcher to collect, analyze, and interpret information regarding the influence of gender equality on employment of TVET graduates.

The study was conducted in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The target population comprised TVET graduates, industry experts, and TVET institutions within the county. Stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain the study sample.

Data collection instruments included questionnaires, interview schedules, and document analysis. Questionnaires were administered to TVET graduates and industry experts to collect quantitative data. Interviews were conducted to gather qualitative information regarding gender equality and employment opportunities.

Validity of the instruments was ensured through expert review, while reliability was tested through pilot testing. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and inferential statistics including regression analysis with the aid of SPSS. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Gender Equality in Employment

The findings established that gender equality significantly influenced employment opportunities among TVET graduates. Most respondents indicated that female graduates experienced more challenges in securing employment compared to male graduates.

The study further established that gender stereotypes and cultural perceptions negatively affected female participation in technical occupations. Many employers perceived technical and industrial jobs as male-oriented and preferred employing male graduates. Results on the role of gender in the employment of TVET graduates were as shown in Table 1. Graduates were asked whether employers are gender-biased in their job, and 54.2% strongly agreed, 23.2% agreed, 22% were neutral, and only 0.6% strongly disagreed. Approximately 27.4% of the respondents disagreed that the industry strives for gender balance, 22.6% strongly disagreed, 9.5% strongly agreed, and 40.5% were undecided. The majority of the respondents (53%) disagreed that both genders are given equal responsibilities, 20.8% strongly disagreed, 25.6% were undecided, and 0.6% strongly agreed.

Table 1: TVET Graduates' Responses on Gender Equality

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD
Employers are gender biased in employment	91(54.2%)	39(23.2%)	37(22%)	0(0%)	1(0.6%)
Industry strives for gender balance	16(9.5%)	0(0%)	68(40.5%)	46(27.4%)	38(22.6%)
Both genders are given equal responsibilities	1(0.6%)	0(0%)	43(25.6%)	89(53%)	35(20.8%)
preferred gender	Male	Female			
	112(84.8%)	20(15.2%)			

Key: SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, N – Neutral, D – Disagree, SD - Strongly Disagree

Source: Author (2026)

When industry experts were asked whether gender equality is observed in the employment of TVET graduates, 2(2.8%) strongly agreed, 1(1.4%) agreed, 3(4.2%) were neutral, 16 (22.5%) disagreed, while 49 (69.0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 2: Industry Experts' Responses on Gender Equality

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD
Gender equality is observed in employment	2(2.8%)	1(1.4%)	3(4.2%)	16(22.5%)	49(69.0%)

Key: SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, N – Neutral, D – Disagree, SD - Strongly Disagree

Source: Author (2026)

Industry experts noted that female graduates often faced discrimination during recruitment and placement in technical occupations. Some employers expressed doubts regarding women's ability to handle physically demanding technical tasks.

The qualitative findings revealed that many female graduates lacked confidence in pursuing technical careers due to societal perceptions and inadequate mentorship. Female respondents also indicated that they experienced unequal treatment during industrial attachment and employment processes.

The study further established that some TVET institutions lacked adequate gender-sensitive facilities and support systems necessary for promoting equal participation among male and female trainees.

Influence on Employment of TVET Graduates

Regression results on the effect of gender on the employment of TVET graduates are presented in Table 3. Again, a significant positive relationship ($r>0$; $p<0.05$) was recorded between gender balance, gender-based responsibilities, and employment of TVET graduates.

Table 3: Regression Analysis on Gender Equality and Employment of TVET Graduates

	B	Sig.	Correlations
Employers are gender biased in employment	0.036	0.462	0.058
Employment positions are preserved for specific gender to achieve gender balance in employment	0.12	0.001**	0.253
Both genders are given equal responsibilities at the industry	0.138	0.033**	0.165

Key: SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, N – Neutral, D – Disagree, SD - Strongly Disagree

Source: Author (2026)

Gender equality in employment is an important aspect that needs to be embraced (Hitka et al., 2018). However, the employers noted that they did not consider gender equality when employing the TVET graduates. Globally, no nation has attained gender equality in their places of work (Salvia et al., 2019). The female gender can perform the same duties as their male counterparts; hence, there is a need to create legal and institutional conditions to promote gender equality in the industries.

Regression analysis established a significant positive relationship between gender equality and employment of TVET graduates. Equal access to training opportunities, fair recruitment practices, and elimination of discrimination improved employment outcomes among graduates.

Industries that promoted gender equality provided equal opportunities for recruitment, career development, and workplace participation among male and female graduates. Female graduates who received equal opportunities demonstrated competence and productivity similar to their male counterparts.

The findings agree with Human Capital Theory, which argues that education and training improve productivity and employability regardless of gender. The findings are also consistent with previous studies which established that gender equality positively contributes to economic empowerment and labour productivity.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that gender equality significantly influences the employment of TVET graduates in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. Promotion of equal opportunities enhances participation, employability, and economic empowerment among male and female graduates.

However, the study established that female graduates continue to experience challenges such as discrimination, cultural stereotypes, occupational segregation, and unequal access to employment opportunities. These challenges negatively affect employment outcomes among female TVET graduates.

The study further concluded that promoting gender equality in TVET institutions and industries would improve access to employment opportunities, increase participation in technical occupations, and support socio-economic development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made the following recommendations:

1. The government should strengthen policies and legal frameworks that promote gender equality and non-discrimination in employment.
2. TVET institutions should establish gender-sensitive learning environments and encourage female participation in technical courses.
3. Industries should provide equal employment opportunities for male and female graduates based on competence and qualifications.
4. TVET institutions should establish mentorship and career guidance programs to support female trainees pursuing technical careers.
5. Employers should eliminate discriminatory recruitment practices and promote inclusive workplace environments.
6. The government and stakeholders should conduct awareness campaigns to challenge negative cultural perceptions regarding women in technical occupations.
7. TVET institutions should provide adequate support facilities and resources that promote equal participation among male and female trainees.

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