

DETERMINANTS OF GIRL CHILD EDUCATION IN STEM: DOES GENDER MAIN-STREAMING MATTER?

GLORIOUS SAMKELISIWE MQADI

Department of Psychology of Education
University of South Africa

Email: smotho.motho@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Girls and women are still under-represented in STEM education in all level of education system in South Africa. The under-representation of female gender in science education may be attributed largely to school and parental factors. Therefore, this study deep dive into analysing the school and parental factors influencing the participation of female students in secondary schools in STEM career in UGU district municipality of KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. The study sampled 110 students (45 males and 65 females) in four secondary schools in the study location. A descriptive research design was employed to address the research problem in the study area. A questionnaire design was adopted to elicit information from the respondents. A set of analytical tools such as mean and t-test statistics were used to analyse the datasets collected from the field. It turns out that school and parental factors constitute significant factors influencing female students' participation in STEM education in the sampled secondary schools across the study location. The research concluded that socio-cultural factors, gender biased curriculum material and inadequate employment of female teachers as role models for female students constitute the school and parental factors causing low enrolment of female students in STEM education in the study area. Based on the result from this study findings, the research recommends that STEM education professionals such as teachers in secondary schools and lecturers in the universities should organize awareness programs for female students, parents and the general public on how to improve female participation in STEM education program under the watch of stakeholder, non-governmental organization as well as government. Government should also employ more female education science teachers who studied STEM courses to serve as role models to female students in all the secondary schools across the study area.

Keywords: STEM Education, Females' interest in STEM, Gender Main-Streaming