

# **Gender and HIV/AIDS Education in the Multicultural Context of Schools in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Its Host Community in Kenya**

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## **Abstract**

This qualitative case study sought to investigate how gender, multicultural and multireligious factors influenced the teaching and learning of HIV/AIDS education in refugee schools. A total of 3 primary schools from Kakuma Refugee Camp and 3 from the host community participated in the study. A sample of 617 respondents of diverse nationalities, including 356 male and 160 female pupils, was used. The study utilized semi-structured interviews, observation, FGDs, documentary analysis and drawings to generate data. Key findings reveal that, first, culture interacted with religion to influence the nature and level of interaction between boys and girls during HIV/AIDS education lessons, thereby determining the process of learning. Whereas Somali Muslim pupils sat and worked in same gender clusters, Christian Sudanese and Turkana boys and girls interacted more freely. Consequently, the cultural and religious tendencies denied Muslim Somali boys and girls an opportunity to work together as partners in addressing pertinent and effective strategies in HIV/AIDS education. Further, unlike the Christian Turkana and Ugandan girls who seemed open and outgoing in their participation in HIV/AIDS education activities, Somali and Ethiopian Muslim girls remained quiet, reserved and shy as a way of showing respect to male teachers and pupils. In this regard, Kenyan Christian teachers misinterpreted the behaviour of Somali and Ethiopian Muslim girls to mean disobedience and hence, tended to exclude the girls during classroom activities. Secondly, gender influenced perceptions and expectations of pupils on HIV/AIDS education content and pedagogy. While boys seemed vocal, uncontrolled and eager to discuss sex and condoms, girls preferred discussing love and care of people living with HIV/AIDS. Consequently, girls found the behaviour of boys during HIV/AIDS education lessons intimidating and tended to dislike learning the subject in mixed gender classrooms. Thirdly, the involvement of refugee boys in the preparation of Information Education and Communication (IEC) material through participatory learning utilized the cultural and linguistic diversity to produce materials that could be easily understood by individuals from various cultural groups. However, the IEC material, having been prepared by boys, seemed to portray males as the ones in need of protection from HIV infection. Such IEC material construed women as potentially responsible for the spread of HIV, thereby making HIV/AIDS education gender biased. Fourthly, religion determined the teacher's interpretation of the content, hence, pupils received different and sometimes conflicting messages on similar topics depending on the teacher's religious background. Lastly, while older male and female teachers were culturally perceived as 'parents' and therefore respected, young male teachers were perceived by girls as having a hidden 'sex agenda'. Consequently, lessons given by older teachers were taken more seriously. This study concludes that gender, culture and religion, singly and interactively, influence the learning of HIV/AIDS education in refugee schools in a complex manner, which teachers need to understand clearly and in a manner that would enhance inclusive and responsive learning. The study has made several recommendations, the major one being pre-service and continued in-service training of teachers in multicultural and gender responsive education.

**Full text:** <https://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/handle/123456789/7045>