


The Perceived Impact of a Post-Secondary Education Program on Kenyan Catholic Sisters' Understanding of Their Lives as Women Religious: A Case Study

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The Problem & its Setting

CHAPTER ONE



Women Religious in Africa

Have a positive impact on the welfare and wellbeing of those to whom they minister (McNally, 2016)

Serve in ministries in fields including education, social services, and health care (Wakahiu & Keller, 2011)

Minimal formal post-secondary education credentials or training (Wakahiu, 2015)

80%

of women religious in sub-Saharan African congregations possess no post-secondary education credentials (Wakahiu & Shaver, 2015)



The Post-Secondary Education Program

PURPOSE

Provide sisters the opportunity to acquire post-secondary education

FACILITATION

Collaborative of US congregations of women religious and their respective colleges/universities

COMPONENTS

10 countries
22 partner colleges / universities
Workshops & cohort system

OUTCOMES

2013-2017:
541 sisters served
Participants report having a positive experience in the program

Prior Research: Program

Wakahiu & Kangethe, 2014, $N = 18$; Wakahiu & Shaver, 2015, $N = 17$

Both qualitative, analyzed the effectiveness of the program's ability to provide African women religious post-secondary education

No studies have addressed the post-secondary education program's perceived impact on sisters' understanding of their lives as women religious or view of themselves in ministry



Significance of Study

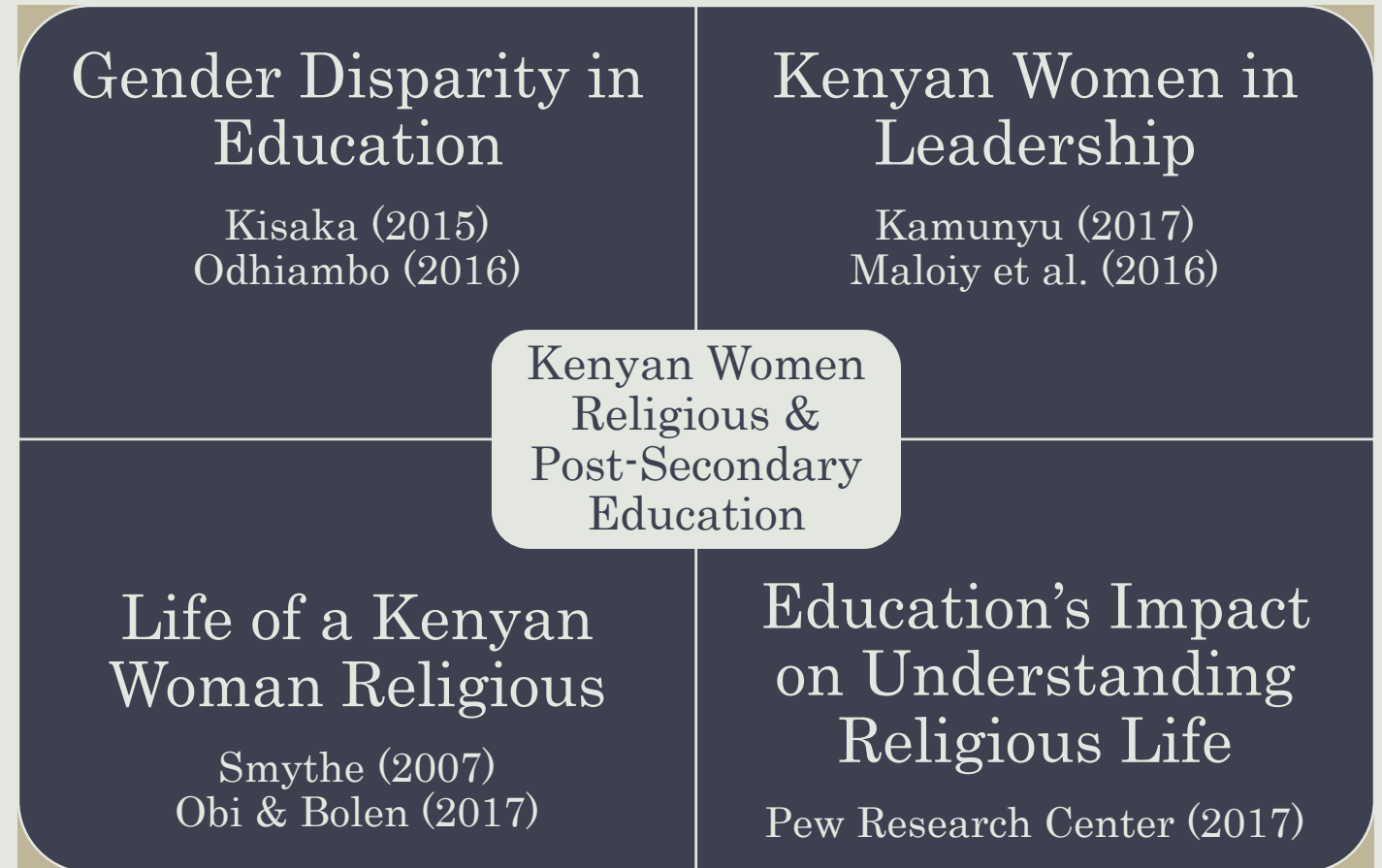
Add to growing body of literature available on women religious in Africa



Literature Review

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review



Gap in the Literature

No studies had explored how a post-secondary education program may impact Kenyan sisters' understanding of their lives as women religious or view of themselves in ministry





Methodology

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design

QUALITATIVE

Collection of rich,
descriptive data

CASE STUDY

Allows researchers to
understand more about a
particular case (Merriam
& Tisdell, 2016)

MERRIAM

Emphasis on an
individual's interaction
with their social world and
specialization for analysis
of educational programs
(Merriam, 2001)

BOUNDARIES OF INQUIRY

Kenyan women religious
participating in the same
post-secondary education
program since 2013

The Case: Program Participants in Kenya

Participants in Kenya

- 119 participants as of 2017
- 81 graduates as of 2017

Partners in Kenya:

- Catholic University of Eastern Africa
- Tangaza University College
- ChemChemi Ya Uzima Institute



Participants

Purposive “two-tier” sampling

- 13 post-secondary education program participants
- 4 staff members



Description of Participants

Post-Secondary Education Program Participants (<i>N</i> = 13)	
Institution	
Catholic University of Eastern Africa	9
Chemchemi Ya Uzima Institute	2
Tangaza University College	2
Level of Education	
Master's Degree	3
Bachelor's Degree	10

Average Age

40

Average Years in Religious Life

16

Average Years Since Final Profession

7

Data Collection Methods

Example Protocol Questions:

What compelled you to join religious life?
What impact, if any, do you feel your post-secondary education is having/has had on your understanding of religious life?



Interview
Protocols



Document
Reviews



Data Analysis

Inductive constant comparative method
(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

- “Open coding”, purely descriptive
- Placed in themes through comparison
- Saturation was reached

Validity Issues

DISCREPANT CASE ANALYSIS

Following the “preponderance of evidence” when coming to conclusions during analysis (Patton, 2015)

TRIANGULATION

Multiple sources of data used to corroborate findings

REACTIVITY

Separate position from evaluation, informed consent & maintain confidentiality

REFLEXIVITY

“The researcher affects and is affected by the research process” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016), awareness of inherent bias and assumptions



Findings

CHAPTER FOUR

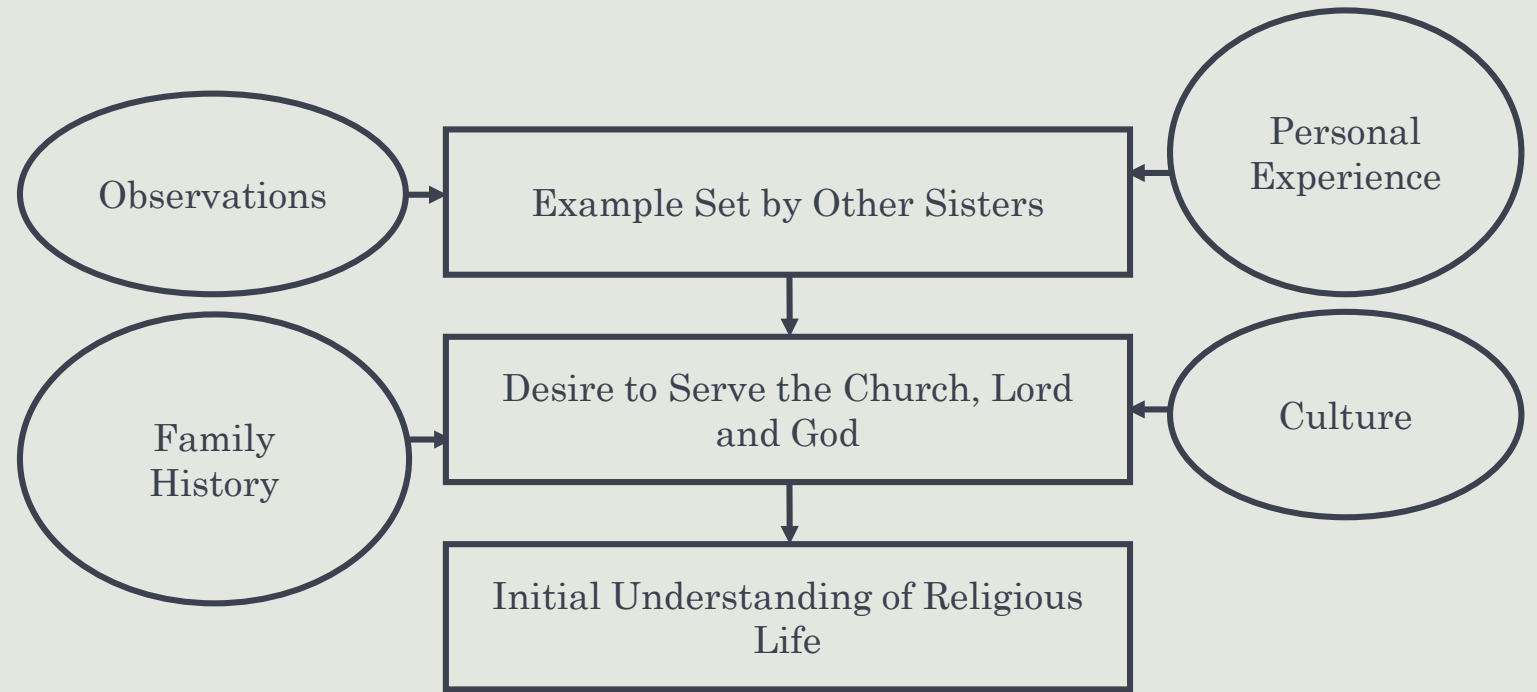


CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Has participation in a post-secondary education program transformed Kenyan sisters' understanding of their lives as women religious?
2. Has participation in a post-secondary education program influenced how Kenyan women religious view themselves in their ministries?

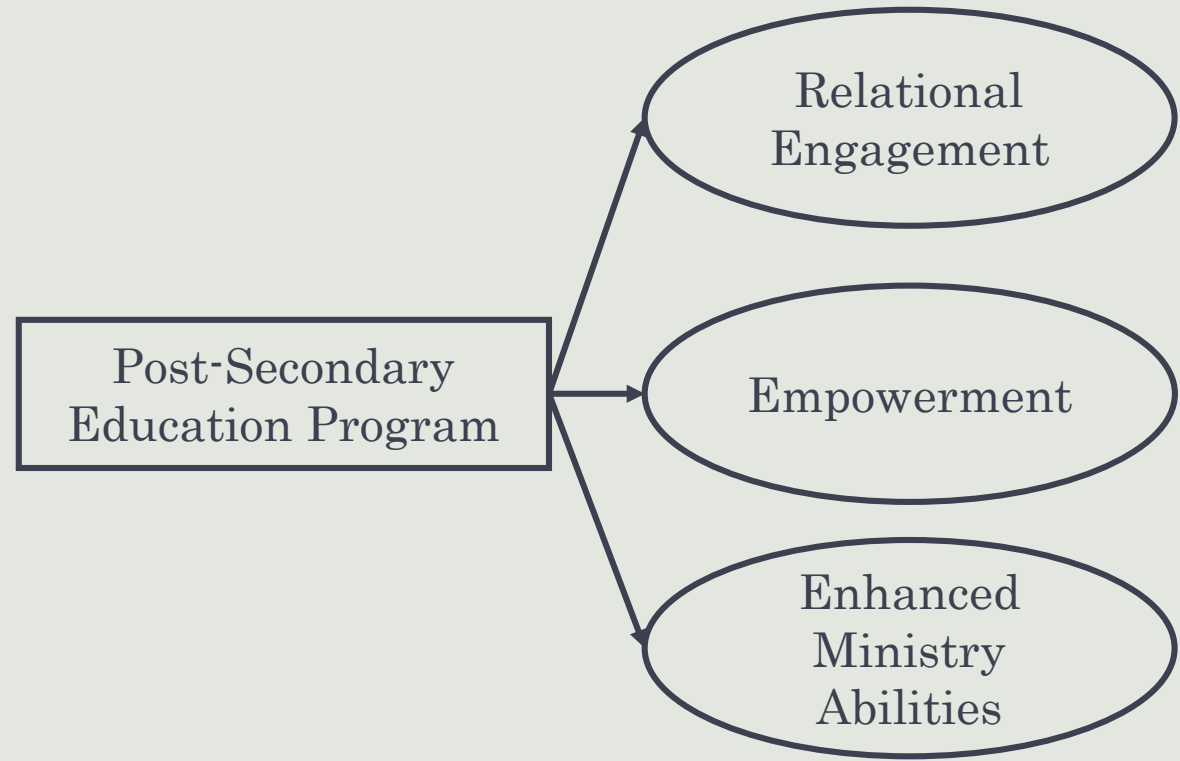
Findings: Establishing Understanding

“Seeing how she was taking care of them, like they were her own children, I am seeing God in these people. So she really motivated me very much and I was very inspired. She actually impressed me.” -Participant C



Establishment of understanding of life as a woman religious and view of self in ministry.

Findings: Impact on Understanding



The post-secondary education program's impact on sisters' understanding of life as women religious and view of themselves in ministry.

Enhanced Ministry Abilities

EXPLICIT SKILLS LEARNED

PROFESSIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Increased knowledge or
understanding of their
ministry

ACADEMIC ABILITY

Improvement of academic
skills, ability to critically
read, write and conduct
research

CONGREGATION STRENGTHENING

Increased capacity of
congregations (i.e., financial
skills, strategic planning)

SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

Comprehension of religious
life and the Catholic faith



Enhanced Ministry Abilities

I needed to be educated, prior to (the program) I was chief accountant in 2013. I was in charge of 32 million shillings and the Italian Diocese wanted the congregation to manage more. There was no one trained to do so, so I needed to be educated. With no education, you are regarded as nothing.

Participant E



Empowerment

PERCEPTION OF PERSONAL
CONTROL

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Increased confidence in
abilities, feeling prepared for
any circumstance

SELF-ESTEEM

Higher value of self

COURAGE

Alleviation of fear for the
future or unknown



Empowerment

I can say that this has been the most important empowerment for me because to say the truth, before I was not a courageous woman. I had a lot of fears but now I am able to face any difficulties and any circumstance that I meet on my way.

Participant A



Relational Engagement

ABILITY TO ENGAGE WITH
OTHERS

SOCIAL-INTERACTION

Increases in ability to communicate, relate to others, and appreciate/accept diversity

SELF-AWARENESS

Relative to relationships with others, an ability to see self in a larger world context, an understanding of others' perceptions

LEADERSHIP

Better able to lead because of an increased understanding of others, being a role model for others, "bearing witness" and "living their faith"



Relational Engagement

We are people of different personalities, so to be able to handle and understand people and take them from where they are and help them...it really helps me to understand diversity, what it means to live and work with people with different varied opinion, different personality and it has helped me to understand that each person has something to offer.

Participant B

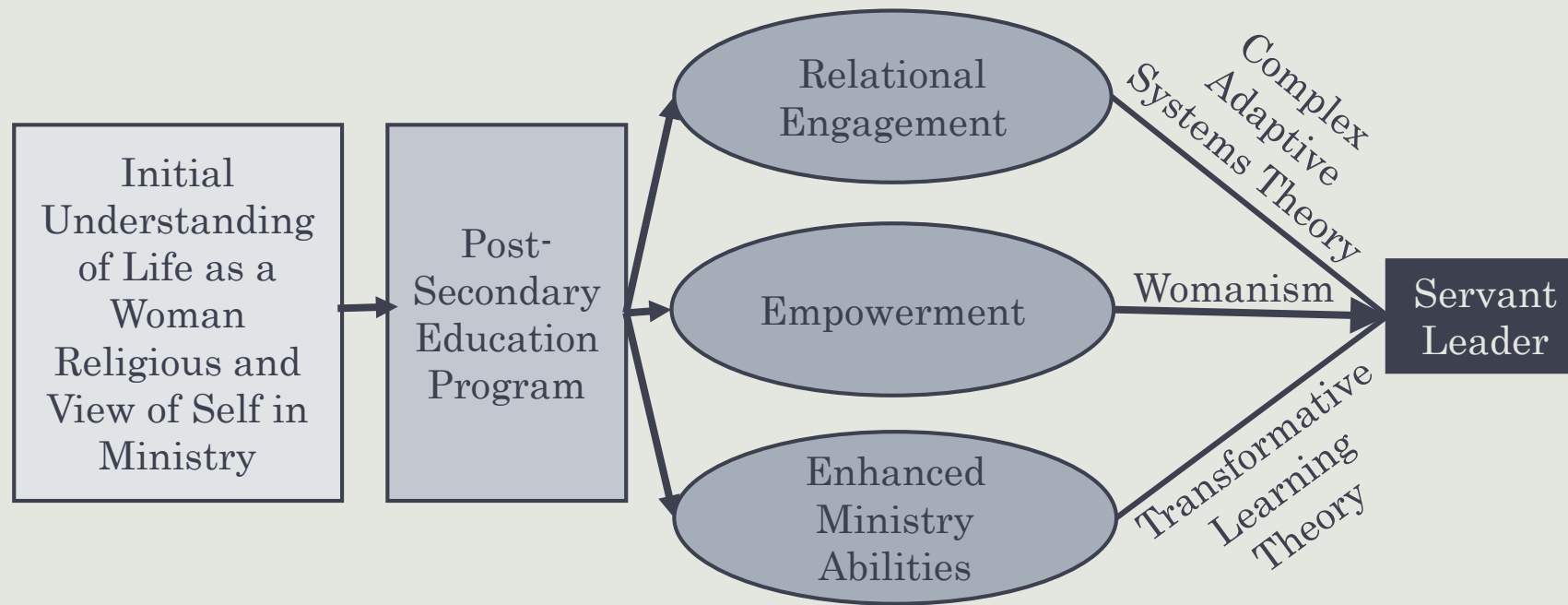




Conclusions

CHAPTER FIVE

Emergence of Findings from Theoretical Framework



Emergence of findings from the theoretical framework.

Servant Leader

Increased sense of stewardship and service as a result of participating in the post-secondary education program

Sisters' stated that their goal is to provide higher level of service to others, indicative of a servant leader

“The knowledge that I get is not something that I own. What I receive is something to be shared in my community.” –Participant H



Interpretation of Findings

Has participation in a post-secondary education program transformed Kenyan sisters' understanding of their lives as women religious?

By developing as servant leaders, sisters:

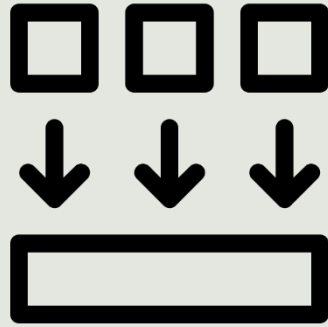
- Have an increased appreciation of their roles within the Catholic Church, their congregations, and society
- Display characteristics of womanists and are able to advocate appropriately for their self-worth
- Experience congregational relationship improvement, as they express humility, gratefulness, and understanding related to the educational opportunity allotted to them

Has participation in a post-secondary education program influenced how Kenyan women religious view themselves in their ministries?

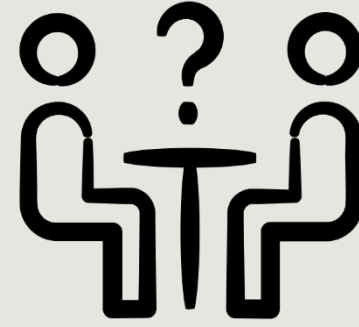
By developing as servant leaders, sisters:

- Are better able to identify the needs of the marginalized and more equipped to respond to their needs

Limitations



Limited
Generalizability



Reliance on
Self-Report



Researcher
Reactivity &
Reflexivity

Implications

Program contributed to the development of servant leaders, which is beneficial not only to the sister but also to those she serves

Long-term impacts have yet to be seen, additional developments continue to be possible

Potentially, findings could be extended to African women in general promoting women's empowerment throughout the continent and encouraging the achievement of worldwide gender equality



Recommendations for Future Studies

EXPAND PARTICIPANT POOL

Allow for cultural comparison,
determine if results are able to
be replicated in the program's
other countries of operation

OTHER POST- SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Compare the unique
characteristics of the program
under study in this research

LARGE SCALE QUANTITATIVE STUDY

Use findings to create a
quantitative assessment tool,
allowing for a larger sample
size and more definitive
information collection

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN THE LIVES OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Enhance understanding of
the cross-cultural differences
in this area

Questions & Comments

CONTACT INFORMATION

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