Abstract

Socially constructed basis of differences between women and men, and the need to challenge existing gender stereotyping marks a shift in thinking about gender issues. In Kisumu City, bodabodas (bicycle taxis) account for 69% of passengers with market traders as the main users for their intra and inter estate transport needs. Discrimination against women in the use of this means of transport that is perceived to be cheaper than public transport, has however relegating them to being passengers other than cyclists, having to spend between Ksh100 and Ksh 150 daily on transport. Issues of gender stereotyping- gender identity, sex-linkage and gender roles in Kisumu City inform most behaviour as cultural dictates are very strong and patriarchal. This study sought to investigate whether there is gender stereotyping in women involvement in cycling among the market traders in Kisumu City. The objectives of the study were to: assess the influence of bicycle status on women involvement in cycling, determine the effect of bicycle ownership on women involvement in cycling; establish the relationship between dress code and women involvement in cycling. These are issues that have cultural implication in Kisumu City and exposing their effects on women involvement in cycling would help understand why there is low adoption rate of women in cycling. The researcher used a cross sectional study with a descriptive and contextual approach to highlight how conditions prescribed by the society can affect women’s involvement in cycling having the individual as the unit of analysis. The study was done on 375 adult market traders who were sampled from 16243 market traders found in 11 markets in Township Location of Kisumu City through systematic random sampling. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify six key informants and a Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Primary data was collected through questionnaires, interview schedules and observations. Documented reviews were used to collect secondary data. The questionnaire was piloted on 38 market traders and two supervisors assessed the relevance of the items. Triangulation enhanced validity and reliability, fortified by case cluster method. Data was coded, classified and organized into themes. Contingency tables were generated by cross tabulations and Cramer’s V was used to measure association. The study established that there is gender stereotyping in women involvement in cycling with a focus on market traders in Kisumu City. Gender roles affected female market traders’ attitude towards cycling; with a heavy leaning towards the belief that men were the ones to cycle. Females who believed that cycling was for men were 8 times more likely to be non-cyclists and about 4 times less likely to be regular cyclists compared to the male with the same belief. Bicycle ownership did not affect women involvement in cycling; power relations did. Among females who claimed ownership of at least a bicycle, or those whose mothers claimed ownership, 50.0% were regular cyclists while the other 50.0% were irregular cyclists; none was a non-cyclist. For those whose spouses and fathers claimed ownership however, the proportion of regular cyclists reduced almost 2.5 times. Dress code dictated the level of female traders’ involvement into cycling. Majority (70.8 %) felt that the dress did not affect cycling chances, their level of involvement in cycling varied with the opinion on dress code. Among those who felt that it did, 45.0% were non-cyclists while 24.5% of them were regular cyclists. Among those who were for the contrary opinion, 30.5% were non-cyclists and 27.5% were regular cyclists. The study recommends the improvement of road infrastructure to entice more women into cycling, awareness creation on road safety and retrogressive culture, industrial development policy geared toward the building of a local bicycle industry that would manufacture affordable women-friendly bicycles.