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Original Article

Cattle Rustling and its Influence on Girl Child Educational Performance in Tiaty Constituency, Baringo County, Kenya

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Keywords:

Cattle Rustling,
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Retrogressive Culture.

Cultural practices significantly impact academic performance worldwide, with disparities evident across different countries and regions. The main objective of the study was to establish the influence of cattle rustling on girls' educational performance among secondary schools at Tiaty Constituency in Baringo County. The research was based on the Push-Out Grounded Model Descriptive research design was used for this study. The target population comprised 1,008 female students in public secondary schools, 13 school principals, 2 Sub-County Directors of Education, 2 Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, and 2 Examination Officers in Tiaty Constituency. A sample size of 286 girls was obtained using Slovin's formula. Questionnaires were distributed to students while interviews were conducted with school principals, sub-county directors, quality assurance officers, and examination officers in the Tiaty Constituency. Simple random sampling was used to select the student participants, while purposive sampling was applied to select education officers. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed, with quantitative data processed using SPSS Version 25 through descriptive statistics, linear regression, and correlation, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed using NVivo Version 12 to identify and report patterns for in-depth insights. The study revealed that 76% of girls were affected by cattle rustling, 62% missed exams due to it, and 72% reported academic disruption due to resettlement. Correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.297$, $p < 0.05$), and regression analysis indicated cattle rustling explains 8.4% of the variance in girls' education performance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.084$). To address the impact of cattle rustling on girls' education, the study recommends enhanced security, peacebuilding, counselling support, and coordinated interventions by stakeholders. It also suggests implementing economic empowerment programs and establishing monitoring systems to ensure effectiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

Investing in girls' education emerges as a pivotal factor in driving economic growth and fostering development. The level of education within a nation stands as a significant gauge of its overall success (Elks, 2020). According to Obeta, (2014), cultural practices significantly impact academic performance worldwide, with disparities evident across different countries and regions. Research highlights the influence of cultural variables on students' social cognitions, behaviours, and educational outcomes. Addressing harmful cultural norms through increased education funding is crucial for promoting gender equality and socioeconomic development. Numerous social and cultural variables have a substantial impact on how well females do in secondary school (Karande & Kulkarni, 2005).

Investigating the impact of cattle rustling on secondary school female students' performance in Baringo County is crucial for developing targeted interventions to improve girls' education and promote gender equality in line with Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 (UNESCO, 2020). Despite comprising 34 public secondary schools, challenges such as cultural affinity, low enrolment rates of girls, and poor academic performance persist in the county. Cattle rustling, a prevalent issue in the region, poses significant socio-economic and security challenges, potentially

disrupting educational continuity and affecting students' academic outcomes. Therefore, this research aims to explore the specific influence of cattle rustling on girls' academic performance across secondary schools in Tiaty Constituency, Baringo County, to inform policy-making and intervention strategies.

Objective of the Study

Analyse the influence of cattle rustling on girls' educational performance among secondary schools at Tiaty Constituency in Baringo County.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypothesis guided the study:

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant influence of cattle rustling on girls' educational performance among secondary schools at Tiaty Constituency in Baringo County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The research was based on the Push-Out Grounded Model. The Push-Out Grounded Model, developed by Akfirat et al. (2017), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors that lead to student attrition, particularly in educational contexts where systemic and student-specific challenges contribute to push-out. These include hostile educational environments, strict disciplinary measures, socioeconomic background, special

educational needs, and cultural practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early marriages, and nomadic pastoralism. The model highlights how these factors interact to marginalize students, especially girls, and how the process of push-out perpetuates cycles of educational exclusion. The model also recognizes the role of external influences, such as family and community dynamics, but it is critiqued for focusing primarily on push factors while neglecting pull factors, such as personal aspirations or opportunities, and the varying degrees of resistance exhibited by different students and communities.

The Push-Out Grounded Model highlights the significant role of education in fostering economic, social, and environmental progress. By systematically excluding girls from education through harmful sociocultural practices, these communities limit their potential to contribute to sustainable development. Practices like cattle rustling create barriers that hinder girls' access to education, thereby restricting their ability to engage in economic opportunities or decision-making processes. The model, however, has limitations in addressing the full scope of sociocultural influences, such as the roles of elders and religious beliefs, and it does not fully capture the broader, multifaceted nature of sustainable development. This suggests that the model alone may not be sufficient to address the complexities of girl-child education and sustainable development, necessitating the use of additional frameworks to better understand the interactions between cultural practices and development outcomes.

Empirical Review

Cattle rustling, defined as the theft of livestock by pastoralists (Mulugeta & Hagmann, 2017), is a deeply entrenched issue in pastoral communities and continues to be a major impediment to development. Often regarded as a measure of strength and wealth, cattle ownership is sometimes associated with one's ability to raid neighbouring communities and defend their herds, thus making

cattle rustling both a cultural practice and a survival strategy. However, this practice severely hinders community and individual development by undermining public participation and making the implementation of development goals difficult. Lombard and van Rooyen (2017) assert that cattle theft, compounded by poverty and drought, is a major factor contributing to reduced agricultural productivity.

In India, Abass et al. (2014) analysed a series of cases to describe features of herds and farmers who have been the victims of cattle and/or buffalo theft in various villages of Punjab in Pakistan during the year 2012. A structured interview was administered to a sample of fifty-three affected farmers. The study found that theft incidents were higher among small-scale farmers, repeat victimization was common, stealing was the main method used, most stolen animals were high-value adults, and thefts mostly occurred at night during crescent moons.

Akpan and Umoh (2014) explored the impact of cattle rustling on community development in Nigeria through a cross-sectional survey of 300 households. The findings indicated that cattle rustling significantly undermined community growth by increasing poverty and restricting access to education. However, the study's limitation lies in its narrow geographic focus and lack of attention to long-term impacts on sustainable development. Similarly, Umib and Muhammad (2022) assessed the effects of cattle rustling and banditry in Northwestern Nigeria with particular reference to Zamfara State. Primary and secondary data were used to generate relevant information. The study found that the effects of cattle rustling and banditry identified are; killing and destruction of property, displacement of people and destruction of livelihood.

Tesfaye and Amare (2021) examined the effects of livestock rustling on school retention among girls in Ethiopia's Afar region. Using a mixed-methods design and sampling 350 households, they found that girls from rustling-affected families were often

withdrawn from school to help with livestock or manage households in the absence of male relatives. Their study, though rich in qualitative insights, lacked rigorous quantitative analysis, which was addressed in subsequent studies such as the present research in Baringo County.

In South Sudan, IGAD (2020) utilized a mixed approach to examine the social and economic cost of livestock rustling. With a sample of 315 households, Livestock rustling/raiding remains a major cause of insecurity and conflict among the pastoral communities in the ASAL of South S. Similarly, Kintu and Wamala (2019) conducted a descriptive study involving 500 girls in Karamoja, Uganda, revealing that cattle rustling led to early marriages and disrupted school attendance, further diminishing higher education prospects. Though effective in identifying key challenges, the study largely ignored community-based solutions. In Bunambutye, Eastern Uganda, Khanakwa (2022) used cluster sampling and ANOVA analysis on a sample of 500 girls to study the indirect effects of rustling on female academic performance. Their findings indicated poor test outcomes resulting from school closures and psychological stress linked to insecurity. However, they did not propose interventions to mitigate these effects.

In Kenya, Mkutu (2018) explored the impact of cattle rustling on security and development in Turkana using a case study approach. With a sample of 300 respondents, the study employed focus groups, interviews, and document analysis, revealing that rustling led to economic underdevelopment, poverty, and insecurity, though it did not focus specifically on educational outcomes. In Samburu County, Lokidongoi, Mbaro, and Manyara (2019) examined the economic sustainability of the El-Barta community in light of rustling, using descriptive and explanatory methods. Their study found that rustling—driven by gun proliferation, cultural beliefs, political influence, and unemployment—resulted in market closures,

increased mortality, and reduced investment, all of which stifled community progress.

Finally, Areman (2019) focused on Turkana East Sub-County and investigated the impact of rustling on student experiences through a descriptive survey involving 100 respondents from Kapedo. Using interviews, surveys, and focus groups, the study found that recurrent rustling led to school absenteeism, trauma, and increased school dropouts among girls. The study illuminated the deep psychological and educational disruptions caused by cattle rustling, reinforcing the need for a broader, integrative analysis of the phenomenon.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design and utilized a mixed-methods approach to examine the influence of sociocultural practices on the education of secondary school girls in Tiaty Constituency, Baringo County. The target population consisted of 1,008 female students enrolled in public secondary schools during the 2022/2023 academic year, along with 13 school principals, 2 Sub-County Directors of Education, 2 Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, and 2 Examination Officers. A sample size of 242 girls was determined using Slovin's (1960) formula to ensure statistical representation. Simple random sampling was used to select the student participants, while purposive sampling was applied to select education officers, who hold key administrative and oversight roles in the education sector. Data collection instruments included structured questionnaires for students and semi-structured interview guides for principals and education officers. A pilot study was carried out in Marigat Sub-County to refine the research tools. The reliability of the instruments was confirmed through a Cronbach's alpha coefficient exceeding 0.7, while validity was ensured through expert judgment by university supervisors and education research professionals who reviewed the instruments to confirm content and construct appropriateness.

Data collection followed a structured and ethical process. Prior to fieldwork, ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (ISREC) of St. Paul's University, and a research permit was issued by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Further permissions were granted by the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education in Baringo County. Access to schools was approved by the respective principals, and informed consent was secured from parents or guardians of participants under 18 years old. The 242 girls completed questionnaires administered on-site, while face-to-face interviews were conducted with the principals and education officers. Confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 25 through descriptive statistics, linear

regression and correlation while qualitative data were examined thematically using NVivo Version 12. The thematic analysis involved identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the qualitative data to provide rich and detailed insights. This approach helped interpret participants' perspectives on how sociocultural practices influence girl-child education in the study area.

FINDINGS

Cattle Rustling and Girl's Educational Performance

Effects of Cattle Rustling on Girl's Educational Performance

Participants were asked if they had been affected by cattle rustling, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Effect of Cattle Rustling (N=242)

Cattle Rustling	Frequency	Percent
Yes	184	76
No	58	24
Total	242	100

Most (76%) of the respondents stated that they had been affected by cattle rustling, while 24% stated they had not been affected. Cattle rustling severely affects girls' education in pastoralist communities by creating insecurity and instability. Families are often forced to migrate or live in fear, leading to school interruptions. This contributes to gender

inequality and limits opportunities for girls' long-term development.

Frequency of Cattle Rustling

The study sought to assess the extent of cattle rustling in the region, and the results are presented in Table 2

Table 2: Frequency of Cattle Rustling in the area (N=242)

Cattle Rustling	Frequency	Percent
High	115	48
Frequency	98	40
Never	29	12
Total	242	100

The findings also indicated that 48% of respondents indicated that the frequency of cattle rustling is high, 40% indicated that cattle rustling is frequent, and 12% stated cattle rustling has never occurred.

This indicates that livestock rustling is prevalent in the research region.

Fear of Cattle Rustling

The researcher sought to determine whether the fear of cattle rustling influenced the girls' performance, with their replies detailed in Table 3

Table 3: Fear of Cattle Rustling (N=242)

Cattle Rusting	Frequency	Percent
Yes	165	68
No	98	32
Total	242	100

The findings indicated that 68% of the respondents indicated the Fear of cattle rustling affected their performance, while 32% stated otherwise. The results showed that cattle rustling has an emotional and psychological impact on the students.

Missing Exams Due to Cattle Rustling

The study aimed to evaluate whether test absences were linked to cattle rustling, with responses outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Missing Exams because of Cattle Rustling (n=242)

Missed Exams	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	149	62.0
No	93	38.0
Total	242	100.0

Further, 62% of the respondents said they missed exams due to cattle rustling, while 38 % said they did not miss exams. This indicates that the apprehension around cattle rustling substantially affects females' academic achievement.

Effects of Resettlement Caused by Cattle Rustling

Respondents were asked to state whether livestock rustling caused by resettlement had affected their academic performance.

Table 5: Resettlement Caused by Cattle Rustling Often Affects Girls' Continuity with Schooling (n=242)

Exams	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	174	72.
No	68	28
Total	242	100.0

The study findings showed that 72% of the respondents indicated that resettlement caused cattle rustling had affected their performance, while 28 % stated that it did not.

that it affected girls' academic performance. One individual stated that

Qualitative Analysis***Effect of Cattle Rustling***

It was also revealed that cases on the impact of cattle, principals and education officers reported

"Cattle are the main source of food for the pastoralists. Some students have abandoned their education to help their parents find fodder for their animals as pastureland deteriorates. Also, animal rustling is rampant.

They stated that it leads to absenteeism, interferes with their academic progress, and causes girls to miss exams. According to one principal;

“In the cases when we have incidents, it is true that many females do not show up for their examinations, even if they have registered for them”

As per another principal:

“Cattle Rustling affects girls in a big way because they report to school late. The movement of parents makes it impossible for students to access basic learning and boarding materials. Their Fear of the unknown by the girls interferes with their academic progress.”

Challenges When Dealing with the Effects of Cattle Rustling on Girls' Education Performance

According to the respondents, there are various challenges they face when dealing with the effects of cattle rustling on girls' education performance. The first challenge stated was the need to acquire wealth. The people in Tiaty Constituency Sub-Counties participate in cattle rustling, including commercialization of cattle rustling and personal gain, restocking of herds and sustaining livelihoods.

One Education officer reported that "Wealth, or poverty for that matter, was measured according to the number of animals one possesses. For instance, if one has at least 2,000 shoats (goats and sheep), and is considered to be above average in terms of wealth in his community, and is able to marry three wives”

Another challenge that the respondents stated was the need to pay dowry. It was quite difficult for a young man in that region to get a spouse if he was not well endowed with a huge herd of cattle to pay as a bride prize. A man with many wives here was regarded with high esteem and given leadership roles in decision-making.

Another challenge is the need to acquire wealth. The community is engaged in cattle rustling so as to

acquire wealth for their families. Wealth in this community is measured by the number of cattle an individual owns. They engaged in cattle rustling to restock their stolen or dead animals.

Poverty was one of the reasons given as a challenge in dealing with the effects of cattle rustling. Due to poverty, most of the youth are vulnerable, and they can be used by cattle rustling warlords to steal animals.

Cattle rustling incidents can result in insecurity and violence within communities, leading to the displacement of families and the temporary closure of schools. Principals may face challenges in maintaining regular attendance for girls as families may prioritize their safety and move away from the affected areas, resulting in interrupted education.

Cattle rustling incidents can have a significant psychological impact on girls and their families, causing Fear, anxiety, and trauma. This can affect their ability to concentrate, engage in learning, and perform academically.

Also, cattle rustling incidents can lead to the loss of livelihoods and economic instability within communities. Principals faced challenges in ensuring that girls have access to essential resources for education, such as textbooks, school supplies, and adequate nutrition. Limited resources can hinder girls' academic performance and overall well-being. Cattle rustling incidents can create a sense of instability and mistrust within communities. This can impact the social fabric and relationships, including those within the school community.

Principals stated they encountered challenges in coordinating and collaborating with external stakeholders, such as law enforcement agencies, local authorities, and NGOs, to address the underlying causes of cattle rustling and its impact on girls' education. Building partnerships and establishing effective communication channels with these stakeholders is crucial to implementing

comprehensive strategies and interventions. Cattle rustling incidents can lead to the loss of livelihoods and economic instability within communities. Principals face challenges in ensuring that girls have access to essential resources for education, such as textbooks, school supplies, and adequate nutrition. Limited resources can hinder girls' academic performance and overall well-being.

Cattle rustling exacerbated by poverty, poses multifaceted challenges including insecurity, economic instability, and psychological trauma, impacting girls' education by disrupting learning environments and exacerbating resource

limitations. Psychological effects, economic instability, and resource scarcity further hinder academic performance and social cohesion within affected communities.

Correlation Analysis

Relationship Between Cattle Rustling and Education Performance

The study sought to find the relationship between cattle and education performance by carrying out a correlation and regression analysis.

Correlation between Cattle Rustling and Education Performance

Table 2: Correlation between Cattle Rustling and Education Performance

		Education Performance
Cattle Rustling	Pearson Correlation	.297*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	242

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis indicates a significant positive relationship (Pearson's $r = 0.297$, $p < 0.05$) between cattle rustling and education performance, suggesting potential interconnectedness or shared community responses.

Regression Analysis

Table 3: Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
					R Square Change	F Change	df1 df2	Sig. F Change
1	.297 ^a	.088	.084	.43264	.088	23.186	1 240	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Education Performance

The adjusted R^2 indicates the proportion of variability in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables, either individually or collectively. Based on the model fit, we obtained an average adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.084, indicating that approximately 8.4% of the variance in girls' education performance can be accounted for by the independent variable under investigation (cattle rustling). The remaining 91.6% of the variation is

attributed to other factors not addressed in this study.

Coefficients for the Relationship between Cattle Rustling and Education Performance

The table presents the coefficients from a regression model exploring the relationship between cattle rustling and education performance.

Table 4: Coefficients

Table 11. Coefficients					
Model	Coefficients			t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)					
cattle rustling	.328	.061	.329	5.398	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Education Performance					

The unstandardized coefficient for cattle rustling is 0.328, with a standard error of 0.061. This suggests that for every one-unit increase in cattle rustling, education performance is expected to increase by 0.328 units, indicating a positive relationship between the two variables the results suggest a statistically significant and positive relationship between cattle rustling and education performance.

Hypothesis (Ho1): The null hypothesis posited that there would be no statistically significant influence of cattle rustling on girls' educational performance. Based on the correlation and regression analyses, the hypothesis is rejected. The findings indicate a significant negative impact of cattle rustling on girls' education, as evidenced by both the high percentage of affected participants and the negative regression results. The analysis confirms that cattle rustling creates a range of challenges, including migration, school interruptions, and gender-based educational setbacks, all of which contribute to poor educational outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the significant negative impact that cattle rustling has on girls' educational performance in pastoralist communities. The data shows that the majority of respondents (76%) had been affected by cattle rustling, with 48% reporting that the frequency of rustling was high in their areas. This aligns with previous studies that emphasize the disruptive nature of cattle rustling in the lives of individuals in pastoralist communities (Kimani et al., 2021; Lekimain, 2020). The instability caused by cattle rustling forces families to migrate, which results in the closure of schools or irregular school operations,

particularly in remote areas. The resulting interruptions in education create barriers to academic achievement, with 62% of the respondents indicating that they missed exams due to the unrest caused by cattle rustling.

The psychological and emotional impact of cattle rustling on girls, as demonstrated by the 68% of respondents who reported that fear of cattle rustling affected their performance, is consistent with findings from Ntarangwe and Kamundia (2017) and Musau et al. (2023). These authors argued that anxiety and fear resulting from insecurity hinder students' ability to concentrate, impacting their academic performance. Students often miss school to protect their families or fulfil herding duties, further exacerbating the educational challenges faced by girls in pastoralist communities.

Additionally, the finding that resettlement caused by cattle rustling significantly affects girls' continuity in schooling (72%) mirrors the work of Egule, Wanjiru, and Njagi (2019), who highlighted that migration due to cattle rustling exacerbates instability and disrupts access to educational facilities. The continuous cycle of displacement and resource depletion caused by cattle rustling deprives families of the means to sustain their livelihoods and prioritize education.

In contrast to some studies that focus exclusively on the direct effects of insecurity on educational performance (Mwangi, 2019), this research acknowledges the broader socio-economic factors that intertwine with cattle rustling, such as poverty, wealth accumulation, and the need for dowry. Cattle rustling is not merely a security issue but a cultural and economic practice that has far-reaching

consequences for the social and educational well-being of girls in these communities. The findings that respondents engage in cattle rustling for wealth acquisition and to pay dowry corroborate the views of Amutabi (2018) and Mwaura (2016), who discussed the complex interplay of economic, cultural, and social factors in hindering educational progress in pastoralist regions.

The regression analysis results suggest a significant positive relationship between cattle rustling and education performance, indicating that cattle rustling's disruptive impact on education could be partially linked to community-wide responses to insecurity and resource deprivation. However, the R^2 value of 0.084 suggests that only a small proportion (8.4%) of the variability in girls' education performance can be explained by cattle rustling, indicating that other factors, such as poverty, limited access to infrastructure, and nomadic lifestyles, also contribute to the challenges faced by students. This aligns with Mwaura (2016), who argued that the challenges of education in pastoral communities are multifaceted, with issues like infrastructure and lack of school resources playing an equally significant role in underachievement.

Moreover, the findings of this study are consistent with those of Kipkorir (2014), who emphasized the resilience of communities facing these challenges, particularly in areas where communities prioritize education despite disruptions caused by cattle rustling. However, as suggested by Cheserek et al. (2012), this study also indicates that without adequate interventions from government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as improving security measures, providing learning materials, and ensuring school continuity during crises, the impact of cattle rustling on girls' education will continue to be profound.

Conclusions

The study reveals a significant negative impact of cattle rustling on girls' education in pastoralist

communities, where incidents of theft and violence create insecurity, disrupt daily lives and hinder academic activities. The fear, psychological strain, and forced family resettlement resulting from cattle rustling led to irregular school attendance, missing exams, and delayed academic progress. The persistence of cattle rustling is further fueled by factors such as wealth accumulation, dowry practices, and poverty, which exacerbate the disruption of education. The correlation and regression analyses confirm a negative relationship between cattle rustling and educational performance, while other factors like poverty and inadequate infrastructure also contribute to the educational setbacks experienced by girls in these regions.

To mitigate this impact, the study recommends a multifaceted approach, including enhanced security measures like increased police presence and community policing, along with peacebuilding efforts and conflict resolution programs. These interventions should emphasize the importance of girls' education and reduce the prevalence of cattle rustling. Additionally, schools should provide counselling and academic remediation to support students affected by cattle rustling. Coordinated efforts among government agencies, NGOs, community leaders, and international organizations are essential for creating comprehensive intervention plans. Economic empowerment programs, such as microfinance initiatives and livelihood diversification, should be implemented to reduce families' dependence on cattle as their primary source of income, thereby curbing the root causes of cattle rustling. Moreover, monitoring and evaluation systems must be established to track the progress of these interventions, ensuring their effectiveness in improving educational outcomes.

The study's findings have broader implications for policy and practice, emphasizing the need for stronger security measures and gender-inclusive educational policies. Further research is also needed to understand the long-term effects of cattle rustling

on girls' education and to evaluate the success of the proposed interventions.

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