



Original Article

## Influence of Culture on Girl Child Education in Central Pokot Sub County, Kenya

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Cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation, early child marriages and patriarchy have been on the rise in West Pokot despite interventions by government and non-state actors over the years. These outdated cultural practices have hindered the progress of girls academically. It is vital to educate the girl-child in society. However, teenage pregnancy gets girls at the wrong time when they are still in schools and this affects their education very much and eventually ends up ruining their future. This paper looks at how various cultural practices have affected girl child education in West Pokot County, Kenya. The study was conducted in Central Pokot Sub County primary schools targeting 12 headteachers and 120 teachers. The respondents were selected through purposive and simple random sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Data collected were analysed using percentages and frequencies. The results of the study showed that the status of girl-child education was low. Cultural factors like; early marriages, female genital mutilation, child labour, widowhood practices and taboos influenced girl-child education. The study found out those cultural factors in the study area affected girl-child education negatively as it slowed down their transition, academic performance and also the acquisition of knowledge required at the basic education level. The study recommends that the government should take legal action against parents who take their girl-children for FGM and early marriages; there is a need for awareness on the importance of girl child education, provision of scholarships for girls at basic and tertiary level and introduction of guidance and counselling sessions in schools.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education in Kenya is seen as a solution to many problems bedeviling society across many countries. Mwanahamisi (2015) noted that education is a fundamental human right and key to the achievement of sustainable development goals. This means that all children should participate in and acquire education. This has seen governments across the world commit to the Universal Primary Education resolutions, Education for All and provision of quality basic education (Andiema & Kitainge, 2016). Ragnarsdottir (2016) noted that access to basic education is lagging behind, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, and girls are left out due to poverty and gender-related issues. In addition, the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2015) found out that social-cultural factors were a threat to the education of the girl child. UNESCO (2012) statistics revealed that basic school systems across the world are enrolling more children in primary and secondary schools but lose a significant number of them due to inefficiencies which lead to early school leaving. For instance, Atieno, Role and Ndiku (2013) indicated that the primary school completion rate of girls was far behind that of boys, at 76% compared to 85% for boys in Kenya. Boosey, Prestwich and Deave (2014) reported that school dropout among girls was high in developing countries including Kenya during the time they reach puberty. Estimates from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2010), show that about one in ten school-age girls in Sub-Saharan Africa do

not attend school during menstruation or dropped out at puberty because of lack of proper hygiene and sanitation facilities for female learners in schools.

The social and cultural activities of communities determine the education aspirations of such communities and the importance put on education directly corresponds to the extent to which the two variables conform (Ochieng, 2015). Research shows that prohibitive social and cultural practices have been the main obstacle to girl child education in developing countries including Kenya (Maichuhie, 2020). The Ministry of Education noted that outdated social-cultural practices contributed to girls having a higher chance of dropping out of primary and secondary schools in the country (Krop, 2017). Chepleting et al. (2013) research revealed that teenage pregnancy and early marriages were the major social and cultural factors influencing girls' participation in free primary education in West Pokot County. Migori Sub County records the highest incidences of injustices to young girl children, Ouma (2013) found out that enhancement of girl-child participation in education was majorly based on socio-economic, socio-cultural, parents' level of education and distance from school factors. In Ndhiwa Sub County, Ochieng (2015) discovered that socio and cultural factors and practices negatively contributed to girls' education in Kenya ranging from not putting value to girls' education, early marriages, initiation rites just to mention but a few. In most communities in Kenya, girls are seen as sources of wealth by their parents in the custom of charging fines for adultery

and pregnancies of unmarried girls (Ochieng, 2015). Because of these practices in the community, girls are denied the opportunity for education compared to boys despite several initiatives taken by the government to ensure a high and completion rate of girls in primary and secondary schools.

The FGM type and process practised in the Pokot community area is one of the most extensive cultural practices that denies girl child the right to education (Maichuhie, 2020). Since immemorial, FGM has been practised all over West Pokot County and seen as a requirement for passage from childhood to womanhood (Chebitwey, 2013). With increasing pressure from the government (national and county), religious institutions (churches specifically), faith-based organisation and civil society, there has, over the last few years been a decreased gender issues relating to the girl child although the harmful cultural practices still continue to be practised (Ragnarsdottir, 2016). FGM was forbidden by a presidential decree in the year 1991. For remote areas of the country especially in pastoral communities, the government directive (including anti-FGM policy) is not known and not enforced as seen by a survey conducted by ActionAid International Kenya (2018) in several counties of Kenya. And we see that often local administrative leaders participate in the ceremony.

Nevertheless, there are some areas in West Pokot that have recorded decline rates of harmful social-

cultural practices to girls (Krop, 2017). This is largely seen in the areas with more social and economic development which has been realised over a long period of time compared to remote and marginalised sections of Pokot where programmes have only run for a few years or not at all (Chepleting et al., 2013). For instance, success rates have been recorded in Pokot South and West Pokot Sub County (Kapenguria area). This paper, therefore, looks at how cultural practices; FGM, early marriages, forced labour and teenage pregnancy influence girl child education in West Pokot County, Kenya.

### Statement of the Problem

The introduction of free primary education in the year 2003 improved access to schools by the majority of children across the country (Mabeya, Gikuihi & Anyona, 2019). However, female participation in education in most pastoral counties in Kenya is still characterised by disparities (West Pokot County CIDP, 2018). Girls continue to constitute the majority of children out-of-school from research studies conducted in the past in West Pokot County. The rate of girls' completion of primary education has been below average in Central Pokot Sub County compared to other parts of the country which have a higher number of girls sitting for their KCPE examinations than boys (County Education Office Report, 2019) as given in *Table 1*.

**Table 1: Girl Child Completion 2015-2019**

Year	Central Pokot	South Pokot	West Pokot	North Pokot
2015	53.3	67.4	70.3	55.5
2016	50.3	68.1	75.3	58.6
2017	54.4	70.6	76.2	57.3
2018	56.3	71.1	77.9	59.9
2019	57.6	75.3	80.2	59.6
<b>Average</b>	<b>54.4</b>	<b>70.5</b>	<b>75.9</b>	<b>58.2</b>

**Source:** West Pokot County Director of Education (2020)

Statistics from the Sub County Education Office (2020) reveal low girls completion rate compared to boys in primary schools in the majority of public primary schools. For example, out of the total number of girls admitted in standard one in the year 2012, only 57.6% were able to complete primary school in the year 2019. The completion rate for the years; 2015 was 53.3%, 2016 was 50.3%, 2017 was

54.4, 2018 was 56.3%, and in 2019 was 57.6%. Completion of girls in Central Pokot Sub is lower compared to other sub-counties in the county; West Pokot (75.9%) which is not semi-arid, North Pokot (58.2%) and South Pokot (70.5%). This shows a high dropout rate of girls in primary schools despite the provision of free primary education. The non-completion of girls in primary education denies

them their equal right to education which is guaranteed by law. This state of affairs has hindered the progress of girls academically over the years (Andiema, 2020). Due to this persistent problem occurring in Pokot, the literature indicates that social, economic and cultural factors could have a significant influence on girl-child education, although this has not been empirically investigated. Due to the broadness of social, economic and cultural factors, the study is centred on finding out the cultural factors prevalent among Pokot that influence girl-child education. The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i) To establish the state of girl-child education in Central Pokot Sub County primary schools.
- ii) To determine cultural factors influencing girl child education in Central Pokot Sub County primary schools.
- iii) To recommend measures aimed at addressing cultural factors affecting girl-child education.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The paper is grounded from liberal feminism and radical feminism theories advanced by Jackson and Pearson (2002). Liberal feminism based its argument on the basis of natural justice, human right and democracy. They emphasise equal opportunities in access to education by all children irrespective of their gender, social status, disability, or even geographical origin. Moreover, they support affirmative action as a strategy for women and girls in schools, family and employment (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). Radical feminism looks at dismantling the foundation upon which patriarchal structures are set up. They challenge the oppressive structures by men to women on gender. These theories argue that women are oppressed by men because they have power over them sexually and materially. Changing the situation of women means contesting and eventually breaking this power (Chege & Sifuna, 2014)). It is therefore important to adopt the liberal feminism and the radical feminism theories because both theories advocate for fair treatment of both girls and boys. Girls should not drop out of school due to pregnancy leaving the male counterparts unpunished (in Kenya, the return to school policy exists but is not followed in totality

in schools). Moreover, the girls' education should not be sacrificed in favour of boys. They should be given equal opportunities in access and participation in education. Thus, the need to utilise the theories as the study seeks to establish cultural aspects that affect girl child education in Central Pokot Sub County.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The United Nations Sustainable Development goal seeks to ensure that by the year 2030, all girls and boys have equal access to quality basic education. This is captured in SDG No. 4. However, the goals of universal primary education and education for all have not been attained in many countries as a result of various factors. Mwakio (2017) indicates that cultural factors tend to affect the girls' capacity to access education more than other factors, especially in developing countries. Mwakio further notes that the cultures of pastoral communities to which the Pokot tribe belongs accommodate customary laws and values that the community lives to perpetuate social reproduction. However, certain rituals practised in the community, strictly adhered to, are major obstacles for girls in accessing education including FGM, early marriages, girls being seen as not significant and propagation of teenage pregnancies (Krop, 2017). This means that despite efforts made to ensure girls' access to schooling, several cultural and social practices act as an inhibitor to girl child education, a focus of this paper.

United Nations considered FGM (UN, 2007) as a violation of the rights of girls and women and that it constituted discrimination against the female gender. A closer look at the pastoral communities in the country (including Pokot), the act is considered a significant rite of passage that makes girls cross over from childhood to adulthood. A survey conducted by Daily Nation on June 11, 2020, found out that with schools closed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, incidences of FGM in West Pokot County had reached alarming levels (Maichuhie, 2020). Despite the national decline in the prevalence of FGM, the practice is still high in some communities like Somali (94.0%), Samburu (86.0%), Kisii (84%), Maasai (78%) and West Pokot at 74.0%. This shows that the vice is still being practised even with government and other

stakeholders putting necessary measures to end it. The impact of FGM on girls and women is wide-ranging and practice comprises the enjoyment of human rights (right to life, right to physical integrity, right to the highest attainable standard of health including maturity, reproductive and sexual health as well as the right to freedom from physical to mental violence injury or abuse) (Chebitwey, 2013). The practice is also a violation of the rights of the child to development, protection and participation as indicated in a UNICEF (2005, p. 15) report.

Another cultural practice that is seen to be continued against girls and women is early marriages. UNICEF (2010) in their report noted that that early marriage denies girls the right to basic education. Girls are victims of turbulent circumstances that lead them to either drop out of school or perform low quality academic work (Mwakio, 2017). When they are sexually coerced, have unwanted pregnancies and early marriages, their education development suffers and results in them dropping out of school. This paper will establish if this is the case in Central Pokot Sub County. Another harmful social-cultural practice is teenage pregnancy caused by rape and defilement cases. According to research studies, teenage pregnancy is very common all over the world and not only in developing countries but developed ones as well. Research conducted in the country by ActionAid International Kenya (2018) discovered that respondents (girls and women) confirmed a high prevalence of sexual violence against girls at home and on their way to school which led to teenage pregnancies. The leading areas were Taita Taveta, Kajiado, Kuria, and Embu counties. Cases of girl child defilement were reported to be meted on girls by relatives and their peers, especially those who have dropped out of school.

Another social and cultural practice that permeated on girl children is child labour. A study by ActionAid International Kenya (2018) found out that girls are viewed simply as caregivers who do not need formal education before they get married and hence their work is to stay at home and not to go to school. In that research, most of the girls responded that housework was meant for them. However, these very girls were conscious that the chores were part of the barriers to their right to basic

education. The boys interviewed in the research held a similar opinion that girls should help more with housework. The household chores are part of the cultural practices that children are socialised on from a very early age. These practices are among those that contributed to low education development among girls in Kenya and other countries.

### **Empirical Studies**

In Somaliland, Mohamed, Mberia and Muturi (2017) examined the socio-cultural influence on girl child participation in education including the parent's attitude on girl child education, religious beliefs, gender preferences and female role model effects. The study concluded that some of the local communities contribute to girls not being in school because girls are booked for early marriage, some underestimate the result of the girl education, and some parents use their daughters as a source of wealth through getting dowry. Girls look after young siblings at home and do domestic chores while boys go to school. The girls among themselves feel culturally out of place as they do not want to compete with boys, particularly in a mixed-gender school.

In Tanzania, Raymond (2014) noted that despite the focus on girls' education in the Millennium Development Goals, there remain a huge number of girls out of education institutions, a situation which, although changing, is still a significant concern in Tanzania (especially at secondary level). Women and girls in pastoral communities are subject to a particularly challenging situation: marginalised not only on account of their gender but also as pastoralists. The study also observed that some cultural practices had a profound effect in as much as they determined or informed some, if not most, of the decisions and practices of the community.

In Kenya, Mwanahamisi (2015) investigated the challenges of girl child education in Tana River County. The findings indicated that early marriages, sexual harassment, inadequate teachers and learning materials are among the factors that affect girl child education. Others include childhood pregnancies, child labour, and retrogressive cultural practices. Mwakio (2017) explored the socio-cultural and economic factors and activities that hindered girls from accessing education in Kenya. The research

was conducted in Taita Taveta, Nairobi, Kwale and Samburu Counties. The findings indicate that socio-cultural and economic factors contributed to girls being out of school, especially in Samburu and Maasai communities where cultural practices including FGM, early forced marriages, among many others, were persistent.

Chebitwey (2013) investigated the effects of circumcision on girl child school participation and educational standards of girls in North Pokot District, West Pokot County through desktop data review and interviews. North Pokot for instance has no middle-level college but only one vocational training centre and one youth centre in Kodich and Alale trading centres, respectively. The researcher found out that education equity was the most pressing issue affecting girls since most of the locals still practise Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early and forced marriage as well as child labour. Chepleting et al. (2013) study found out the influence of social-cultural factors on girls' participation in FPE in Kapenguria Division. The findings showed enrolment of boys being higher than that of girls and if this scenario continues, girls will be underrepresented in the school system. This will mean gender disparity in favour of boys in enrolment will continue to be witnessed. Girls being higher than that of boys over the five-year period. This will further widen gender disparity between boys and girls in primary schools.

Oguta (2013) study aimed to establish factors affecting girl-child participation in secondary education in Migori District, Migori County, Kenya. Lack of personal effects for those with a poor socio-economic background was one of the inhibiting factors to girl child access to education. The socio-cultural factors result in early marriages, male preference in family, community initiation into adulthood, negative attitudes towards girls' education, cultural practices and feeling of being adults affect the participation of girl child in secondary education. Krop (2013) investigated the challenges the parents of children with disabilities from the pastoral communities face in conflict zones. The area of study was Kacheliba Mixed Integrated Primary School for the Physically Handicap (PH) in Kacheliba Division. The population studied comprised parents of children with disabilities and special education teachers and

regular teachers from Kacheliba Mixed Integrated Primary School in Kacheliba Division. The findings indicated that the prevailing societal attitudes about disability arise from myth, superstition, and self-blame. The intensity of insecurity and cattle rustling influenced the decision to enrol, retain, closure of schools, and sometimes learners with disabilities drop out of school.

Rotich, Kipkirui and Mutisya (2014) assessed the role of community leaders and socio-cultural factors on Maasai girls' academic performance in secondary schools in Narok County and their subsequent transition rates to university education. The study was conducted in 20 secondary schools in Narok County. They found out that the engagement of girls in sexual practices lowers their academic performance and leads to teenage pregnancies. The results also revealed that FGM was linked to early marriages of the Maasai girls. It also has an association with girls' engagement in sexual practices and teenage pregnancies. This research has also demonstrated that parents in Narok County still fear their daughters may drop out of school due to pregnancy and may also transfer the family wealth to their marital homes. Ochieng (2015) evaluated the contribution of social-cultural factors on the same. He examined how the quality and relevance of curricula influenced the retention rate and assessed the extent to which accessibility to educational opportunities contribute to retention. The study targeted all the 2,240 girls in the public secondary school in Ndhiwa Sub-county and all 38 headteachers of the 38 public secondary schools in the Sub-county. It was found out that socio-cultural factors affected the retention of girls negatively in secondary schools in Ndhiwa for many parents cannot afford to pay for their children's schools.

Waswa (2015) investigated factors affecting girl child progression rates in primary schools in West Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County. Results showed that the effects which were economic and cultural in nature influenced girl child progression rates negatively than economic factors. Government stimulus and ASAL funds had a less explicit effect as intervention measures. However, the school feeding programme and FGM campaigns and programmes for vulnerable children were more effective interventions in supporting girl-children education.

Ragnarsdottir's (2016) study evaluated the educational support of the ILM (Icelandic Lutheran Mission) to ELCK (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya) regarding secondary education for adolescent girls in Propoi Girls Secondary School (PGSS). Literature review on education in low-income countries, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, and NGO support within the school system. A desk analysis was carried out with a focus on the boarding school PGSS in the Pokot area in North-Western Kenya that has received material and financial support from the ILM and ELCK. Data indicated that the girls have benefited from the school's existence. More girls have been able to get secondary education with improved education and better employment opportunities after graduation. The financial support of the NGOs has had a great impact on the school and the girls; the school has been able to enlarge rapidly in a short time, and with expanded facilities, it can admit more students. Nevertheless, there are continuous challenges such as lack of space for students and the facilities need further work, including for example, improved sanitation and safer water for the pupils.

Chematui et al. (2019) investigated the effects of Female Genital Mutilation on the educational performance of girls in primary schools in West Pokot Sub County. The study adopted a mixed research method design whereby the researcher uses qualitative data as well as the quantitative strands formulating triangulation convergence design. It was evident that FGM was practised either openly or secretly. Many girls' participation in school was thwarted by female genital mutilation along with early marriages and child labour hence dismal performance. The study established that FGM and education performance correlates basing on an interview from the respondent who testified to have boldly abused and demeaned her female teacher from a community different from her and who do not practice FGM calling her 'clitoris' in the mother tongue. Her relationship with the victim teacher and all others was unbearable and so led to many and dropped out of school.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study area covered primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County, West Pokot County, Kenya. The mixed-method design was chosen. The study

targeted pre-primary and primary schools in Central Pokot Sub County, West Pokot County. According to the Ministry of Education data bank, there are twelve schools in the Sub County and 120 teachers employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). The study sampled four (4) schools, which formed approximately 30% of the total population was used. The sampling methods comprised of stratified, simple random sampling and purposive sampling. The schools were selected based on two major categories using stratified sampling methods. Simple random sampling was used to obtain four (4) out of twelve (12) primary schools within the Sub County. Purposive sampling was used to select four (4) headteachers to be interviewed. Simple random sampling was used to select teachers. The instruments for data collection in this study were the questionnaires, document analysis and interview. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics; frequencies, and percentages. Data were presented using tables, graphs and narrative analysis for qualitative data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Demographic Characteristic of Teachers

The results of the study show that the majority (62.5%) of teachers were male (see *Table 2*). Considering the location of Central Pokot (hardship), the majority of female teachers usually seek transfer while others leave the profession. Regarding their education level, many of the teachers (56.3%) have a certificate level of education (see *Table 2*). The result implies that most of the teachers are qualified in teaching primary school children. Many of the teachers (71.9%) were also married (see *Table 2*). This shows that the majority of respondents have families and therefore know the challenges that girl-children experience while schooling in the area. When asked to indicate the number of years they have been teaching in the area, most (71.9%) had taught between 5-10 years (see *Table 2*). This experience makes them understand the challenges facing female students better. Besides their experience makes the class teachers better placed to give proper guidance to enhance the retention of female students in schools (Raymond, 2014).

**Table 2: Demographic characteristic of teachers**

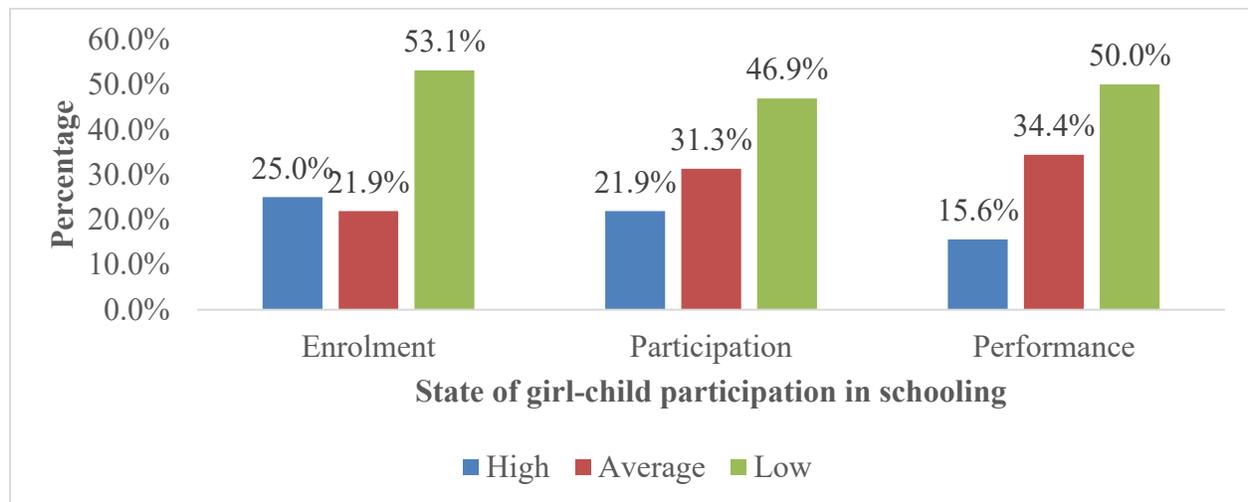
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	20	62.5
Female	12	37.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education level</b>		
Basic (Form IV)	2	6.3
Certificate (PI & PII)	18	56.3
Diploma	7	21.9
Degree	5	15.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	8	25.0
Married	23	71.9
Divorced/separated	1	3.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Work experience (in Central Pokot)</b>		

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	5	15.6
5-10 years	23	71.9
10 years and above	4	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

**State of Girl-Child Education in Central Pokot Sub County Primary Schools**

The first objective of the study sought to find out the state of girl-child education in Central Pokot Sub County primary school. This involved getting responses from headteachers and teachers. The teachers were requested to give their opinion on the status of girl-child education in Central Pokot primary schools based on the admission rate in schools, attendance rate and performance in examinations. The results are presented in *Figure 1*.

**Figure 1: Enrolment, participation and performance of girl-child in Central Pokot Sub County**



Results show that in terms of enrolment, 53.1% of headteachers recorded that their schools recorded low enrolment of girl-child, 25% stated that the admitted girl-children in their schools was high while 21.9% was on average. This shows that access to education for girl-child is still a problem in Central Pokot Sub County. The research agrees with Krop (2017) who found out that the participation of girls in education was a challenge experienced by many schools. The information was supported by an interview with one headteacher who indicated that for the past five years, the number of girls being admitted to the school has been on average.

Regarding their participation in the classroom, the majority 46.9% admitted that some girl pupils attend school irregularly while others drop out of school (see *Figure 1*). This is supported by information from pupils who indicated that cases of truancy among girls are on the increasing trend in their school. One headteacher remarked that cases of girls' irregular attendance had been reported to his office in the past two years. This shows that despite gaining access to free primary schooling, a significant number of girl pupils do not attend school regularly.

When asked to indicate the status of performance of girl-children in their school, half (50%) said that the performance is below average, 34.4% said that it is on average while 15.6% indicated that the performance of these children was high. This shows that poor performance is recorded amongst girl pupils in Central Pokot Sub County. The study concurs with Sub County KCPE results (2013) that showed that there's a decline in performance amongst girls in Central Pokot Sub County.

### Cultural Factors Influencing Girl-child Education in Central Pokot Sub

Social-cultural factors are the family set-ups in the society, their values and beliefs. This is the second research question that sought to find out the cultural factors influencing girl-child education in Central Pokot Sub County primary schools. Through a Likert scale of five, the teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement on several factors influencing girl-child education status in the area and results have been summarised in *Table 3*.

**Table 3: Cultural factors influencing girl-child education in Central Pokot Sub County**

Factor	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total		Decision
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	
Early marriage	25	78.1	4	12.5	3	9.4	32	100.0	Accept
Female genital mutilation	23	71.9	7	21.9	2	6.3	32	100.0	Accept
Widowhood practices	15	46.9	6	18.8	11	34.4	32	100.0	Mixed opinion
Taboos	18	56.3	5	15.6	9	28.1	32	100.0	Accept
Child labour	20	62.5	4	12.5	8	25.0	32	100.0	Accept

The findings of the study showed that 25 (78.1%) of respondents agreed that early marriages influence girl-child education in Central Pokot Sub County (see *Table 3*). This led the study to accept that early marriage is a factor influencing girl-child education. The result coincides with Maichuhie (2020) who indicated that FGM incidents have been rising in the county in recent years. As to whether female genital mutilation practices (FGM) influenced girl-child education, 23 (71.9%) teachers agreed (see *Table 3*). This shows that FGM as a cultural practice hinders girl-child access to schooling in Pokot Central. When probed whether widowhood practices influence girl-child access to primary education, 15 (46.9%) agreed, 6 (18.8%) disagreed while 11 (34.4%) were undecided. This implies that respondents seem to have a mixed opinion on the factor.

During a discussion with respondents, some reported that girl-children from single-parent

families were unable to access schooling as opposed to those who came from full composed family backgrounds. When asked to indicate if taboos were a contributor to girl-child education, the majority 18 (56.3%) agreed, 9 (28.1%) were uncertain while 5 (15.6%) disagrees. This shows that certain taboos influence girl-child access to schooling. Lastly, when asked if child labour contributed to lack of schooling for girls, 20 (62.5%) concurred with the statement, 8 (25%) were neutral while 4 (12.5%) disagreed (see *Table 3*). This shows that family chores like looking after small children and household chores influence negatively girl-child schooling in Central Pokot Sub County.

The third research question for the study examined the effect of cultural practices on girl-child education in Central Pokot Sub County. The respondents were asked to give their responses on a Likert scale of five. The results are illustrated in *Table 4*.

**Table 4: Effect of cultural factors on girl-child education**

Effects	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total		Decision
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Denial from going to school	26	81.3	2	6.3	4	12.5	32	100.0	Accept
Physiological effect	24	75.0	6	18.8	2	6.3	32	100.0	Accept
Psychological effects	25	78.1	3	9.4	4	12.5	32	100.0	Accept
Poverty	29	90.6	2	6.3	1	3.1	32	100.0	Accept
Performance	24	75.0	2	6.3	6	18.8	32	100.0	Accept

The result of the study shows that most 26 (81.3%) of respondents agreed that the girl-child is denied access to school because of negative social-cultural beliefs and practices (see *Table 4*). This shows that the majority of school-aged girls are denied the right of entry to schooling due to outdated and unpopular cultural beliefs. Moreover, 24 (75%) of respondents were found to agree that the physiological state of the girl-child is affected due to negative cultural practices and beliefs. This can affect girl-child growth and development because this is a critical age of adolescence as most organs are developing.

The findings also depict that 25 (78.1%) of respondents agreeing that girl-child usually suffers from psychological disorders for not or after dropping out of school. During discussions, one pupil lamented that her female colleagues who dropped out of school end up in prostitution in most cases because of their frustration. The literature sources indicate that a cultural practice that hinders female education usually results in the majority of girls suffering from psychological disorders. The study also found out that poverty is continuing to rise because the majority of girl-children cannot access schooling in Central Pokot Sub County (90.6%). As it is known, educating a woman is educating the whole society; this saying is not applicable to the majority of school-going girls in the study area. Society needs to rise up and

champion for the education of the girl child as it would reduce poverty cases in the future. Lastly, 24(75%) of respondents approved that the performance of girls who are denied schooling is always low. One headteacher mentioned that the performance of girls who irregularly attend classes is usually low and this has made the majority of them drop out of school because they are tagged by their colleagues as 'old' for repeating. Lack of support from parents for girl-child education lowers their morale of performing and participating in education, the study found. The pupils also reported that their colleagues who are usually absent most of the time score lower marks in examinations. This shows that the future career and aspirations of girl-child in Central Pokot Sub County are hampered by lack of access to free primary education.

#### Measures Addressing Cultural Factors Affecting Girl-child Education

The last objective of the study sought to respondents suggestions on appropriate measures that stakeholders in the education sector need to undertake to improve the status of education of girl-child in Central Pokot Sub County primary schools. The teachers were asked to give their suggestions on measures aimed at addressing cultural factors that influence girl-child education in Central Pokot Sub County. Here are the responses in *Table 5*.

**Table 5: Measures aimed at addressing cultural factors affecting girl-child education**

Suggestion/measure	f	%
Government to take legal action against parents who marry their girls or take them through FGM	29	90.6
Provision of regular guidance and counselling sessions	26	81.3
Provision of scholarships to needy girls	25	78.1
Awareness creation on the importance of girl child education	24	75.0
Establishment of girl-boarding primary schools	19	59.4
The education of girls should be made a priority	18	56.3

Suggestion/measure	f	%
Establishment of rescue centres for girls	15	46.9
Establishment of gender clubs in schools to discuss the impact of cultural practices on education	13	40.6
Training of girls in vocational skills in schools to ward them off from forced or child labour	12	37.5

The result shows that 29 (90.6%) of respondents suggested that the government should take legal action against parents and guardians who marry off school girls and even those who take them for FGM rituals. The headteachers also supported this statement by indicating that the law should be implemented to the latter to prevent further casualty. The respondents also suggested that schools should regularly conduct guidance and counselling services to girls who have undergone FGM or those who had been married off but later rescued. One teacher said that school girls who are at risk of being subjected to punitive cultural practices should be shielded and mentally prepared in case of any advances are made to them.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found out the status of girl-child education in Central Pokot Sub County primary school is still very low. The results of research objective two show that girl child responses on cultural factors ranged from early marriage, pregnancies, child labour, female genital mutilation, widowhood practices and taboos. The result of research objective two showed the effects of socio-cultural factors on girl-child in Central Pokot was that it denied the girl-child opportunity of going to school, poor performance in the examination, increased poverty level, increased immoral activity, trauma, general weakness of the girl child (physiological) and emotional feelings (psychological). It emerged that robust community sensitisation and mobilisation on the need to educate girls for the development of society ought to be enforced in Central Pokot Sub County. Teachers need to educate the young girls at the school level on the importance of education. This is because; there is a rampant decline in truancy, school dropout among the girls in Central Pokot Sub County. It is worth noting that cultural practices do attract tourists and preserves the history of a particular community, but retrogressive and

oppressive cultures need to be discarded. The cultural tradition common in Central Pokot Sub County has over a long period of time prevented girls from accessing education and embracing literacy.

Several aspects were noticed in the study which should be adopted by the headteachers, teachers, community, parents, stakeholders and the government in order to address the effect of cultural effects on girl-child education in Central Pokot Sub County. These recommendations are:

- (a) Stakeholders should organise forums to educate the local community on the importance of girl-child education. Specifically, the Ministry of education needs to reach out to the marginalised areas and support the Girl-Child education.
- (b) Guidance and counselling sessions in primary schools should be made a priority. This will include the provision of G & C services on a regular basis and the invitation of resource persons to talk to traumatised girls in schools. This will enhance the retention of female learners.
- (c) More boarding schools need to be set up which will address low enrolment levels of girls in secondary schools. These schools will also be modified to have rescue centres for girls who have experienced unpopular cultural practices.
- (d) To support their participation, there is a need for the provision of scholarships to needy girls.
- (e) The government through the Ministry of Education should continue to develop and implement policies to ensure that girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy enrol back to school (enforcement of re-admission policy). The schools should create an enabling environment for parents' girls to enhance retention and smooth transition.

- (f) The school management should enhance guidance and counselling in schools so as to address the challenges facing the female students like relationships, peer influence, drugs and substance abuse.

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