

**INFLUENCE OF SELECTED CULTURAL NORMS ON EDUCATIONAL  
ATTAINMENT AMONG KIPSIGIS WOMEN IN BOMET EAST SUB-  
COUNTY, BOMET COUNTY, KENYA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Education in  
Educational Foundations of Chuka University**

**CHUKA UNIVERSITY**

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## DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of diploma or conferment of a degree in any other University.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my beloved husband , Amos Yegon and my treasured son, Geovanny Kipkirui Ngetich. I also extend this dedication to my parents, in-laws and siblings.

## **AKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I sincerely thank the Almighty God for His constant guidance and strength throughout my academic journey. I am also deeply grateful to my supervisors, Dr John Ogembo and Dr John Karauri for their unwavering dedication and invaluable support.

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## ABSTRACT

Women's educational attainment is crucial for promoting gender equality, improving health outcomes, and fostering economic development within families and communities. Educated women are more likely to participate in decision-making, access better job opportunities, and invest in the education and well-being of future generations. Despite the critical benefits of women's educational attainment, cultural norms often influence the extent to which women can access and complete their education. Government of Kenya has initiated various programs and policies aimed at enhancing women's educational attainment and promoting inclusive, equitable access to learning opportunities. In spite of the interventions by the government of Kenya to improve women educational attainment, women educational attainment is still low as compared to that of men. This study aimed to determine the influence of selected cultural norms on Kipsigis women in Bomet East sub-county, Bomet County, Kenya. The study was guided by four objectives; to determine the influence of gender roles, marriage practices, rites of passage and parental perception on women educational attainment. The study was guided by two theories namely; structural functionalism theory and liberal feminism theory. Historical research design was adopted for the study. The study population was 7,081 participants consisting of 7,056 women in the four age sets according to the Kipsigis customs, 5 chiefs, 10 educationists and 10 elderly persons in Bomet East Sub- County. A sample size of 125 comprising of 5 chiefs, 5 females and 5 male educationists, 5 female and 5 male elderly persons 100 women distributed proportionately in the four Age set in the five locations of Bomet East Sub-County was selected for this study. Data was collected using interviews presented to chiefs, elderly persons and educationists, while focus group discussions was used to collect data from women in various age sets. Piloting was done in Bomet Central sub-county because it has similar characteristics and environment to the study. Reliability of the instruments was ascertained through pilot testing the interviews or focus group question. The instruments were validated using face and content validity while reliability was ascertained by subjecting data obtained from a pilot study to Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, 0.7 reliability coefficient and above being the accepted threshold. Content validity of the research ascertained by expert judgment from the faculty of education and resource development while face validity was ascertained through use of appropriate line spacing, font size and logical arrangement of information. Qualitative data was analyzed basing on the themes. The findings of the study showed that marriage practices, gender roles, rites of passage and parental perception influence women's participation in education. It was established that marriage practices, gender roles, rites of passage and parental perception have a significant influence on women's educational attainment. The study recommends that education stakeholders sensitize communities on the importance of balancing household roles with girls' education through awareness campaigns and community dialogue, enforce strict measures against practices such as female genital mutilation, early and forced marriages by engaging local authorities, elders, and religious leaders and launch community education programs highlighting the long-term benefits of educating girls for families and the society at large.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>ABS:</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>DPTE:</b>	Diploma in Primary Teacher Education
<b>FGM:</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>FPE:</b>	Free Primary Education
<b>FPE:</b>	Free Primary Education
<b>KNBS:</b>	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
<b>MGDs:</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>NACOSTI:</b>	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
<b>SGDs:</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SID:</b>	Social Impact Development
<b>STEM:</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
<b>TVET:</b>	Technical Vocational Education and Training
<b>UNICEF:</b>	United Nations Children Fund
<b>UPE:</b>	Universal Primary Education

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Education is fundamental to both individual and societal development, as it equips individuals with essential knowledge and skills that facilitate personal growth, enhance employment opportunities, and improve overall living standards. Education also nurtures critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, enabling individuals to make informed decisions and effectively address challenges in their lives (Razak et al., 2022). In addition to personal benefits, education significantly contributes to economic prosperity by creating opportunities that enhance community well-being and improve the overall quality of life (Reimers, 2020). Research further indicates that education significantly contributes to economic prosperity, as investments in education generate more opportunities within society, ultimately leading to improved living conditions for all (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). Beyond intellectual development, education also supports emotional and social growth by equipping individuals with the requisite skills to navigate complex social interactions and build meaningful connections with others. Given its far-reaching impact on both individuals and communities, it is imperative for societies to prioritize educational investment, ensuring that children not only enroll in school but also actively engage in learning and strive to reach their full potential.

Educational attainment denotes the highest level of education an individual has successfully completed, encompassing formal education at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. It is typically assessed through the acquisition of recognized qualifications such as certificates, diplomas, and degrees (Lee, 2019; UNESCO, 2020). As a fundamental measure of participation in the education system, educational attainment reflects an individual's progression through structured learning pathways. Basic educational attainment refers to the completion of pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, signifying that a learner has acquired sufficient competencies to either enter middle-level colleges or pursue higher education at the university level (Aurpi, 2024). This phase ensures that individuals not only develop foundational knowledge and skills but also gain the qualifications necessary for further academic or professional advancement.

Tertiary education encompasses technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, teacher training colleges, and other specialized institutions. These institutions equip learners with practical skills and technical expertise required to offer specialized services to their communities (Sebola, 2022). Higher education, which includes undergraduate and postgraduate studies, represents the most advanced stage of educational attainment, preparing individuals with specialized knowledge and competencies for professional and academic pursuits (Riga, 2024). As a critical determinant of individual and societal progress, educational attainment significantly influences economic opportunities, social mobility, and national development.

Educational attainment offers numerous benefits to individuals by enabling them to unlock job opportunities in the labor market and reduce dependency on others for financial support. It serves as an indicator of an individual's socioeconomic status and life prospects (Banner et al., 2016). When individuals pursue education, they often secure employment, which allows them to afford necessities such as quality housing, healthcare, and better opportunities for their children. Bunchmann and Park (2016) highlight that educational attainment enhances employability and earning potential by equipping individuals with essential skills and experiences needed to achieve personal and societal goals. According to UNESCO (2020) education is a fundamental human right and a critical driver of sustainable development. On a personal level, education attainment acts as a powerful tool for empowerment, enabling individuals to make informed decisions that impact their personal and social well-being. It is also a vital equalizer in fostering equity, particularly in improving opportunities for women and girls.

The importance of educating women and girls has prompted significant efforts by communities and nations to enhance their educational opportunities. According to UNICEF (2020), providing girls with the opportunity to attend school enables them to acquire knowledge and skills that empower them to shape their futures. Through education, girls gain confidence and develop essential decision-making abilities that influence various aspects of their lives. Women education also plays a critical role in fostering advocacy for gender equality and social justice, allowing them to demand equal access to education and the same opportunities as boys (Dhiman, 2023). Studies

also highlight that education opens pathways to better job opportunities and higher earnings, which in turn enable girls to support their families (Butler, 2023). In addition, studies consistently show that educated girls are more likely to prioritize their health and the well-being of their children (Currie, 2016). Investing in women education is therefore a critical strategy for fostering social and economic development, as it benefits individuals while also strengthening communities and nations.

Despite the well-documented significance of women's education, historical data consistently reveal that their educational attainment has lagged behind that of men across communities. Bonfert and Wadhwa (2024) highlighted that, historically, women had limited access to education and have persistently fallen behind their male counterparts in terms of education attainment. According to Hammond et al. (2020) women are significantly underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, leading to lower female graduation rates in STEM disciplines globally. Zulaika et al. (2023) reported that school dropout rates among women, particularly in developing countries such as Kenya, increase notably upon reaching puberty. Rosenzweig and Chen (2023) also documented considerable gender disparities in primary school enrollment, with male pupils attending school at higher rates than their female counterparts. These persistent gender disparities in education necessitate a critical examination of the cultural, societal, and institutional factors that influence girls' educational attainment.

A study conducted in Asia by Pasha (2024) revealed a persistent gender disparity in access to education, with significantly fewer women having the opportunity to attend school compared to their male counterparts. The gender disparity in education attainment was attributed to entrenched cultural perceptions that view boys as long-term financial assets to their families, thus prioritizing their education over that of girls. As a result, most of the girls were denied the chance to acquire basic education. The study by Pasha (2024) further found that a substantial proportion of women across various Asian countries were excluded from participating in the formal labor market, a condition that could be closely linked to their lack of educational qualifications and skills. This situation persisted despite the numerous awareness campaigns and advocacy initiatives spearheaded by both government agencies and non-governmental

organizations, all aimed at sensitizing the public on the critical value of educating women.

In Australia, a study by Hadjar et al. (2014) found that women achieved lower educational levels compared to their male counterparts, with upper secondary and tertiary education being largely dominated by men, reflecting a persistent gender disparity in academic progression and career opportunities. In attempt to improve education attainment among girls, the Australian government introduced policies to improve girls' educational attainment and reduce gender disparities in learning institutions. Initiatives like the National Action Plan for the Education of Girls (1993–1997), scholarships and funding programs, such as the Australian Government's Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship (WISE) initiative, aim to support female students in pursuing higher education and careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The Gonski Reforms (2011) also sought to address educational inequalities by increasing funding to schools with disadvantaged students, including those from low-income backgrounds, where women often face greater barriers to education.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist in achieving full educational attainment for girls in Australia. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) indicates that while female students have higher school completion rates than males, there are still gaps in subject selection and tertiary education participation. Women remain underrepresented in STEM fields, and fewer women progress to leadership roles in academia and the workforce. Furthermore, research by Von, Brekke, and Hardoy (2022) shows that girls have lower upper secondary school completion rates than boys, with a 26% completion rate for women compared to 29% for men, demonstrating that disparities still exist. Socioeconomic factors, cultural expectations, and regional disparities continue to hinder equal educational opportunities for women, requiring ongoing policy intervention and targeted support programs to close the gender gap in education.

Despite the expansion of educational opportunities since the 1960s, women eligible for higher education continue to have lower transition rates to tertiary institutions than men

in African countries. A persistent gender gap remains in subject selection and vocational choices, limiting women's representation in certain academic and professional fields. In South Africa for instance, there has been considerable attention paid to gender and education by government, researchers and civil society (Senit & Biermann, 2021). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 provides everyone with a right to basic education. South Africa's government has been working in partnership with other stakeholders including non-governmental organizations to foster the drive of empowering girls to access education at all levels (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Bangani, 2020). However, women educational attainment in South Africa has been lagging behind than that of men often due to negative stereotypical discourses about women ability to perform well school (Betten et al, 2021). This includes daily school practices that may discourage girls from pursuing studies in mathematics, science, and other technical subjects. Additionally, cultural norms often place a heavy burden on girls by expecting them to balance domestic chores with school responsibilities, which can negatively impact their academic participation.

In Nigeria, Adeosun and Owolabi (2021) found that gender disparity in education consistently favors boys across nearly all levels of the education system. The gender gap in access, participation and achievement broadens with progress from early childhood education to primary and secondary education. The federal Ministry of Education and United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) have been leading the campaign for girl-child education in Nigeria (Agusiobo, 2018). However, efforts to address gender disparities in education attainment at the policy level have been largely superficial and uncoordinated. This is despite Nigeria signing the Framework for Action, which included a goal to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education (Abubakar, 2023). Without meaningful interventions, girls will continue to face barriers to education attainment, limiting their opportunities for economic independence.

In Egypt, Benaissa (2024) found that while men often enjoy greater education freedom, women particularly from disadvantaged rural backgrounds are denied schooling and forced into early marriage. In response, the Egyptian government introduced various initiatives aimed at enhancing women educational attainment. One significant effort is

the Girls' Education Initiative, which focuses on establishing community schools in rural and underserved areas where modern schooling is limited. These schools provide flexible learning schedules and a curriculum tailored to the needs of girls, particularly those who might otherwise be excluded from formal education (Guglielmi et al., 2021). Additionally, the government has partnered with international organizations such as UNICEF to support projects that promote girls' enrollment and retention in schools. Despite these commendable efforts, challenges persist. Cultural norms continue to constrain women access to and completion of education of various levels of education in Egypt (Barsoum, 2019). Based on experiences in Egypt, there remains a limited understanding of how cultural norms could affect women educational attainment different socio-cultural settings like Bomet East Sub County in Kenya.

In Tanzania, research conducted by Mollel and Chong (2017) highlights that women face significant challenges in accessing and succeeding in formal education, placing them in a disadvantaged position compared to men. Repetition and dropout proportion are significantly higher for women while completion rate is very low. In Uganda, the promotion of women education has been on agenda of the government of Uganda for the last two decades. The UN office in Uganda is working with the government and other stakeholders to review curriculum and teaching materials for gender sensitivity and promote female teachers as role models (Education, 2013). The situation in Uganda and Tanzania indicates that despite efforts to promote gender equality in education, systemic barriers continue to hinder women educational attainment these countries. There is a need for further research to examine how deeply embedded cultural beliefs and societal expectations influence women education and to identify effective strategies for promoting gender equity in educational systems. Bridging this gap is essential for designing responsive, community-specific strategies that promote equitable educational attainment for women.

During the colonial period in Kenya, educational systems were designed to serve the needs of the colonial state. Formal education for women was limited because it was considered unnecessary and their role was only seen in domestic duties due to gender roles (Delgado et al., 2024). In post-independence, Kenya's government realized the need for widespread education to promote development. There was emphasis of

education as a tool for building the nation and policies focusing on increasing school enrollment for both boys and girls (Melesse & Obsiye, 2022). Traditional gender roles remained a problem to girls' education since it restricted girls to domestic duties. Since Kenya's independence, the government has recognized education as a fundamental driver of social and economic development. This acknowledgment has led to various policies and initiatives aimed at improving access to education and fostering human capital development as a means to propel the nation's growth and prosperity.

Since independence in 1963, Kenya has undertaken significant efforts to improve women's educational attainment through a series of progressive policies and partnerships aimed at bridging the gender gap in education. Early initiatives such as the introduction of free primary education opened access for many girls from disadvantaged backgrounds (Ray & Chakravarty, 2025). Complementary policy frameworks, including the National Girls' Education Policy (2004) and the Gender Policy in Education (2007), sought to address barriers such as early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and gender-based violence while promoting gender-sensitive curricula and improving school retention for girls. Despite the post-independence education policies narrowing down gender gap and improving education in Kenya, women educational attainment is still low. Persistent cultural norms appear to continue limiting educational attainment for women, particularly in marginalized communities.

Pan (2023) carried out an in-depth study examining the factors influencing higher education attainment among girls residing in pastoralist communities in Turkana. The study revealed that women in pastoralist communities exhibited significantly low levels of educational attainment, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels. Among the other findings was the identification of numerous socio-cultural and structural barriers that hinder women progression in the education system, including early marriages, domestic responsibilities, and limited access to gender-responsive learning environments. In response, the study recommended that the government should strengthen and expand existing education policies with a focus on addressing gender disparities, especially in marginalized and pastoralist regions. The findings and recommendations by Pan (2023) implies that there remains a notable research gap in historical understanding of how cultural norms intersect with women educational

attainment in specific contexts. This study investigated effect of selected cultural norms on women educational attainment within historical perspective.

Despite Kenya's notable progress toward achieving gender parity in education, national statistics still reveal persistent disparities in educational attainment between men and women. Kipkemoi (2017) reported that women's secondary school education attainment stood at 76%, compared to 85% for men. More so, data from 2022 indicate a further decline in women's participation, with 75% enrolled in lower secondary and only 51% in upper secondary education. This downward trend becomes even more pronounced at the county level. For instance, Chebet and Ishenyi (2023) found that Bomet East Sub-County recorded the lowest female educational attainment in Bomet County, with only 13.9% of women completing secondary school. This is despite sustained government and community interventions such as bursary allocations, classroom construction, and awareness campaigns. Although national policies like the Free Primary Education initiative and the 100% transition policy introduced in 2018 were intended to promote equitable access and progression, these measures appear inadequate in addressing deep-seated local barriers such as cultural norms that continue to hinder women's educational attainment in Bomet East Sub-County.

Cultural norms refer to expectations and rules that guide people on how to behave in a society. They include values, traditions, customs and practices which are passed from one generation to another. Cultural norms refer to collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group from another (Žemojtel & Piotrowski, 2023). Westendorp and Kmec (2023) defines cultural norms as unspoken rules that explain how people should act in different situations. This means that cultural norms explain what is considered polite and respectful, for instance when a young person is greeting an elder, they are expected to bow in some communities to show respect. This observation is emphasized by Sutrisno (2023) who considers cultural norms to be core values and beliefs that a group of people share. These values shape individuals on how to see the world and the way they treat one another. Generally cultural norms are values that help people navigate the social world and connect with others. Other cultural norms which include; gender roles, marriage practices, rites of passage and parental perception

were selected in this study because they were the most influential in women education in Bomet East sub county in Bomet county.

Gender roles plays an influential role in women educational attainment because they shape societal expectations imposed on girls from an early age (Eble & Hu, 2022). In many communities, girls are expected to prioritize domestic chores such as fetching water, cooking and caring for siblings over their education. These traditional roles often lead to higher dropout rates among girls, as they are burdened with tasks that limit their time for schoolwork. Additionally, cultural norms that view girls primarily as future wives and mothers contribute to the perception that investing in their education is less valuable than investing in boys' education (Bangura & Mambo, 2023). This mindset is prevalent in rural areas where economic constraints and entrenched gender roles prevail. However, when families, teachers and communities recognize that women deserve equal educational opportunities, they can challenge these traditional gender roles by actively supporting women education. These efforts can empower women to pursue education, leading to improved personal and societal outcomes. Therefore, this study analyzed the influence of gender roles on women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub County in Kenya.

Marriage practices play a critical role in influencing women's educational attainment, as they often determine both the timing and likelihood of a woman continuing her education (Zulfiqar & Kuskoff, 2021). In traditional African communities, early and arranged marriages are prevalent, and once married, women are typically expected to assume the roles of wife and mother, rather than pursue academic advancement (Allison, 2023). Cultural expectation regarding marriage practices frequently results in young girls dropping out of school prematurely to fulfill marital responsibilities. Marriage is often prioritized over education, with women being viewed as sources of wealth through bride price or dowry arrangements. When societal norms begin to value education over early marriage and actively promote delayed marriage, the overall influence is that more women are likely to complete higher levels of education and make meaningful contributions to their families and communities. However, there lacks sufficient studies on how traditional marriage practices influence women educational attainment especially in Bomet East Sub County, which was one of the concerns of this study.

In African traditional context, rites of passage marked a transition from childhood to adulthood and emphasized gender roles. In many cultures, ceremonies such as initiation rites signal that woman is now considered an adult with responsibilities such as marriage, domestic chores and childbearing (Kingsman, 2024). Women may be pressured to leave school because continuing with education because it may be seen as unnecessary for someone viewed as an adult woman or incompatible with adult female roles which accompany rites of passage (Williams, 2023). These rites of passage might discourage women from pursuing education by reinforcing traditional gender roles often shifting attention away from formal schooling, a claim that lacks empirical evidence especially in Bomet East Sub County. The study therefore analyzed the influence of rites of passage on women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub County in Kenya.

Parental perception plays an important role in shaping women educational attainment because parents' attitudes and beliefs influence the support women receive in their schooling. In many communities, parents may view education for women as less important than for boys because they believe that women future lies in marriage and motherhood rather than in academics (Sear, 2021). Parents will therefore invest less on their daughters' education and encourage them to stay home to do domestic chores. Parents may also fear that too much education will make a woman independent and would not get married. These perceptions may limit women confidence and access to educational opportunities. This study analyzed the influence of parental perception on women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub County in Kenya.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Educational attainment in an individual life is very important because it empowers people to make informed personal choices on relevant issues of life. Furthermore, it is a gateway to myriad job opportunities in the labor market. Historically, women's education in Kenya was neglected while men education was prioritized. Women educational attainment has been lagging behind that of men in Kenya especially in Bomet East Sub County. Despite the significant efforts made by government and local initiatives to boost women educational attainment in Bomet East Subcounty, women educational attainment is still low compared to other sub-counties in Bomet County.

This issue persists despite free education policies, bursaries and other measures. Cultural norms have been identified as part of the factors that can influence the persistence of the low women educational attainment. However, the influence of cultural norms on women educational attainment had not been studied in Bomet East Sub County. This study examined the influence of selected cultural norms on women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub County.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to analyze the influence of selected cultural norms on women educational attainment in Bomet East sub-county, Kenya.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

- i. To determine the influence of gender roles on educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East Sub- County in Kenya.
- ii. To determine the influence of rites of passage on educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East sub-county in Kenya.
- iii. To determine the influence of marriage practices on educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East Sub- County in Kenya.
- iv. To determine the influence of parental perception on educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East sub-county in Kenya.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

- i. To what extent does gender roles influence educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East Sub-county in kenya?
- ii. How does rites of passage influence educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East Sub-county in kenya?
- iii. To what extent does marriage practices influence educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East Sub-county in kenya?
- iv. How does parental perception influence educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East Sub-county in kenya?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study may add knowledge to the current issues affecting women educational attainment on how to solve them. Findings and recommendations of the study may help the Kenyan government especially Bomet East Sub- County government to fund programs that facilitate women completion rate in schools. The findings of the study may help the principals and school management to realize the factors hindering women's educational attainment in their schools and provide them with solutions that might help change the situation. The findings of the study maybe of paramount importance to parents identifying traditional cultural practices hindering women completion rate in schools. Findings may also benefit the Ministry of Education in Kenya on ways to improve gender equity in education. The finding of the study might serve as an eye opener to the community on the factors contributing to low women educational attainment in schools. The findings and recommendations of this study may also create hindsight to the country education board on strategies of improving women educational attainment.

### **1.7 Scope of the study**

The study was based on analyzing the influence of selected cultural norms on women educational attainment in Bomet East sub county, Bomet County, Kenya. The study target population comprises women of different age sets according to Kipsigis customs, elderly persons, chiefs and educationists in Bomet East Sub-county. The study focused examining the influence of gender roles, rites of passage, marriage practices and parental perception on women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub County.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

- i. Some information sought were sensitive. However, researcher assured the respondents that data provided would be used solely for academic purpose.
- ii. Language was another limitation in the study. Therefore, the researcher translated the questions on the instruments to Kipsigis language to minimize the effects of language barrier on data collected.

### **1.9 Assumptions of the Study**

- i. All the participants cooperated and willingly gave honest information.
- ii. Respondents were aware of selected cultural norms in the community.

### 1.10 Operational Definitions of Terms

The following are the key terms used in the study have been operationalized.

<b>Cultural Norms</b>	These refers to rules and expectations that guide the behavior of people in a society. According to this study, cultural norms has been used to refer to the cultural beliefs within a given community. It has been taken as a lifestyle, for example practices including marriage practices, gender roles and rites of passage is lifestyle. Examples of cultural norms include; gender roles, rites of passage, marriage practices and parental perception.
<b>Educational attainment</b>	Refers to the level of education someone has finished According to this study, educational attainment refers to level of education attained by women whether completing primary school, secondary school or colleges.
<b>Educationist</b>	Educationist refers to an individual with at least postgraduate degree.
<b>Elderly persons</b>	Elderly persons in this study refers to someone who is 70 years and above.
<b>Gender Roles</b>	Refers to expectations and ideas on how people should behave basing on whether they are female or male. According to this study, gender roles refer to duties that children are given depending on their gender. For example, girls are assigned duties like domestic chores while boys are encouraged to pursue education.
<b>Norms</b>	These are expected ways of people act in the community. According to this study, norms refer to accepted and expected practices that influence how society views women education.
<b>Parental perceptions</b>	Refers to how parents view various aspects of their children's lives, including their behaviour, needs and values. Parental perception in this study refers to how parents view and value education for their daughters.
<b>Rites of passage</b>	Refers to ceremonies and events that mark the changes in person's life, for instance becoming an adult. According to this study, rites of passage refer to culturally ceremonies that mark transition from one stage of life to another, such as from childhood to adulthood.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Women Educational Attainment: A Historical Perspective**

Women educational attainment refers to the highest level achieved by women, encompassing primary, secondary and tertiary education. Educating girls transforms their lives, uplifts entire communities, and paves the way for healthier families and brighter futures (Gallagher, 2024). According to Sperling and Winthrop (2015), women educational attainment has seen global progress with more girls enrolling in primary, secondary and higher education than before. However, girls still face barriers like poverty, early marriages and rites of passage which prevent girls from completing their level of education. Although the government has made a lot of efforts to improve women educational attainment, challenges persists particularly when it comes to keeping in school and this has contributed to women educational attainment lagging behind that of boys.

Between 1963 and 1973, girls faced numerous challenges in accessing education. parents prioritized the education of boys, believing that investing in girls' education was less valuable. This perspective was influenced by societal norms that defined a woman's primary role as that of a homemaker (Aslan, 2021). Girls' roles were traditionally confined to household chores, cooking, and childcare, preparing them for their expected future as wives and mothers. According to Lundberg (2020), societal expectations significantly limited their access to education. However, during this decade, the global discourse on gender inequality gained momentum, driven by the rise of feminist movements advocating for change.

From 1973-1983 world conference on education for all was introduced, which explained education as a fundamental human right (Elfert, (2021). This conference led to commitment in ensuring that girls' access education was equaled to that of boys. There was progress in primary education in many countries which increased girls' enrolment rate in secondary schools. Feminist movements helped change attitude towards girls' education, this contributed to girls completing their secondary school education and attending colleges (Eichler, (2024). However, girls' school dropout rate is still high, this challenge could be attributed to poverty and uncondusive environment

for learning mostly in areas affected by conflicts where families prioritized survival than education. Between 1983-1993 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were introduced, this emphasized on gender equality in education and focused in improving girls' enrollment in primary schools and also growth of awareness for girls to continue with their education to secondary schools and higher levels (Singh,2023). Nevertheless, societal norms still remain the challenge affecting girls' education. According to Udoh (2024) cultural norms dictate that girls should be at home or even get married at young age which force girls to drop out of school in many cultures.

There was a lot of advancements from the year 2003-2010 in primary education and many girls began attending secondary schools in many nations (Gao et al, 2024). The Advocacy efforts including powerful voices for example Malala Yousafzai highlighted the challenges facing girls' education attracting international attention to the importance of girls' education. Also, quality education and complete the education among girls has improved (Donkoh et al, 2023). Global initiatives like United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) called for action to promote gender equality in education by 2030. Despite of these gains, girls continued to face challenges.

A study on the determinants of educational attainment of Latin American girls and women was conducted by Grant and Behrman (2010). The findings of the study indicated that girls' educational attainment reflects a country's level of income and characteristics of its educational expansion. The main issues in girls' and women educational attainment are related to income and to country's degree of economic development though gender disparity in educational attainment exist. The findings also indicated a lower opportunity of girls' schooling than boys. The researcher recommends that for any future successes in improving educational levels of less advantaged girls and women in Latin America depend on the design of educational policies and strategies that target the specific needs of girls and also firm commitment on the part of educators and international organizations.

In Northern Nigeria, Edungbola and Ene (2024) conducted a study on factors inhibiting girls' education in from 2010 to 2020. The findings of the study indicated that poverty and early marriage are the inhibitors of girls' education in Northern Nigeria. The study recommended that there is need to consider the inhibiting factors when designing

interventions and developing policies on girls' education. Despite the efforts to achieve gender equality in education, Nigeria is still experiencing wide regional and gender disparity in basic education enrollment, retention and completion. However, the study dealt with inhibiting factors affecting girls' education in Northern Nigeria from 2010 to 2020 while the current study was held in Kenya and focused on selected cultural norms affecting women educational attainment.

A study on women participation in formal education among Maasai girls in Tanzania was conducted by Iddy (2021). Data was collected using ethnographic interviews and observation. Findings reveal that girls value formal education but are prevented by their home and school environments. The study recommended that concerted effort and dedication to the provision of education are needed to address the challenges faced by girls in their education and also the community should be sensitized about the importance of girls' education. Despite the efforts made by government in Tanzania to improve girls' participation in education, girls are still not going to school and therefore girls' educational attainment is low. However, this study adopted interviews and observation as methods of collecting data while the current study adopted interviews and focus group discussions.

According to Hockett (2021), girls are facing challenges like insufficient school infrastructure, inadequate basic resources and limited family and community support which make girls' educational attainment low. The study was on how to improve girls' educational attainment in primary schools in Kenya. Interviews and school artifacts were used to collect data. The findings of the study indicated. Despite the efforts made by Kenyan government to improve girls' educational attainment, the attainment is still very low. The study recommended that removal of barriers to girls' education should be a global priority. However, the study adopted descriptive survey research design while the current study adopted historical research design.

## **2.2 Cultural Norms and Women Educational Attainment**

Cultural norms refer to shared beliefs and expectations within a community which shape how people live and interact with one another. These norms can be based on various factors which include history, traditions and religion. Bicchieri and Dimant

(2025) defines cultural norms as rules and expectations which guide behavior of a person within a community. Bicchieri and Dimant further explain that these norms help maintain order in the society because they regulate individual behavior and promote social stability. These norms include gender roles; rites of passage and marriage practices Cultural norms can have a big impact on girls' education. In some cultures, there is an expectation that boys should be educated more than girls because they will be providers of the family and girls should only focus on domestic duties as they are prepared to be house wives and mothers in the future (Valenzuela, 2014). Cultural practices like early marriage, biases from teachers can limit girls stay in school. Cultural norms have affected girls' educational attainment negatively and thus this study aim at focusing on influence of selected cultural norms on girls' educational attainment.

A study was conducted by Sarkar et al (2014) on the effects on socio cultural barriers on girls' educational attainment in Bangladesh in Asia. The researcher adopted qualitative method. Findings of the study indicated that traditional gender norms, child marriage and religious misinterpretation hinder girls' educational attainment. Despite NGO working in Bangladesh implementing various education programs to improve women education, girls continue facing socio cultural problems which affect their education. The study recommended that programs addressing attitudes toward women education should be launched. However, the current study shifted focus from effects of socio- cultural norms on girls' educational attainment to effects of selected cultural norms on women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub County, Kenya.

In Zambia, Mushibwe (2013) conducted a study on influence of cultural traditions on women education among the Tumbuka tribe. The study employed methods such as observation, focus group and interviews to collect data. The total number of participants were 47. The findings of the study showed that the Tumbuka women experiences and beliefs reflect traditional norms that limit gender equality and thus affecting women education. The study recommended that while ethnic traditions should be respected because they define one's identity, aspects of culture which discriminate and devalue women should be eradicated in the community.

In Kagamba Sub County, Rakai district, Uganda Namanyi (2017) carried out a study on impact of cultural practices on girl child education. The study adopted both quantitative approaches. The researcher used questionnaires and purposive sampling to collect data. The findings of the study indicated that early marriages, boy preference, child labor and sexual exploitation are major cultural practices affecting girl child education. The study recommended that economic incentives should be provided to delay early marriages and also need for constitutional measures to uphold the rights of girls and women to be provided. Despite the government and nongovernmental organizations implementing efforts to eradicate cultural factors affecting girl child education, cultural practices still persisted in the district.

A study was conducted by Nyanzwa (2015) on influence of socio-cultural values on the provision of quality secondary school education on girls in Masasi District, Tanzania. The study adopted mixed methods approaches which involved total of 166 respondents. The study employed random sampling methods such as interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussion and review of documents. The findings of the study indicated that socio-cultural factors have negative influence on girls' secondary education. The study recommended that parents and female students should be educated on the importance of girl-child education.

In another study, Andiemba (2021) investigated influence of cultural practices on girl child education in Central Pokot Sub County, Kenya. Data was collected using interviews and questionnaires. The findings of the study indicated that girl child education was low because of cultural factors such as early marriages, female genital mutilation and taboos which influence girls' education negatively. The study recommends that the government should take actions against parents who practice female genital mutilation and early marriages. Despite interventions for instance free primary Education (FPE) policy by both the government and non-state actors over the years, cultural practices such as early marriages and female genital mutilation persist.

### **2.3 Gender Roles and Girls' Educational Attainment**

Gender refers to social, cultural and behaviors that a society associates with person's biological sex. A given community has gender pre-assigned roles and responsibilities,

upon birth, a child is raised and natured to fit the predetermined behavior that best express the chosen gender. This guidance of growth greatly influences the child's life and might alter his/her educational outcome. Zevallos (2014) describes gender as how society determines and manages sex categories, the cultural meanings attached to the roles of men and women, and how individuals perceive their identity as being a man, woman or other gender positions. Zevallos further explains that gender involves social norms, attitudes and activities that a given society considers appropriate for each sex.

Gender roles are the activities a specific gender can indulge in; these activities are derived from societal norms associated with a person's sex. For instance, traditionally women were expected to do nurturing roles such as house chores and caregiving whereas boys were expected to be providers and protectors of the family. These gender roles are bound to influence girls' educational attainment. Women are expected to help with house chores and taking care of the siblings instead of going to school and this will interfere with their learning. The African society perceive girls as unable to excel in subjects like mathematics and sciences, this lowers their confidence in them, which ultimately influences their career choice. Girls are pressurized into choosing perceived feminine profession hence missing on out other opportunities.

In China, Chan (2022) carried out a study on the influence of gender on girls' educational attainment. Results supported the moderating effect of traditional gender role beliefs and found that gender differences in self-efficacy, interest, and aspirations in STEM were more apparent among students who strongly endorsed stereotypical views of male and female roles. The underrepresentation of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields is well documented in developed countries, and yet public discussion of gender disparities in STEM in China is still in its nascent stage. Endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs and conformity to social norms are pertinent to Chinese culture, which may even exacerbate the gender disparities in STEM engagement. The study recommends that efforts should be made to improve girls' access to stem education by eradicating traditional gender roles beliefs. The study was conducted in 10 secondary schools in different geographical regions of China, including Guangdong, Zhejiang, and Shanghai. The current study was done in the five locations of Bomet East Sub-county which included;

Longisa ward, Kembu ward, Chemaner ward, Merigi ward and Kiprerres ward and it targeted women, chiefs, elderly persons and educationist as participants in the study. In Northern Ghana, Ngulube (2018) conducted a research study on influence of gender roles power on women education. The purpose of the study was to review existing literature on the influence of gender roles on girls' educational attainment. Findings of the study indicated that geographical settings, economic status, social and cultural structures are factors reinforcing unbalanced gender roles that contribute to the rural women and girls' limited access to education and healthcare facilities. Even though some initiatives contained within the National Gender Policy of Ghana have been put in place by the government to achieve a gender balance, girls' access to education is still limited in rural areas. The study adopted secondary data analysis as a method of research using both qualitative and quantitative research resources. The current study used primary data and shifted focus from the study of effects of gender roles and power on girls' educational attainment to influence of gender roles on girls' educational attainment.

A study conducted by Msoffe (2016) on whether inequality in gender roles affect women's education, find out types of domestic chores that women normally engage with and how they affect their academic progress and assess whether women have assistance in performing domestic chores or not. The study was carried out at The Open University of Tanzania, Tanga Regional center. Fifty-one (51) Female students pursuing Diploma in Primary Teacher Education (DPTE) were involved. A quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20<sup>th</sup> version). The study found that inequality in division of household roles affect girls' academic careers. Food preparation, washing clothes, house cleanness and family care mentioned as the main domestic chores that attribute to poor academic progress among female study. The study recommends that division of household roles should be restructured so as to refrain women from domestic chores that constraints their participation in education.

Muga (2010) conducted a study on effects of gender roles on education in Hamisi District in Kenya. The objective of the study was to investigate whether gender roles impact negatively education of boys and girls differently. Data was collected using

direct observation, survey technique and informal interviews. Findings of the study indicated that gender roles impact both boys' and girls' education at different levels. Findings indicated that girls are the most affected by gender roles as compared to boys' education which is not so much affected. The study recommended that any government and non-government efforts to enable youths in Hamisi District benefit from education should be given and youths should be empowered in order to improve their education. However, the study focuses on enrollment of both boys and girls at form one level, attendance of school for both boys and girls, retention of both boys and girls in school and completion of their education. The current study focused on the effects of gender roles on girls' educational attainment in Bomet East Sub County. Reviews undertaken have shown that girls' education progress is affected by societal gender roles. These studies have recommended that the issue of gender roles should be dealt with in order to improve girls' educational attainment.

#### **2.4 Rites of Passage and Women Educational Attainment**

Rites of passage can have an impact on women education. For instance, traditional practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) lead to early marriage and increased domestic duties by causing both psychological and physical challenges that make it harder for women to manage household tasks thus causing many girls to drop out of school. Alosius (2017) conducted a research study on how female genital mutilation affects girl child education at secondary school. The study was conducted in Kapchorwa District, Uganda, employing a cross-sectional survey design that integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings of the study were that female genital mutilation was practiced to a small extent and there were other factors affecting women education which include parents' level of education, socio-economic status and absence of female role models in the district. The study recommended that there is need for the Government to continue sensitizing the masses about the dangers of that practice so that it can be wiped out completely. As related to female circumcision, some people in Uganda still love the practice and they feel that they should continue with it and are against those who want to end it claiming that it is against their culture and thus the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is still done secretly in Uganda. The study was done in Kenya and the focus was on the effects of rites of passage on women education attainment.

According to Pesambili and Mkumbo (2018) rites of passage such as FGM could have multifaceted impact on women education. The study was on implications of female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on women education and psychological wellbeing in Tarime, Tanzania. The study employed interviews and focus group discussions to collect data. Despite the widespread awareness about its negative consequences, FGM is likely to continue due to its centrality in the Kuryan cultural, social and economic necessities. However, the study focused only on FGM as a rite of passage while the current study focused on age of transition into adulthood, marriage readiness, seclusion during puberty and FGM.

In Isinya District of Kajiado County, Kenya, Sironga (2013) carried out a research study on female genital mutilation and women participation in primary and secondary schools in Isinya District of Kajiado County, Kenya. The investigation was necessitated by continuous low participation of women in school activities. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and a population of 300 primary and secondary female students from 10 schools in the district. The research tools that were utilized included Questionnaire and Observation checklist. The study found out that there was a high level of effect of Female Genital Mutilation, and that there is low level of participation of girls in schools. The study recommends that if girls' participation is to be improved in Isinya District, then school management and the government should focus more on improving and increasing awareness against FGM practices throughout the country but particularly in Isinya District. This study was conducted in Bomet County, Bomet East Sub-County in Kenya and was carried out in villages whereby participants included; women, educationists, elderly persons and chiefs.

In another study, Kirima (2024) examined the impact of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on girl child education in Isiolo Sub County, Kenya. The main objectives of the study were to investigate the factors contributing to the persistence of (FGM), how FGM led to girl's school dropout and how FGM leads to poor performance of secondary school girls in Isiolo sub county. The method used to collect data from the respondents was the use of questionnaires. The findings clearly shows that FGM leads to school dropouts of young girls because this practice prepare girls for marriage traditionally

meaning that when a girl undergoes FGM she will drop out of school to fulfill the purpose of marriage. The study recommended that FGM should be addressed in order to promote girls' educational attainment. As many young girls engage in this practice in Isiolo Sub County, many of these girls' dropout of school and therefore study seek to understand the interplay between FGM and education. The current study was held in Bomet East Sub County and focused on the effects of rites of passage in women educational attainment in all levels as from primary school, secondary school to tertiary level.

## **2.5 Marriage Practices and Women Educational Attainment**

Marriage refers to partnership between two people who choose to commit to each other. Marriage is all about loving one another, facing challenges together, sticking with one another through thick and thin and building life together. Calantha (2023) defines marriage as exquisite union of two lives with each other thread standing for a common goal, shared love and hope for future. He further explains that marriage is a commitment and journey full of experiences which shape lifetime. According to Kendall (2017), marriage is an institution that unites individuals of various cultural and religious backgrounds via a mutual reliance on one another in order to create a household. Marriage practices in the communities practiced include early marriages which involve girls getting married at young age that is before 18 years of age and forced marriages where girls are forced to get married. The prevalence of early marriage remained a major obstacle, as families often preferred the immediate financial benefits of dowry over investing in long-term education for their daughters, thereby restricting their access to formal schooling (Mganga, 2021). Therefore, awareness should be created to the community on the long-term value of women education over short-term dowry gains.

A study was carried out in Nepal, in South Asia by Sekina and Hodgkin (2017) on effect of child marriage on women school dropout in Nepal. The findings of the study showed that early marriage is the most common reason for girls leaving school. It also shows that women are at high risk of dropping out of school after completing grade five and six because they are forced to get married. The findings recommend that marriage should be delayed in order to reduce girls' dropout in Nepal. Despite School-based

programmes aimed at preventing child marriage in Nepal, girls are still getting married and dropping out of school. The study used the Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2014 data to collect and dropout among girls aged 15\_17. Bengesai, Amusa and Makonye (2021) carried out a research study on the impact of child marriage on the completion of first cycle of secondary education in Zimbabwe in South Africa. The study adopted the 2015 Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey and extracted 2380 cases of ever-married women aged between 20–29 years. Results indicated that early marriage decreased the chances of completing the first cycle of high school. The findings suggest that the issue of early marriages should be addressed in order to improve women secondary completion. The current study was done in Kenya and focused on effects of marriages on women educational attainment.

In another study, Oyelade (2024) investigated the effects of early marriage on academic achievement among girls in Oyo state in Nigeria. The study adopted design known as descriptive survey. Simple random procedure was used and 200 teachers were chosen from Akinyele and Oyo East Local Governments in Oyo state to participate. The t-test statistical method was used. The findings of the first hypothesis showed that male and female teachers' perceptions of girl-child marriage courses are not significantly different from one another, and the second hypothesis results, according to experiences of the teachers, indicated that there is no significantly different effect of girl-child marriage on students' academic achievement. The study recommended that the public and governmental organizations should create awareness on the elements which have been shown to encourage girl-child marriage and the impact that has on girls' educational achievement. Despite the United Nations, government, and some non-governmental organizations failing to offer a solution to the problem of girl-child marriage, girls in Oyo state do not receive the same treatment as other children in terms of education. However, this study adopted descriptive research design and the target population was teachers only while the current study adopted historical research design and the target population included women from different age sets among kipsigis customs, educationist, chiefs and elderly persons.

Another study was done in Yumbe District in Uganda by Jamal (2024) on the effects of forced marriage and teenage pregnancy on girls' education. The study adopted

qualitative methods to collect data and these include interviews and focus group discussions. The findings of the study indicated that forced marriage and teenage pregnancy limits young females to reach their fullest potential in education because it causes high rate of dropouts among girls which affects retention of girls at all levels of education thus low completion rate at all level of education. The study recommended that community should be sensitized on the importance of educating girls and effects of forced marriages. Despite the efforts made by government of Uganda to eradicate forced marriage and teenage pregnancy in order to improve girls' education, problem still persist in Yumbe District and thus causing low girls' educational attainment. There is need to carry out a study to find out influence of marriage practices on women educational attainment.

A study on drivers of child marriage in Lira district, Northern Uganda was carried out by Neema et al (2021). The study adopted qualitative methods such as interviews, focus group discussions and observations. The findings indicated that child marriage is still common in the study area and also girls are traded for the exchange of livestock. Despite the national policies, legislation and programs to improve rights of girls, child marriage remains a big problem in Lira district. The study findings recommends that there is need for determined efforts to address the socio-cultural drivers of child marriage and parents should support their daughters to be well educated. Hamidu (2023), conducted a study in Kilosa district in Tanzania on the effect of early marriage on girl childhood education among Masai girls in Kilosa district. The study adopted descriptive design and survey design. Interview and focus group discussions were used to collect data. The study findings indicated that early marriages are the main cause of school dropout among girls in Kilosa district. The study recommends that there is need for collaboration among stakeholders in order to address the issue. Despite the government of Tanzania, NGOs and other organization has made an attempt to stop child marriage, the problem still persists. The studies done in Uganda and Tanzania have not dealt with effect of marriage practices on girls' educational attainment in all the levels.

In Migori County, Ganira et al (2015) conducted a study on effects of forced marriage on girls' education. The study target population were young mothers and a sample of 30 women who got married before the age of 18years were used. The study adopted

both primary and secondary data. Questionnaires and structured interview schedules were used to collect data by the researcher. Findings of study indicated that the belief that girls are source of wealth makes parents force girls to marriage without their consent and hence affecting girls' educational attainment. The study recommends that the existing laws should be reviewed to strengthen legal and policy frameworks through adherence to minimum age of marriage, registration of marriage and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child and to prevent forced marriages. The target population in this study was young mothers while the target population in the current study were chiefs, elderly persons, educationist and women in four different age sets according to Kipsigis customs.

In Buna Sub-County, Wajir County, Hellen (2020) conducted a study on the effect of early marriages on the primary education of girls. Descriptive research design was used to execute the study. Sampling method of 159 sample size that is 114 standard seven and eight pupils, 39 teachers, and 6 headteachers) drawn from six schools. The total respondents for the study were 133 (97 pupils, 30 teachers, and 6 headteachers) which were drawn from the four schools that participated in the study. The findings of the study were presented in the descriptive statistical format using tables, pie charts and graphs. The findings of the study showed that early marriages in Buna Sub-County have affected girls' education negatively and completion rate was found to be low because girls were getting married at the age of 14 and 17 years. The study recommended that awareness should be made to the community on the effects of early marriages on women educational attainment. The study had a sample size of 159 which include pupils, teachers and headteachers while the current study has a sample size of 125 which include chiefs, elderly persons, educationist and women from different age sets according to Kipsigis customs.

## **2.6 Parental Perception and Women Educational Attainment**

Parents' perceptions refer to how parents see and feel about something for example educating their daughters. Parents' perceptions towards educating girls are shaped by a mix of cultural and societal changes. In some communities, they still belief that girls should only focus on domestic duties and education is not necessary for them. The society believe that girls will become wives and mothers. Parents believe that girls

should be married in exchange of dowry and thus there is no need of educating girls and they feel that investing in sons' education is a better way of investment because boys will carry the family name and support the household. Other cultures are promoting gender equality and creating awareness on the value of educating girl child. However, girls' educational attainment is still poor due to the way parents view it.

Purewal (2015) conducted a study on parental attitudes towards women education in rural Punjab, Pakistan in southern Asia. The results showed that more than one-half of the HOHs (52%) were found to be in favor of boys' schooling as compared with that of girls. The per centage of those identifying themselves in favor of girls' schooling over boys was merely 1.7%, yet those showing no bias when asked whose education they preferred– girls' or boys'–constituted a significant 46.3%. The study adopted questionnaire and qualitative interviews as methods of collecting data. The study recommends that biasness in educating children should be addressed and eradicated.

In the early post-independence era, Nigerian parents, particularly in rural areas, prioritized boys' education over girls', believing that a girl's primary role was as a caregiver and that formal education beyond basic literacy was unnecessary (UNESCO, 2003; Omoniyi, 2016). Parents would often prefer to use the limited resources boys, who were seen as having better future employment prospects (Okeke, 2008). By the 1980s and 1990s, parental perceptions began to shift due to government policies promoting universal education, urbanization, and increasing awareness of the benefits of educating girls. The introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program in 1976 boosted enrollment, but parental perceptions limited girls' education, especially in northern Nigeria. Despite the efforts to improve girls' education in Nigeria, research indicates that parental perceptions remain a significant obstacle to their educational attainment.

A study was conducted by Eweniyi and Usman (2013) in Northern Nigeria on parental perceptions affecting girls' education in Northern Nigeria using a descriptive survey design. The study sampled 1,200 parents and adults purposively chosen from various states in Northern Nigeria. The results revealed that parents favored boys' education over girls' and often viewed women education as a waste, believing that daughters

would ultimately be confined to domestic roles. Similarly, Yise (2020) examined the determinants of parental attitudes toward educating girls in Plateau State, Nigeria, using a correlational survey design with questionnaires for data collection. The study found that extended family members and friends frequently ridiculed parents who chose to educate their daughters, discouraging them from prioritizing women education due to societal pressure and mockery. The study adopted descriptive survey design and a sample size of 1200 while the current study adopted historical research design and a sample size of 125.

In another study, Obiageli and Paulette (2015) investigated parental attitudes and girl-child education in Edo State, Nigeria. A total of 450 participants were systematically sampled from the Benin metropolis through a randomized selection process. Purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure the inclusion of respondents from diverse occupational and social backgrounds. The findings indicated that while parents generally hold a favorable attitude toward girls' education, regional disparities persist. Parents from southern Nigeria, particularly those residing in the Benin Metropolis, demonstrate a better perception towards girls' education compared to their counterparts in the northern regions. Studies suggest that these perceptions have historically shaped girls' access to education and their ability to progress academically. This raises concern about whether similar challenges affect girls' educational attainment in Kenya. It is essential to explore how parental perceptions impact girls' education in the Kenyan context. Therefore, the current study investigated the effects of parental perceptions on women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub-county, Kenya.

After the independence, education in Tanzania was positioned as a fundamental pillar for national development. However, societal expectations continued to favor boys' education over that of girls, particularly in rural areas. Parents perceived girls' education as unnecessary beyond basic literacy (Bendera, 1999; Malale & Masanja, 2020). Girls were often kept at home to assist with domestic chores and agricultural work, which took precedence over formal schooling. Maro and Omer (2024) carried out a study on the relationship between parents' attitude and girl child education in central district, Ugunja Zanzibar, Tanzania. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The target population comprised teachers, parents, and students from secondary schools in Central

District, Unguja, Zanzibar. The findings of the study on parents' attitudes towards women education indicated that attitudes of parents on girls' education are poor since parents prioritizes boys' education. The study's findings suggest that entrenched cultural norms continue to shape parental perceptions on the need for women education which could lead to gender disparities in educational opportunities hence the motivation for this study.

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by two theories namely; structural functionalism and liberal feminism.

### **2.7.1 Structural Functionalism Theory**

The study was guided by structural functionalism theory was proposed by Emile Durkheim in the year 1895. Durkheim views society as a collection of parts all working together to maintain stability in the society. Cultural norms are considered as a crucial part of these societal structures, influencing behaviors, expectations and roles within the society. Structural Functionalism theory view society as relying on certain roles to keep things running smooth in the society. Roles in many communities are divided according to gender where girls are expected to perform domestic chores while boys are given time to school. The societal believe that girls should prioritize domestic chores over education limits their opportunities to attend school thus lowering their attainment of education (Peplau,1963). Emile argues that some cultures believe that educating a woman is unnecessary because her main role is to care for a home and not to earn a salary. These beliefs are passed down from one generation to another and reinforced by institutions like school and religion that have lower expectations for women. These systems all work together to maintain the structure of the society stable.

Advancements were made to structural functionalism theory by Judith Butler and Michael Foucault in 1990 that cultural expectations and gender roles restrict women access to education and limit their opportunities. In the year 2010 Wang Yanzhong made advancements to structural functionalism theory. Wang emphasizes that traditional cultural norms are not static and instead they are flexible and capable of evolving in response to contemporary societal needs. Wang further argues that

traditional cultural norms can be reinterpreted in ways that align with modern values such as gender equality without disrupting cultural frameworks that the communities deeply value. Initially the theory overlooked the impact of gendered cultural norms on educational attainment. Emile argues that cultural norms make the society believe that education is less important for girls and thus contributing to low women educational attainment.

Structural functionalism theory helps the researcher understand why cultural norms like gender roles or marriage practices exist and how they help keep society stable. It shows that despite these norms limiting girls' education, they play a role in maintaining order in the society. Structural functionalism theory also helped the researcher to see how different parts of society for instance family and education are connected and how they are connected and how does changing one part affect others. This theory is important to be adopted in the study because it helps find ways to make changes that improve women educational attainment and solutions that respect cultural traditions while providing more opportunities for girls in Bomet East Sub County.

### **2.7.2 Liberal Feminism Theory**

The study also was guided by Liberal Feminism theory by Mary in the year 1792. The argument of this theory is based on human rights, natural justice and democracy. Mary emphasizes on equal opportunities in access to education by all children. It also supports the idea of affirmative action as a plan for women in schools and family (Koggel, 1994). Liberal feminism theory argues that women education should not be sacrificed in favor of boys and they should be given equal opportunities in access and participation in education. Both boys and girls are important in the society and they must be given equal opportunities in education because education is a prime mover of any development process in a society. Liberal feminism theory argues that every woman deserves the same chance to learn, dream and grow as any boy. Liberal feminism theory pushes for changes in laws and school systems to make sure that women are treated fairly for example creating policies that protect women from discrimination and creating awareness in communities about the importance of educating women. Besides, liberal feminism theory acknowledges women rights in education and employment.

Liberal feminism theory has been advanced by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (1990). The latter have pointed out that liberal feminism theory by Jackson is critical in advocating policy changes, equal rights and opportunities for women education. Linda C. McClain made advancement to liberal feminism theory in the year 2010. Linda builds on traditional liberal feminist thought by emphasizing the role of the state in promoting not only formal equality but also recognizing that equal treatment alone is not enough when women are disadvantaged by cultural norms. Linda argues that the state should support educational policies and family structures that foster equal opportunities for women. Linda's ideas support the creation of gender-sensitive policies such as anti-discrimination laws in schools, inclusive sex education and support systems for girls at risk of dropping out. These advancements help liberal feminism theory to tackle the cultural barriers that limit women from accessing education.

This study is guided by liberal feminism theory because it emphasizes equality of opportunities in education and laws that create an enabling environment in which all women can participate fully and equally (Mosetse, 2006). Liberal feminism theory helps the researcher understand and challenge the barriers that prevent girls from accessing education for example cultural factors and laws that favor boys. It also encourages changes in societal practices and policies to make sure women are given the same chances to learn and succeed as boys. Liberal feminism theory should therefore be adopted in this study because the study can look at how to create an equal and fair education system where women are supported and empowered to reach their full potential in education in Bomet East Sub County.

## 2.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework diagram shows the relationship between independent variable and dependent variables. Intervening variables have an effect on the dependent variable. In this study, the selected traditional cultural norms are the independent variables while women educational attainment is the dependent variable.

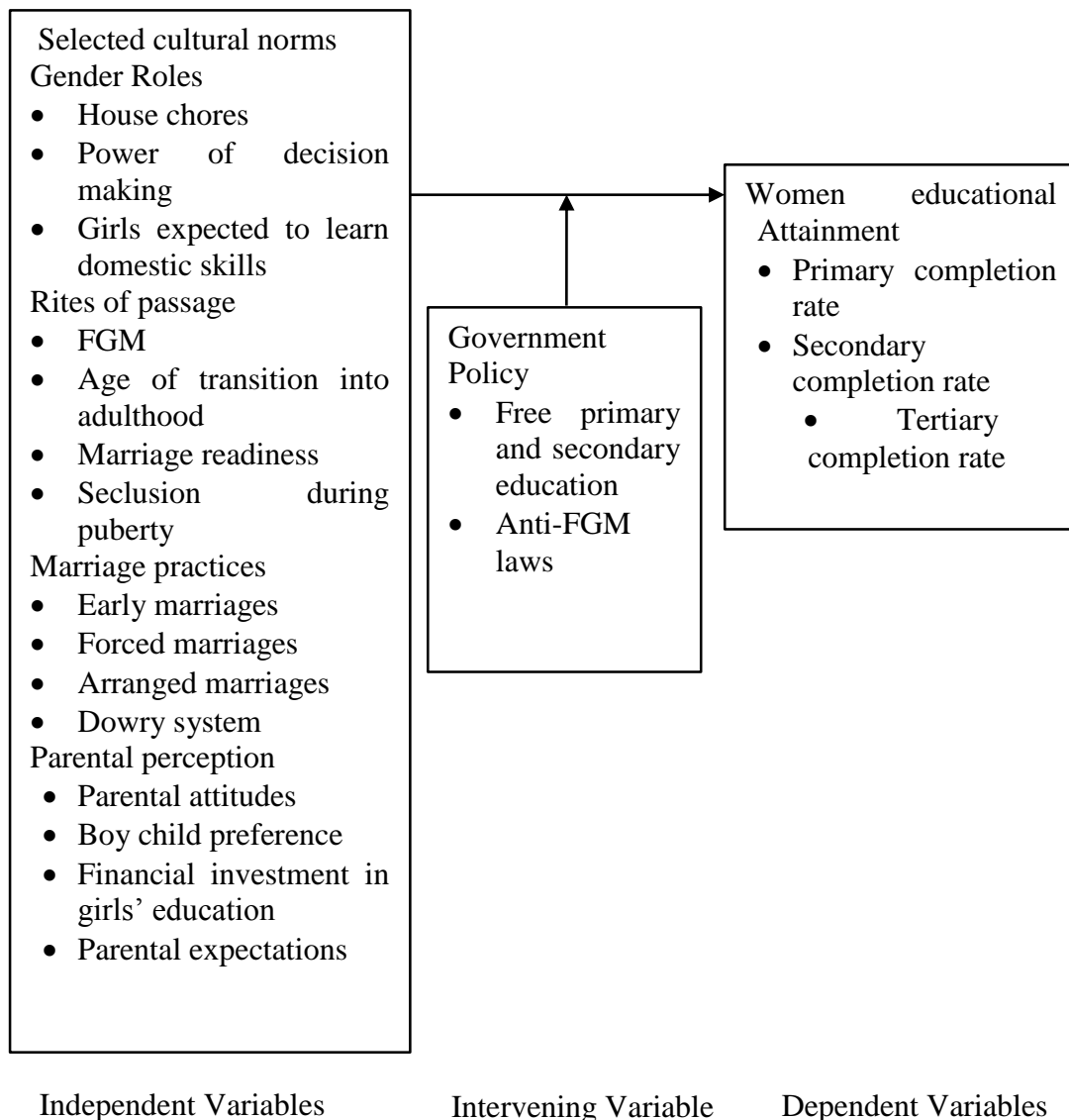


Figure 1: Selected cultural norms and girls' educational attainment.

Selected cultural norms is an independent variable of the study. Selected cultural norms include gender roles, rites of passage, marriage practices and parental perception. The dependent variable is women educational attainment. The two variables are intervened by government policy. Government policy helps reduce the negative impact of cultural

norms by enforcing laws that protect women's right to education such as promoting free schooling. These government policies include free primary education, subsidized secondary education and anti-FGM laws.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Location of the Study**

This study was conducted in Bomet East Sub- County, Bomet County, Kenya. The researcher purposely selected Bomet East sub-county because of the reported cases of low educational attainment among women.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The study adopted historical research design. Historical research design was chosen because it enables the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of past events and trends, which helps contextualize current issues and inform future decisions (Porra et al, 2014). It also contributes to preserving knowledge, identifying long-term patterns, and enhancing academic knowledge in various fields. According to Marino (2014), historical research design allowed the researcher to trace cultural beliefs and practices regarding women educational attainment. This design assisted the researcher in exploring how gender roles, rites of passage, marriage practices, and parental perceptions have shaped Kipsigis women access to and participation in education. The historical research design allowed the researcher to collect data through participant in-depth interviews, document analysis and focus group discussions.

#### **3.3 Study Population**

The study population was 7,081 participants consisting of 7,056 women in the four age sets according to the Kipsigis customs which include Sowe, Korongoro, Kaplelach and Kipnyige, five chiefs, 10 educationists and 10 elderly persons in Bomet East Sub-county (KNBS Census, 2019).

#### **3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**

The study used purposive and snowballing sampling techniques to arrive at appropriate study sample. The appropriate sample size was arrived at purposively based on the need to address the study objectives that requires that a specified respondent is identified to provide information required. Determining an appropriate sample size for a qualitative historical study involves strategic sampling techniques that prioritize depth of understanding over statistical generalization, because it does not adhere to strict

numerical guidelines (Mason, 2010). The sample size comprised 125 respondents. The respondents were 5 chiefs each drawn from the five locations of Bomet East sub county. Chiefs are chosen because as administrators they are aware of the socio-economic and cultural activities in their areas. The information they provided was useful in enriching expected study outcome. An elderly person of each gender was sampled with the help of chief to provide experiences related to the study theme and also to assist the researcher identify women in each of the four age sets in their location. An educationist, one of each gender per location was sampled with the help of the chief. Educationist were chosen because they are well informed on educational issues and therefore will provide credible information related to the study theme. The inclusion of both gender for educationist and elderly persons was to allow inclusion of gender perspectives necessary for triangulation and thus to avoid biasness. 5 women from each of the four age sets were sampled. Women were chosen because they represent all the four age sets and that they are well versed with underlying cultural norms influencing women educational attainment during.

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

The study to obtain qualitative data through interviews and focus group discussions. Using multiple data collection instruments ensured the validity of data is ascertained. Dubey & Kothari (2022) observes that research instruments should be valid and reliable so that the researcher can collect the information and test the hypotheses. These instruments provided reliable information and assess selected cultural norms and educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet east sub-county, Kenya.

#### **3.5.1 Focus Group Discussions**

Focus groups serve as a method to collect qualitative data through interactive group discussions. Focus group discussions provide a platform for participants to express diverse perspectives, share experiences, and generate rich insights, as highlighted by Millward (2012). According to Gundumogula (2020), they are precious when delving into complex social phenomena, understanding group dynamics, and uncovering shared meanings. Focus group discussions were held to enable the researcher to obtain more information on the participants' knowledge on girls' educational attainment.

Focus group discussion contained information for women. According to Krueger and Casey (2014), the number of participants in focus group discussions ranges from 5 to 8 individuals. This research will employ focus groups discussions consisting of small groups of five participants. Choosing five participants for a focus group allows for a more intimate setting, where participants feel comfortable sharing detailed and personal responses, which is particularly useful for sensitive topics. Smaller groups also facilitate better conversation management and ensure that each participant has more time to contribute without the influence of dominant voices.

### **3.5.2 Interview Schedules**

Mugenda (2011) explains that interview is one of the best data collection methods because it provides in-depth data. The interview schedule was administered to chiefs and Educationist. It encompassed questions on effect of gender roles, rites of passage, marriage practices and parental perceptions on girls' educational attainment. This technique was employed to obtain the underlying views on the effects of selected cultural norms on girls' educational attainment in Bomet East Sub County.

### **3.6 Validity of Instruments**

Prior to the use of instruments for collection, the validity was ascertained through the use of content validity and face validity. Almanasreh et al (2019) defines content validity as the degree to which the sample of the test represents the content that the test is designed to measure. Content validity was ascertained by having subject matter experts review the test or measurement tool to ensure it comprehensively covered all relevant aspects of the concept being measured. Face validity refers to the extent to which a test appears, at first glance, to measure what it is intended to measure based on casual inspection or subjective judgment (Cohen, et al. 2018). The researcher ensured face validity of the research instruments by use of appropriate line spacing, font size, and logical arrangement of items and clarity of information.

### **3.7 Pilot Study**

Piloting was conducted in Bomet Central sub-county, which has a similar environment and characteristics to this study. These characteristics include culture norms such as rites of passage, marriage practices, gender roles and parental perceptions. A pilot study

was conducted to enable the researcher to assess the clarity and ease of use of the research instruments. Piloting enabled the investigator to establish the time taken to administer the instruments, identify sensitive sections and establish clarity of each item. Dikko (2016) notes that pilot testing is vital as the research participants' feedback improves the research instruments. The outcome of the pilot study enabled the researcher to make adjustments in the research instruments in preparation for the data collection and analysis.

### **3.7.1 Reliability of Instruments**

Reliability is the consistency of scores obtained by the same person if they take test at different times under different conditions from time to time, from item to item, from one rate to another or from form to form (Aldridge et al, 2017). 0.7 reliability coefficient and above is the accepted threshold. Reliability increases transparency and decreases opportunities for biasness thus ensuring trustworthiness and neutrality. Reliability of the instruments was ascertained through pilot testing the interviews or focus group question with a small group to check if they are effective.

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher obtained an ethical clearance letter from the Chuka University Ethics Committee, along with an introductory letter from the Board of Postgraduate Studies at Chuka University. The researcher used the clearance and introductory letter to apply for a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). The researcher visited the area and interviewed the area chief.. After the interview the researcher then requested the chief to purposively identify one elderly person from each gender and educationist from each gender. The researcher then interviewed the identified elderly persons and educationist. The researcher then requested elderly persons to identify a woman from the four age sets according to Kipsigis customs. The identified women helped the researcher identify other women from the same age set. The researcher then conducted focus group discussion for the identified women from the four age sets.

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

During fieldwork, individual formal consent was obtained from each respondent at the start of each session. Ethical rules were followed to ascertain the utmost confidentiality during the process. Voluntary participation, where respondents were allowed to participate in the process at will without being forced. Informed consent were adhered to, and respondents were informed about the possible risks and benefits of the process. Anonymity was observed where respondents were assured of their safety and no one's details will be disclosed. The identity of the respondents was kept out of this documentation and the data availed will be used only for academic purposes.

### 3.10 Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analyzed through identification of themes emerged from raw data. The researcher read through the data, broke it into smaller pieces and gave pieces names called codes to describe important ideas. The researcher then grouped similar ideas together to find common themes. Table 1 present data analysis matrix

Table 1: Data Analysis Matrix

Research Questions	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Method of analysis
To what extent does gender roles affect women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub-County, Bomet county, Kenya?	Gender roles	Women educational attainment	Thematic analysis
How does rites of passage affect women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub- County, Bomet county, Kenya?	Rtes of passage	Women educational attainment	Thematic analysis
To what extent does marriage practices affect women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub- County, Bomet county, Kenya?	Marriage practices	Women educational attainment	Thematic analysis
How does parental perception affect women educational attainment in Bomet East Sub-County, Bomet county, Kenya?	Parental perception	Women educational attainment	Thematic analysis

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Response Rate

The study sought information from 83 respondents including chiefs, educationist, elderly persons and women. Table 4 presents information on response rate.

Table 2: Response Rate

Respondent	Sample	Responses	Percentage
Chiefs	5	5	100%
Educationist	10	8	80%
Elderly persons	10	10	100%
Women	100	60	60%
Total	125	83	66.4 %

Information in Table 4 shows that data was collected from 5 chiefs, 7 educationist, 8 elderly persons and 60 women from Bomet East Sub County in Kenya. This implies that 83 respondents out of the 125 took part in the study achieving a response rate of 66.4%. Mugenda and Mugenda (2009) states that for analysis and reporting, a response rate between 50%, 60% and 70% is good for a study. This response rate is therefore deemed more than ideal for the purpose of the study.

#### 4.2 Demographic Information

The study sought the respondents' demographic information from chiefs, educationist, elderly persons and women. This section presents demographic information of study respondents.

##### 4.2.1 Chiefs Demographic Information

The demographic information of the chiefs was assessed based on age, gender and length of service in the position. Table 3 presents information obtained.

Table 3: Chiefs demographic information

Description	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	4	80%
	Female	1	20%
	Total	5	100.0%
Age	51-55yrs	2	40%
	56-60yrs	3	60%
	Total	5	100%
Length of service	0-5yrs.	1	20%
	6-10 yrs.	1	20%
	Above 10 yrs.	3	60%
	Total	5	100.0%

The information on chiefs shows that male respondents (80%) were more than female (20%). This implies that there is a greater involvement of men in leadership positions compared to women. Results on age indicates that majority of the chiefs are between the age of 56 to 60 years this means that they have likely served in public administration for many years bringing a lot of institutional knowledge and leadership experience. Findings on length of service shows that majority of the respondents have served for more than 10 years (60%) and therefore could be presumed to be highly experienced and knowledgeable professionals. Findings from the chiefs are represented in the study using codes C1 through C5.

#### 4.2.2 Educationist Demographic Information

The demographic information of Educationists was assessed based on Age, Gender and level of education. Table 4 presents the results obtained.

Table 4: Educationist' Demographic Information

Description	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	4	50%
	Female	4	50%
	Total	8	100.0%
Age	Below 40	2	25%
	41-50yrs	3	37.5%
	51-60yrs	3	37.5%
	Total	5	100%
Level of education	Masters	7	87.5%
	PhD.	1	12.5%
	Total	8	100%

Data obtained shows that there was an equal number of male and female educationist. This that indicates a balanced representation in terms of gender within that group. Majority of them (75%) were between the age of 41 to 60 years and this could imply strong expertise. More than half of them had a master’s degree (87.5%) and a slightly lower proportion (12.5%) had a PhD. This means that the vast majority of the respondents are highly educated. Findings from educationist are represented using codes ED1 through ED8.

#### 4.2.3 Elderly Persons’ Demographic Information.

The Demographic Information of elderly persons was assessed based on age and gender. Table 5 presents information obtained

Table 5: Demographic information on elderly persons

Description	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	5	50%
	Female	5	50%
	Total	10	100.0%
Age	70-80yrs	6	60%
	81-90yrs	4	40%
	Above 90yrs	0	0%
	Total	10	100

Information obtained shows that the number of male and female who participated in the study was equal and this implied gender balance. All of the respondents were aged above 70 years indicating that they possessed extensive life experience which likely contributed to the reliability, depth and credibility of the information they provided. Findings from the elderly persons are represented using codes EDL1 through EDL 10.

#### 4.2.4 Women’s Demographic Information

The Demographic information of the women was assessed based on their age, age-set and highest level of education. Table 6 presents information obtained.

Table 6: Women' Demographic Information

Description	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 30	0	0%
	41-55yrs	25	41.7%
	56-70yrs	21	35%
	71-85yrs	14	23.3%
	Above 85yrs	0	%
	Total	60	100%
Age-set	Sowe	14	23.3%
	Korongoro	21	35%
	Kaplelach	25	41.7%
	Kipnyige	0	0%
	Total	60	100%
Highest level of education	Primary	51	85%
	Secondary	7	11.7%
	Tertiary	2	3.3%
	Total	60	100%

Data obtained shows that 41.7% of women were aged 41 to 55 years, 35% were 56 to 70 years and 23.3% were 71–85 years. This could mean that responses were shaped by women aged 41 to 70 reflecting key educational changes from personal and professional experience as well as women aged 71 to 85 provided deeper insights from earlier education. Findings from age sets indicated that women from sove (23.3%), Korongoro (35%) and Kaplelach (41.7%) participated in the study. This indicates that three quarters of the age sets took part in the study. Information on the level of education indicated that more than half (85%) of the women attained primary school education, while 11.7% reached secondary school and 3.3% attained tertiary education. This implies that the majority of the women in the study had low formal education with most not progressing beyond primary school. Findings from women age sets are represented using codes FGD 1A to 3A for sove Age set, FGD 1B to 3B for Korongoro Age set and FGD 1C to 3C for Kaplelach Age set.

#### **4.3 Presentations of Findings on Selected Cultural Norms Influencing Women Educational Attainment**

The study sought to determine the influence of selected cultural norms on educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East Sub County, Bomet County, Kenya. This section presents findings based on qualitative analysis. Information was sought

from women of various age sets using focus group discussions and interview from chiefs, educationists and elderly persons. According to respondent FGD 1A and FGD 1B from Sowe age set; *"In 1960s, Women who manage to go to school could only reach class 3 and drop out due to traditional practice which was necessary at the age of 12 years which is (FGM). This practice took 2 years of seclusion period and women were considered adults after the process and were not allowed to go to school anymore"*. This implies that in the 1960s girls' education was cut short by FGM which was compulsory at age 12. The two-year seclusion period that followed marked their transition into adulthood after which they were barred from returning to school thereby denying them further educational opportunities.

Findings from Korongoro age set from respondent FGD 2B and FGD3B observed that; *"In 1970s and early 1980s, women drop out in class 4 and 5 due to FGM which took 6 months during korongoro period to prepare women for marriage"*. This means that in the 1970s and early 1980s girls' education was interrupted by FGM usually around class 4 or 5. The six month seclusion during the Korongoro period prepared them for marriage forcing many to abandon schooling prematurely. Another respondent FGD 1A stated that; *"Women who manage to finish school during korongoro age set became secretaries (karaniek), the only job women could do during this period"* Women who successfully completed schooling had very limited career opportunities with secretarial work being the only job available to them.

Findings from the Korongoro age set indicated that in the 1970s and early 1980s women education was heavily disrupted by FGM. Most dropped out in class 4 or 5 to undergo six months of seclusion in preparation for marriage. For the few who managed to complete school career opportunities were extremely limited with secretarial work being the only option. This implies that FGM and cultural expectations not only caused premature dropout but also restricted women's professional attainment thereby limiting their overall educational and career advancement.

In the Kaplelach age set (FGD 1C and FGD 2C) stated that *"women in this age set during 1980s and early 1990s who manage to go to school dropped out in class 6 and most could end up in class 7"*. Women in this age set who attended school often

dropped out by class 6 with only a few managing to reach class 7. Respondent FGD2C reported that; *“Women who manage to finish college level during korongoro period became primary school teachers and secretaries. During the Korongoro period women who managed to reach college level had very limited career options mainly restricted to becoming primary school teachers or secretaries. This means that during the 1980s and early 1990s women in the Kaplelach age set faced significant barriers to educational attainment. Most girls dropped out of school by class 6 or 7 limiting their academic progression.*

Information was also obtained from elderly persons, chiefs and educationist on women educational attainment. From the 1960s to the early 1990s girls’ education among the Kipsigis was heavily constrained by cultural practices particularly FGM which forced girls to drop out around ages 12 to 14 after seclusion periods. In the Sowe age set girls left school by class 3 while in the Korongoro set most dropped out in class 4 or 5 and in the Kaplelach set by class 6 or 7. Those few who completed school faced extremely limited career options mainly secretarial or primary teaching roles. Cultural expectations and FGM significantly hindered educational progression and professional opportunities for women across generations. According to interviewees EDL1 to EDL10; *“ Women who went to school in 1960s and 1970s were few and most of them could reach only class 6 or 7, they were supposed to undergo FGM at the age of 12 years and the practice took a period of 2 years in seclusion. It was a mandatory cultural practice and therefore all the women were supposed to undergo”* this implies that very few women accessed education and those who did rarely advanced beyond class 6 or 7. FGM imposed further limitations as girls were required to undergo the ritual at around 12 years. This was followed by a two years seclusion which disrupted their schooling.

Results from interviewees EDL1 to EDL10 indicated that *“few women who manage to finish the 7.4.4 system became secretaries (karaniek), the only job which was available for women”*. For example, in location A, EDL 1 said that *“women who managed to achieve college level education in his area were 2 and both of them were secretaries”* This implied that under the 7.4.4 system women’s professional attainment was very limited. Most of those who completed their education ended up as secretaries which

was the only readily available job for women. This was supported by interviewee ED3 and ED4 who believed that; *“Many women drop out in secondary schools due to early pregnancies”* This implies that early pregnancies hindered girls’ education forcing many to abandon school before completing secondary level thereby limiting their future career and life opportunities.

Findings from interviewees EDL1 to EDL10 revealed that in the 1960s and 1970s, very few women accessed education and most only reached class 6 or 7. FGM was performed at around age 12 and followed by two years of seclusion which disrupted girls’ schooling. Professional opportunities were also very limited in that under the 7.4.4 system most educated women became secretaries. Additionally, interviewees ED3 and ED4 observed that many women dropped out of secondary school due to early pregnancies. On professional achievements, interviewee ED6, ED3, ED1 and ED2 asserted that *“Most of the educated girls did not go beyond the first degree level especially after marriage. Girls tend to concentrate more on family matters and thus they end up to first degree only. Few women who beat cultural barrier excel to the highest level (masters only)”* This could mean that women’s professional achievements were largely restricted. Many did not progress beyond the first degree due to cultural expectations and family responsibilities after marriage. Only a few who managed to overcome these barriers advanced further with masters being the highest level most could attain.

Findings from elderly persons, chiefs and educationists revealed that in the 1960s and 1970s very few women accessed education with most reaching only class 6 or 7. Cultural practices such as FGM at age 12 followed by two years of seclusion disrupted schooling. Under the 7.4.4 system limited professional opportunities meant most women who completed education became secretaries was the main available job. Early pregnancies further forced many to drop out of secondary school. Even those who advanced academically rarely went beyond a first degree. Only a few overcame these barriers to attain master’s level.

From the 1960s to the early 1990s girls’ education among the Kipsigis was limited by cultural practices particularly FGM which forced girls to drop out between ages 12 and 14. In the Sowe age set, girls left school by class 3, in the Korongoro set by class 4 or

5 and in the Kaplelach set by class 6 or 7. Those who completed schooling faced extremely limited career options mostly secretarial or primary teaching roles. Early pregnancies further hindered progression and most women did not advance beyond a first degree with only a few achieving master's level reflecting persistent barriers to educational and professional attainment. Iddy (2021) stated that girls value formal education but are prevented by their home and school environments. Hockett (2021) observed that girls are facing challenges like insufficient school infrastructure, inadequate basic resources and limited family and community support which make girls' educational attainment low.

#### **4.3.1 Gender Roles and Women Participation in Educational Attainment**

The first objective sought to determine the influence of gender roles on women educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East sub county, Bomet County, Kenya. Findings from focus group discussion on domestic chores in Sowe age sets indicated that during Sowe age set period of the 1960s and earlier, women were expected to stay at home and do all the household duties. Their main roles were caring for the family, cooking and fetching water. Women were not allowed to go to school because families believed that girls' job was to stay at home as a helper and therefore education to them was valueless and they missed education completely in this period. One of the respondent FGD 1A indicated that; *"In 1960s, women were responsible for house chores such as cooking, fetching water and care giving"*. This data shows that women's educational attainment at the time was likely to be low as their primary roles in cooking, fetching water and caregiving limiting their opportunities to attend school or pursue further studies, reinforcing gender-based barriers to education.

Another respondent FGD 2A indicated that; *"Education for women was not valued in 1960s and before because women were seen as helpers at home"*. This could mean that women's educational attainment in the 1960s and earlier was generally low, as societal norms prioritized domestic responsibilities over schooling limiting their access to formal education and career advancement. The above findings were supported by respondent FGD 3A who confirmed that; *"women were overburdened with domestic chores and were not allowed to go school"*. The findings indicate that during the Sowe age set period of the 1960s and earlier, societal norms assigned women exclusively to

domestic roles such as cooking, fetching water, caregiving and managing household duties which resulted in the undervaluing of their education and the complete exclusion of many from schooling.

With regard to effect of domestic chores, respondents in *Korongoro* Age set observe that during 1970s, few women began going to school. However, they still had to do all the household chores before and after classes. Waking up early and working at home made it hard for them to focus on their studies. Even though few women had access to education, the heavy workload at home was a challenge to them. Some families wanted education for their daughters, but old traditions still held them back and they could not focus on their studies due to domestic chores. Respondent FGD 1B stated that; *"In 1970s, few girls had started going to school but they had to complete the chores before and after the school"*. This implies that although the 1970s marked the beginning of school attendance for girls, domestic responsibilities remained a major barrier.

Girls faced a double burden balancing academic work with household chores which could limit study time, affect concentration and hinder academic progress. This was confirmed by respondent FGD 2B who reported that; *"Women had to wake up early to do house chores before and after school"*. This implied that girls attending school still carried significant domestic responsibilities requiring them to wake up early to complete household chores before leaving for school and again after returning. Respondent FGD 3B stated that: *"In 1970s, women struggled to balance academics and heavy house chores at home"*. This could mean that in the 1970s, women's educational progress was hindered by the double burden of schoolwork and heavy domestic responsibilities which limited their study time and reduced academic performance.

With regard to effect of domestic chores, respondents in *Kaplelach* Age set observe that in 1980s, more women in *Kipsigis* community began going to school. Many families accepted education for their daughters but women had to do all the house chores at home. However, it was hard for women to balance between school and domestic chores and this shows that even though respondents' views about women going to school were improving, traditional domestic chores were still strong and held them back. For

instance, respondent FGD 1C reported that: *"In 1980s, there was an increase in number of girls attending school but chores were burden to them.* Even though more girls were enrolled in school than before heavy household chores still placed a significant burden on them. This was supported by respondent FGD 2C and FGD 3C who acknowledged that: *"Though education was accepted by some parents, girls were still burdened with household duties* "and *"In 1980s, number of women in school increases but domestic chores were major barrier for women"* respectively. This could mean that even though more parents in the 1980s began to value girls' education and allowed them to attend school, household duties did not change significantly. As a result, had to manage both academic work and heavy domestic chores which continued to act as a major barrier to their full participation and success in education.

Information on the effect of decision making power in *Sowe* Age set shows that during that period of the 1960s and earlier, decisions in the families were made by men. Respondents said that older men and fathers had full control in making decisions and women were not allowed to make any decision. Women could not choose whether to go to school or get married, fathers made decision on behalf of women. Women education was not valued because they were expected to get married early and learn how to take care of husbands. Therefore, women could not go to school because they had no voice in decision making. In particular, respondent FGD 1A stated that; *"In 1960s and earlier, fathers and male elders had full control over family decisions and women were not allowed to make any decision"*. This could imply that family decision-making was entirely done with fathers and male elders holding all authority, while women had no say in matters affecting the family. Respondent FGD 2A and FGD 3A reported that; *Education for women was not valued in 1960s and before because marriage was more important and women had no voice of choosing education or marriage"* and *"Education for women was not valued in 1960s and before because marriage was more important and women had no voice of choosing education or marriage"*. This implies that in the 1960s and earlier societal norms prioritized marriage over women's education and women had no autonomy to decide whether to pursue schooling or marry. Decisions about their lives were made by male family members leaving them with little to no control over their educational future.

Findings from Korongoro Age set illustrated that in 1970s and early 1980s, women were allowed to take part decision making but the final say was made by men. Men were sole decision makers in everything. Respondents said that mothers could share their opinions but were not taken seriously as that of men, their decisions were valueless. Therefore, women could not decide on whether to go to school or concentrate on house chores since fathers and older men made final decisions. Respondent FGD 1B stated that; *"In 1970s, mothers were allowed to make decision but still their decisions were secondary because men were in controlled of key decisions"* This implies that women gained some decision-making power within the family, but their choices still carried less weight than men's. This was confirmed by respondents in FGD 2B who reported that: *"Decision-making was male dominated during this period even though women influenced some decision"*. Based on the findings, women began to have some influence over family but the ultimate authority still rested with men. This shows that gender inequality in decision-making persisted with women's contributions being secondary. However, another respondent FGD 3B reported that; *"Although some families began realizing the value of educating daughters in 1970s and early 1980s, fathers and elderly men made final decisions and could not support women education"*. Awareness of the importance of girls' education was slowly growing, but deep-rooted patriarchal norms persisted. Fathers and elderly men still held ultimate authority over family decisions and often chose not to support women's education. This limited their progress toward gender equality in schooling.

In 1980s and early 1990s during the Kaplelach age set, families had started sharing decision-making. Respondents said that they were allowed to go school but could only reach class seven while others drop out in class five due to Female Genital Mutilation which prepared them for marriage life. Fathers could decide to stop daughters from schooling to help with house chores and get married. Even though women were allowed to take part in decision making for example in going to school, fathers still made the final decision. For instance, Respondent FGD 1C and FGD 3C reported that: *"In 1980s and early 1990s, women were allowed to take part in making decisions and they had a better chance to access school, but fathers could prefer marriage over educating girls and their decision was final"* and *"In 1980s and early 1990s, women had better chances of going to school but were still at risk of being withdrawn if fathers decided to value*

*house chores and marriage over education” respectively. Women’s opportunities for education improved as they gained some participation in decision-making. However, fathers still had the final say and could withdraw girls from school in favor of marriage or household duties meaning progress toward educational attainment was easily reversed. Respondent FGD 3C stated that: “In 1980s and early 1990s, women had better chances of going to school but were still at risk of being withdrawn if fathers decided to value house chores and marriage over education.”* Despite improved access to education for women their schooling was still insecure because fathers retained the power to prioritize domestic work and marriage over education. This show male dominated decision making continued to limit women’s educational attainment.

Findings from interviewee EDL1, EDL4, EDL5, and EDL8 indicated that: *The Kipsigis community as a whole had set roles for each gender, domestic chores such as cleaning, cooking and care giving were assigned to the female gender. This role hindered any a schooling as parents would rather have their daughters’ nursing newborns or fetching fire wood and water than going to school. This practice was common in 1960s to 1990s.* Based on the findings, in the Kipsigis community between the 1960s and 1990s gender roles like cleaning, cooking, caregiving, fetching firewood, and collecting water was assigned exclusively to girls and women. These responsibilities took priority over schooling leading to many parents keeping their daughters at home for household duties instead of allowing them to attend school. This significantly hindered their educational attainment.

During interview EDL2, EDL7 and EDL6 reported that; *Decision making was a power given to men as from 1960s to early 2000. This meant that girls and women had no or limited voice. This was rooted from the fact that girls were there to be seen and not heard. Parents and specifically husbands were the sole decision makers on their daughter’s lives.* Men had full control over family decisions leaving girls and women with little or no say in matters affecting their lives. This meant that their education, marriage and personal choices were determined entirely by male especially their fathers. These findings suggest that patriarchal cultural norms significantly constrained women’s agency and autonomy, thereby influencing their educational opportunities. The exclusion of women from decision-making roles likely affected household

priorities and resource allocation, often to the detriment of girls' education. This implies that historical gendered power relations played a critical role in shaping educational attainment patterns among Kipsigis women in Bomet East Sub-County.

Interviewee C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5 reported that: *Domestic chores are minimal and women get time to school and currently women make their own decision and they are heard.* Interviews with participants revealed that domestic responsibilities for women have significantly reduced in recent years, allowing them more time to pursue education. The interviewees further indicated that women have gained greater autonomy in decision-making, and their opinions are increasingly respected and acknowledged within society. These findings indicate a positive shift in cultural norms influencing women's educational attainment. The reduction in domestic burdens and increased decision-making power have enhanced women's agency, enabling them to prioritize education and personal development. This transformation reflects progressive social change and suggests that evolving gender roles contribute to improved access to and participation in education among Kipsigis women.

Information from interviews confirmed focus group discussions indicating that between the 1960s and 1990s, the Kipsigis community assigned domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, caregiving, fetching firewood and collecting water exclusively to women. These responsibilities hindered girls' schooling as parents prioritized household duties over education. Additionally, decision-making power rested with men from the 1960s to early 2000s leaving women with little or no voice in matters like education and marriage. However, chiefs reported that today domestic burdens on women have reduced allowing them more time for schooling. Women now participate in decision-making, and their voices are increasingly respected.

Generally, findings from focus group discussion and interview schedules indicates that gender roles, particularly domestic chores and male dominated decision making, significantly influenced women's educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East Sub-County from the 1960s to the early 2000s. Cultural norms confined women to household duties such as cooking, care-giving and fetching water preventing many girls from attending school. Decision making power rested almost entirely with

men leaving women without a voice in matters affecting their education, marriage and personal development. Msoffe (2016), reported that inequality in division of household roles affect girls' academic careers. Food preparation, washing clothes, house cleanness and family care mentioned as the main domestic chores that attribute to poor academic progress among female study. According to Muga (2010), gender roles impact both boys' and girls' education at different levels but girls are the most affected be gender roles as compared to boys' education which is not so much affected.

#### **4.3.2 Rites of Passage and Women Participation in Educational Attainment**

The second objective sought to determine the influence of rites of passage on women educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East sub county, Bomet County, Kenya. Women educational attainment was assessed based on Female Genital Mutilation, marriage readiness, age of transition to adulthood and puberty related rituals. This section presents qualitative findings based on the objective and a discussion on each. According to respondent FGD 1A: *"In 1960s young girls at the age of 12 years could undergo FGM for 2 years to prepare them for marriage"*. This could be taken to mean in the 1960s, girls as young as 12 years old were subjected to FGM and then spent about two years in cultural training during which they were prepared for marriage rather than continuing with education. This practice removed them from school and reinforced early marriage limiting their educational opportunities and personal development.

Another respondent FGD 2A reported that: *"Young girls could only reach class 2 or 3 then drop out to undergo FGM to be prepared for marriage"*. This could mean that girls' education was cut short at an early stage as a result of cultural practices like FGM and preparation for marriage. This took over schooling leading to very low educational attainment for young girls. This was confirmed by respondent FGD 3A who stated that: *"In 1960s FGM mark the transition period to motherhood and marriage"*. FGM was viewed as a cultural rite of passage by which girl's transit into adulthood after which they were expected to assume the roles of wife and mother. Respondents from the Sowe Age Set observe that back in the 1960s, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was a very important cultural practice among the Kipsigis community. It was seen as a way to prepare young girls for adulthood and marriage. Girls as young as 12 years old would go through this process, which could take up to two years. Because of this, many girls

had to leave school early, some dropped out early in class 2 or 3. At the time, going through FGM meant that a woman was now considered a woman, ready to become a mother and take on adult roles in the community.

With regard to effect of Female Genital Mutilation, respondents in Korongoro Age set observe that Respondents from the Korongoro Age Set, who grew up in the 1970s and early 1980s, said that FGM was still a common and expected part of growing up for girls. By this time, some girls were able to stay in school a bit longer up to class 3 or 4 but most still had to leave school around the age of 12 to undergo FGM. The practice was seen as something every girl had to go through, and it usually lasted about two years. Once a girl completed FGM, she was no longer allowed to go back to school because she was now seen as an adult, ready to get married and take on the responsibilities of a woman in the community. For instance, respondent FGD 1B stated that: *"In 1970s and early 1980s young girls could only reach class 3 or 4 and drop out at the age of 12 years could undergo FGM for 2 years to prepare them for marriage"*. Girls' education was limited as many left school by class 3 or 4 around age 12 to undergo FGM and a two year preparation period for marriage. This was supported by respondent FGD 2B who supported that: *"It was a must for all girls to undergo FGM for two years at the age of 12years to get ready for marriage"*. This cultural practice prioritized early marriage over schooling thereby restricting girls' educational attainment. Another respondent FGD 3B confirmed this by asserting that; *"FGM was a cultural practice which was necessary for all the girls and after girls undergoing FGM they could not back to school since they were considered adults and wives"*. FGM was a compulsory cultural requirement for all girls, and once performed, it marked their transition into adulthood and marriage, making it socially unacceptable for them to return to school.

With regard to effect of Female Genital Mutilation, respondents in Kaplelach Age set observe that Respondents from the Kaplelach Age Set said that during the period 1980s and early 1990s, girls were able to stay in school a bit longer and many reached class 6 or 7 before going through FGM, usually around the age of 13. The FGM process during this age set took six months. After the girls underwent FGM, they were called *"chepkelelik"*, which means they were now ready for marriage. From that point on,

suitors would begin to show interest. Although FGM was still considered an important tradition for preparing girls for marriage, there were some signs that things were beginning to change, especially in how long girls were allowed to stay in school before going through the practice. Respondent FGD 1C reported that: *"In 1980s and early 1990s girls could only reach class 6 or 7 and drop out at the age of 13 years could undergo FGM for 6 months to prepare them for marriage"*. Girls' education was often cut short at class 6 or 7 as many dropped out around age 13 to undergo FGM and spend six months in cultural preparation for marriage which prevented them from continuing their schooling. Another respondent FGD 2C stated that: *"After FGM practice, girls were considered "chepkelelik" meaning they were ready for marriage and suitors could now identify themselves"*. This was supported by respondent FGD 3A who asserted that: *"FGM was a cultural practice which was valued among Kipsigis community which was mainly use to prepare girls for marriage"*. This could mean that within the Kipsigis community, FGM was a highly regarded cultural tradition that was intended to prepare girls for marriage thereby reinforcing early marriage and as a result limiting their educational opportunities.

Results from interviewee EDL1, EDL2, EDL4, EDL5, EDL7 and EDL8 indicated that: *Female genital mutilation was a common cultural practice among the Kipsigis community before 1963 to early 1990s. Girls dropped out of school at class 3 and 4 to participate in this practice which took two years.* The graduates of FGM were referred to as *Chepkelelik*, a term which emphasized their readiness to gather for the needs of their husbands and the lack of need to further their education. Girls who did not undergo FGM were rarely married as they were seen as not women enough and often ridiculed by other women. These findings highlight the profound impact of traditional cultural practices on girls' educational continuity and attainment. The practice of FGM not only disrupted schooling but also marked an early transition into adulthood, with girls being socialized into marriage and domestic roles soon after initiation. This significantly curtailed their educational advancement and long-term socio-economic empowerment.

Findings from chiefs in the interview indicated a decline in FGM rituals among girls in Bomet East Sub-County. For instance respondents C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5 observed

that: *FGM is not practiced anymore and marriage readiness was currently not being practiced. Some girls are affected by adolescent stages especially in form one and two and thus leading to early pregnancies which make them drop out of school.* Findings from the chiefs indicated that FGM and marriage readiness rituals are no longer practiced hence new challenges such as adolescent related issues in early secondary school are contributing to school dropouts. Early pregnancies among girls in Form one and two have become a significant barrier to completing education. This shift shows that although cultural barriers have reduced social and behavioral factors now threaten girls' educational attainment.

Educationist (ED1 TO ED8) during the interviews indicated that: *Age of transition to adulthood-- with teenage pregnancies, most women opt for marriage at a tender age, dropping out of school. Basing on Puberty related issues, results from interviewee ED1 to ED8 indicated that, women are the most vulnerable, especially when it comes to meeting the cost of sanitary towels during their menstrual cycles. They are forced to get from strangers in exchange with sex, leading to early pregnancies.* These findings highlight how deeply intertwined cultural expectations continued to impede women educational attainment. The accounts of educationists illustrate that the onset of puberty marked a critical turning point in the educational trajectories of many girls, with economic hardships amplifying their vulnerability into risky situations that compromise their education.

Based on the findings from educationist, practice of Female Genital Mutilation, puberty related issues, domestic chores decision making and marriage readiness are the rites of passage that influenced women's educational attainment. Generally, from the stories shared across the Sowe, Korongoro, and Kaplelach age sets and the interviews, FGM was mainly done to prepare girls for marriage. For many years, girls were expected to leave school at a young age some as early as class 2 or 3 to go through FGM. This was seen as the moment they became women, ready to take on adult roles like being a wife and mother. Even though some changes happened over time like girls staying in school a little longer or the FGM process becoming shorter the main reason for the practice stayed the same. It was a way for the community to get girls ready for marriage.

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#### **4.3.3 Marriage Practices and Women Participation in Educational Attainment**

The third objective sought to determine the influence of marriage practices on women educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East sub county, Bomet county, Kenya. Women educational attainment was assessed based on early marriage, forced marriage, arranged marriage and dowry systems. This section presents

qualitative findings based on the objective and a discussion on each. With regard to effect of early marriage, respondents in Sowe Age set observed that early marriage was a common and accepted part of life. Girls as young as 12 were considered ready to become wives. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) played a big role in this, as it was seen as the moment a girl became a woman. After undergoing FGM, a girl was expected to get married and take on adult responsibilities, even though she was still very young. Results from respondent FGD 1A reported that: *"In 1960s young girls at the age of 12 years were considered ready for marriage"*. This implies that in the 1960s girls were married off at a very young age limiting their chances of continuing with education. Respondent FGD 3A stated that: *"In 1960s FGM was used to mark the transition of a girl child to adulthood ready for motherhood and marriage without considering the child's young age"*. This means that FGM was viewed as a rite of passage that prematurely pushed young girls into adulthood and marriage disregarding their education.

Findings on early marriage in Korongoro Age set illustrated that during the 1970s and early 1980s, early marriage continued to be widely practiced. Girls around the age of 13 would go through FGM and then spend two years in seclusion. This time was meant to prepare them for life as wives. Once they completed this period, they were considered adults and ready for marriage. Education usually ended at this point, as the focus was marriage. Respondent FGD 1B, FGD 2B, FGD 3B stated that: *"In 1970s and early 1980s young girls at the age of 13 years were considered ready for marriage after circumcision and a seclusion period of two years"*. This implies that in the 1970s and early 1980s circumcision and the seclusion period marked the end of girls' schooling and childhood. They were seen as adults prepared for marriage denying them educational opportunities.

With regard to effect of early marriage, respondents in Kaplelach Age set observe that: Respondent FGD 1C, FGD 2C, FGD 3C: *"In the late 1980s and 1990s girls at the age of 15 years were considered ready for marriage this was marked by a 6-month seclusion and circumcision period"*. This implies that in the Kaplelach Age set girls around 15 years old were viewed as mature enough for marriage with readiness marked by circumcision followed by a six-month seclusion period. This cultural practice

reinforced early marriage interrupted schooling and therefore limiting educational attainment.

This implies that in the late 1980s and 1990s girls as young as 15 years were still subjected to circumcision and a six-month seclusion period. This marked them for marriage reinforcing early marriage practices. In the late 1980s and 1990s, early marriage was still practiced, although the age had increased slightly. Girls were now expected to marry at around 15 years old. They would undergo FGM followed by a six-month seclusion period, during which they were prepared for marriage. After coming out of seclusion, many girls were married soon after and the girls were not allowed to go to school anymore. While some were able to stay in school longer than in previous generations, the pressure to marry early remained strong.

On forced marriage, the respondents in Sowe Age set observed that in the 1960s, girls had no voice in matters of marriage. Respondents shared that young girls were not asked if they wanted to get married or who they wanted to marry. Everything was decided for them usually by their fathers or other elders in the family. Whether they were ready or not didn't matter. Once a decision was made, the girl was expected to accept it and prepare for her new life as a wife. Women had no voice to choose education over marriage. Respondent FGD 1A asserted that: *"In 1960s young girls were not consulted or involved in decision making pertaining the choice husbands"*. This means that in the 1960s young girls had no voice in marriage matters as parents and elders chose husbands for them. Respondent FGD 2A, FGD 3A stated that: *"girls did not have any voice on whether they were ready for marriage or not"*. This implies that girls lacked decision making power regarding their own lives. Marriage was imposed on them regardless of their readiness reflecting gender inequality.

According to respondent FGD 1B, FGD 2B, FGD 3B: *"In 1970s and early 1980s young girls at the age of 13 years were forced to marry older men"* and *"In 1970s and early 1980s young girls at the age of 13 years were forced to marry older men and a times not as the first and only wife"*. Girls as young as 13 were subjected to child marriage to much older men which denied them the opportunity for education. It also shows that some girls were married off into polygamous unions reducing their status and rights

within marriage. Those who grew up in the 1970s and early 1980s remembered a similar experience. Girls as young as 13 were married off, often to older men. Sometimes, these men already had other wives, which meant the girls had to enter marriages where they were not even the first. These were not marriages of love or choice they were arranged by families, and the girls had no power to say no or speak up for themselves.

Findings from the Sowe age set show that girls had no voice in marriage decisions. Their fathers and elders chose husbands and women were denied the chance to choose education over marriage. In Korongoro age set forced marriages persisted with girls as young as 13 married off to older men in polygamous unions. These marriages were arranged without consent denying them education and reducing their status and rights within marriage.

With regard to effect of early marriage, respondents in Kaplelach Age set observe that in the late 1980s and 1990s, forced marriage was still very common. Girls around 15 were married without being asked how they felt about it. Once they were married, they had to leave school immediately. The decision about who they would marry was made by the older men in the family, and girls were simply expected to follow through. Their opinions didn't count, and many were left feeling helpless. Respondent FGD 1C, FGD 2C, FGD 3C reported that: *"In the late 1980s and 1990s girls at the age of 15 years were considered ready for marriage without any room for objection"* and *"choice of a husband was solely the responsibility of the elderly men"*. Girls as young as 15 were forced into marriage without having a say in the matter showing that their consent and personal choice were disregarded. The decision of selecting a husband was entirely controlled by elderly men leaving girls and even their mothers with no influence or voice in the matter. Another respondent FGD 1C, FGD 2C reported that: *"Going to school stopped as soon as one was married"*. This means that in the late 1980s and 1990s girls as young as 15 were forced into marriage without having a say in the matter.

Findings from the Kaplelach age set indicated that in the late 1980s and 1990s early and forced marriage was still widespread. Girls as young as 15 were considered ready for marriage and decisions about their husbands were made by elderly men in the

family. Girls' voices and consent were disregarded and even mothers had no influence in the process. Once married girls were required to drop out of school immediately.

Across all three age sets, forced marriage was a deeply rooted practice. Girls were often married off at a young age, without being asked for their consent or even being part of the discussion. Older male relatives made the decisions, and once a marriage was arranged, girls had no choice but to comply. Many were forced to leave school, sometimes to marry men much older than them, and in some cases, to become second or third wives. Their voices were silenced, and their futures shaped by others leaving them with little control over their own lives.

According to respondent FGD 1A, FGD 2A, FGD 3A: "*In the 1960s Young girls were booked for marriage at birth kibwoterer*". This implies that in the 1960s girls had no control over their future since marriage arrangements were made for them from birth. This denied them freedom of choice and prioritizing marriage over education. Respondent FGD 2A stated that: "*young girls were natured with the aim of reading them for marriage to the pre-identified husbands*". Young girls were raised and socialized with the primary goal of preparing them for marriage to men who had already been chosen for them rather than being given opportunities for education.

In the 1960s, arranged marriage was a common tradition. Girls were often promised for marriage at birth in a practice known as *kibwoterer*. Families would agree on future husbands for their daughters long before the girls were old enough to understand what was happening. From early on, these girls were raised and guided with one main goal to become wives to the men chosen for them. Their lives were shaped around this expectation, and little attention was given to their education or personal dreams.

With regard to effect of early marriage, respondents in Korongoro Age set observed that those who came of age in the 1970s and early 1980s described similar experiences. The practice of *kibwoterer* was still very much alive. It was normal for girls to be booked for marriage while they were still babies. As they grew up, everything family guidance, cultural training, and community expectations was aimed at preparing them for this future role. School was not considered important for girls who had already been

promised to someone. *Respondent FGD 1B, FGD 2B, FGD 3B: "In 1970s and early 1980s kibwoterer a practice of booking young for a hand in marriage from as young as at birth was a c practice"*. This could mean that booking young girls for marriage from as early as birth was a cultural practice where parents or elders determined their future husbands. Information from Korongoro age set show that in the 1970s and early 1980s, early marriage was widespread. Girls were often booked for marriage from birth with families or elders determining their future husbands. As they grew all cultural training, family guidance and community expectations focused on preparing them for marriage rather than education.

With regard to effect of early marriage, respondents in Kaplelach Age set observe that in the late 1980s and 1990s, arranged marriage through *kibwoterer* continued, though with some small changes. Girls were still promised for marriage and prepared for it after undergoing circumcision. Many were taken out of school shortly after, as their role as future wives was considered more important than their education. Even the few girls who managed to attend school were often forced to leave by the age of 13 so they could get married. Respondent FGD 1C, FGD 2C, FGD 3C observed that: *"In the late 1980s and 1990s girls were booked for marriage kibwoterer and natured for marriage after circumcision without need for schooling them"* and *The few girls who managed to go to school even after being booked for marriage dropped out of school at the age of 13 for marriage.*" This implies that despite some progress in schooling opportunities cultural practices like booking girls for marriage and circumcision still prioritized marriage over education.

Findings from the Kaplelach age set show that arranged marriage persisted though with slight changes. Girls were often booked for marriage early and prepared for it after circumcision. Education was seen as secondary and many girls were withdrawn from school shortly afterward. Even those who managed to attend school were often forced to drop out by around age 13 to marry. This highlights how cultural practices continued to prioritize marriage over education.

Across all three generations, the tradition of arranged marriage through *kibwoterer* remained strong. Girls were often promised for marriage from birth and brought up

with that goal in mind. Their voices were rarely heard, and their chances for education were limited or completely denied. The expectation that girls should marry young, and to someone chosen by their family, was deeply rooted in the culture and passed down over the years with little change.

Findings on dowry system in Sowe Age set observed that in the 1960s, the dowry system was a key part of early marriage. Respondents shared that when girls as young as 12 were married off, their families received a dowry that was typically set at 14 cows and 12 sheep. Girls were often viewed not just as daughters but as a way for families to gain wealth. The marriage of a girl meant an increase in livestock, which was highly valued. Families made decisions based on this expectation, and the girls themselves had no say in the matter. Respondent FGD 1A, FGD 2A, FGD3A reported that: *"In 1960s young girls at the age of 12 years a transaction involving payment of dowry set at 14 cows and 12 sheep" and girls were seen as means to wealth" this means that young girls as early as 12 years old were married off through dowry transactions often set at 14 cows and 12 sheep reflecting the perception of girls as sources of wealth. Findings from the Sowe age set reveal that dowry system influenced early marriage. Girls as young as 12 were married off with families receiving dowries commonly set at 14 cows and 12 sheep. This exchange turned girls into a source of wealth as livestock was highly valued in the community. Decisions about marriage were made by families based on the economic benefits of dowry.*

With regard to dowry system, respondents in Korongoro Age set observed that During the 1970s and early 1980s, dowry continued to play a major role in marriage decisions. Like in the earlier generation, daughters were seen as a source of wealth, and dowry payments remained at 14 cows and 12 sheep. Families would often choose a husband for their daughter based on who could pay the highest dowry. The more animals a suitor offered, the more likely he was to be accepted. Girls and women had no voice in these transactions. Their preferences, thoughts, or feelings about marriage were not considered important. Respondent FGD 1B and FGD 3B stated that: *"In 1970s and early 1980s dowry payment was a common practice, which meant daughters were a source of wealth" and Dowry was set at 14 cows and 12 sheep". Dowry payment was a common practice which meant that daughters were regarded as a source of wealth*

with the dowry set at 14 cows and 12 sheep. This was confirmed by respondent FGD 2C who said that: *"Dowry was used to select a husband among fellow suitors, with preference going to the one paying the most and women and girls had no say in the amount of dowry to be paid"*. This means that Dowry was used to determine the choice of a husband among suitors with preference given to the one who paid the most. Women and girls had no say in the amount to be paid.

Findings from the Korongoro age set show that, dowry remained central to marriage arrangements. Girls were still regarded as sources of wealth with dowry payments fixed at 14 cows and 12 sheep. Families prioritized suitors based on who could pay the highest dowry often accepting the wealthiest offer. Women and girls had no say in either the choice of husband or the dowry negotiations.

According to respondent FGD 1C and FGD 3C: *"Dowry was a common practice paid to the girl's family upon marriage"*. This could be taken to mean dowry was a common practice that involved payment to the girl's family upon marriage. Another respondent FGD 2C confirmed that: *"Dowry was used in the selection of a husband among suitors, with preference going to the one paying the most"*. This implies that marriage decisions were driven by wealth rather than personal choice, as the suitor who paid the highest dowry was favored.

Dowry was used to determine the choice of a husband among suitors with preference given to the one who paid the highest amount. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the practice of dowry remained common. Families still received payment when their daughters were married, and this payment continued to influence the choice of husband. As with earlier generations, the suitor offering the highest dowry was usually preferred. Girls were rarely involved in these decisions, as marriage was treated more as a family arrangement than a personal choice.

Across all three age sets, dowry was closely tied to early marriage and played a powerful role in shaping the lives of young girls. Families saw daughters as valuable assets because of the livestock they could bring through marriage. The suitor offering the most dowry was often chosen, regardless of the girl's wishes. Over the decades, the

dowry system remained a strong influence, reinforcing early marriage and limiting girls' freedom and choices in their own futures. Early and forced marriage reinforced by FGM, seclusion, arranged unions and dowry payment was practiced in the Sowe, Korongoro and Kaplelach age sets. Girls as young as 12–15 were considered ready for marriage as education was not their primary goal. Marriage decisions were controlled by fathers and elders leaving girls without consent and sometimes in polygamous unions. Dowry payments of 14 cows and 12 sheep treated daughters as sources of wealth. These practices denied girls schooling interfering with their educational attainment.

The results obtained from the interviewees on marriage practices were consistent with those of the focus group discussions. According to EDL1, EDL3 and EDL8: *There was early marriages where women were booked immediately after birth for hand in marriage (kibwoterer). They could go to school until class 3 or 4 then drop out to undergo FGM for 2 years to be prepared for marriage. There was also forced marriages in that in the past, fathers could decide on who to marry their daughters. Whatever it was decided by old men and fathers basing on the marriage partner was final decision. In Kipsigis community during the period of 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, women were forced to undergo FGM in January in order to prevent them from going back to school. After the seclusion period the suitors could take them as their wives.* This implies that there were early and forced marriages where girls were booked for marriage (kibwoterer) immediately after birth. Most dropped out of school after class 3 or 4 to undergo FGM for two years as preparation for marriage. Fathers and elders decided on marriage partners. Among the Kipsigis community in the 1960s to 1990s FGM was conducted in January to prevent girls from returning to school after which suitors would take them as wives.

EDL2 and EDL4 reported that; *There was arranged marriages where by the old men could seat in a circle at a certain tree in Kipsigis community to discuss while taking wine and book young girls to their sons. This made many young girls drop out in class 3 or 4. Dowry systems was there where women education was not valued in Kipsigis community as cows. Parents valued cows more than women and anyone without a cow was not considered a member of a community. Payment of dowry in 1960s, 1970s and*

1980s. A bride price of 14 cows and 12 sheep was commonly agreed upon, any suitor who had the ability to go past the set bride price was likely to be accepted. Cows and sheep were therefore a sign of wealth and under no circumstance was it used to as fees for girls' education. There were arranged marriages in the Kipsigis community, where old men would sit under a tree, drink wine and agree on booking young girls for their sons. As a result, many girls dropped out of school by class 3 or 4. The dowry system reinforced this practice as women's education was not valued compared to cattle. Parents valued cows more than their daughters and anyone without cows was not considered a full member of the community.

According to the chiefs (C1, C2 and C4): *Early marriage has been affecting a majority of girls in their education. Most are married off in form 2.* This implies that early marriage has greatly affected the education of many girls with most being married off while still in form two. Other interviewees C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5: *“Some parents prefer girls getting married in exchange of dowry because girls are viewed as financial (few) and there is no forced marriage the girls are the ones choosing their partners”.* This implies that girls' education is compromised since parents prioritize dowry over schooling viewing daughters as sources of financial gain. Even though marriages may not be forced the pressure to marry early reduces the chances of girls completing their education.

The above findings are supported by the educationists ED1, ED3, ED6 and ED4 who stated that; *“Forced marriages demoralizes women from going back to school and ties them with responsibilities of running families and raising children and therefore women won't go back to school. Women are seen as a source of wealth once they attain the age of marriage. They are married off in exchange with cows which is used to educate the boy child.”* Forced marriages discourage women from returning to school as they are burdened with family responsibilities and childcare. Most women never resume their education. In addition, women are perceived as a source of wealth once they reach marriageable age, as they are married off in exchange for cows which are then used to finance the education of the boy child. Interviewee ED3, ED5 and ED6 asserted that; *“Early marriages impede the ambition to continue with education”* Results therefore indicates that early marriages, forced marriages, arranged

marriages, dowry systems are marriage practices that influences educational attainment in women.

Findings from interview schedules reveal that among the Kipsigis community early, forced and arranged marriages were widespread and they interfered with girls' education. Girls were often booked for marriage at birth dropped out of school by class 3 or 4 and underwent FGM as preparation for marriage. Fathers and elders chose husbands and e dowry payments were 14 cows and 12 sheep. Chiefs confirmed many girls were married off by form two while educationists emphasized that early and forced marriages tied women to family responsibilities limiting their educational attainment.

Information from interview schedules and focus group discussions show that from the 1960s to early 1990s marriage practices such as early, forced and arranged unions significantly limited girls' education among the Kipsigis. Girls were often booked for marriage from birth and dropped out of school by class 3 or 4 as they underwent FGM to prepare for marriage. Fathers and elders made marriage decisions with dowry system of 14 cows and 12 sheep being valued over education. Chiefs noted many girls married by form two and educationists observed that forced marriages burdened women with family roles preventing return to school. Sekina and Hodgkin (2017) conducted a study on effect of child marriage on women school dropout in Nepal. The findings of the study showed that early marriage is the most common reason for girls leaving school. It also shows that women are at high risk of dropping out of school after completing grade five and six because they are forced to get married. Hamidu (2023), also observed that early marriages are the main cause of school dropout among girls in Tanzania.

#### **4.3.4 Parental Perception and Women's Participation in Educational Attainment**

The fourth objective sought to determine the influence of parental perception on women educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East sub county, Bomet county, Kenya. Women educational attainment was assessed based on attitude towards girl child, preference of boy child, family's willingness to invest in girl child education. This section presents qualitative findings based on the objective and a discussion on each. According to respondent FGD 1A, FGD 2A: *"In 1960s young girls Parents and the community at large did not value girls' education and development"*. This implies

that in the 1960s, parental attitudes placed little importance on girls' education leading to limited opportunities for them to attend school. Another respondent FGD 2A, FGD 3A reported that;” *From as early as childbirth parents had a preference of siring sons*”. These findings indicated that, from the time of a child's birth parents showed a clear preference for male children over female children. Sons were valued more highly, which likely influenced the opportunities, attention and resources given to girls compared to boys reinforcing gender bias from an early age.

In the 1960s, many girls grew up in environments where their potential was overlooked. From an early age, there was little recognition of their need for education or personal development. Families and communities often did not see value in supporting their growth beyond traditional expectations. As a result, many girls were not given the chance to explore their abilities or imagine different futures for themselves.

With regard to effect of attitude towards girl child, respondents in Korongoro Age set observed that in the 1960s, many girls grew up in environments where their potential was overlooked. From an early age, there was little recognition of their need for education or personal development. Families and communities often did not see value in supporting their growth beyond traditional expectations. As a result, many girls were not given the chance to explore their abilities or imagine different futures for themselves. Respondent FGD 1B through 3B reported that: *"In 1970s and early 1980s Girls were considered lesser members of the community, with little to no impact"*. This implied that girls held a low social status and were undervalued within the community. Their opinions and contributions were largely ignored. This was supported by respondent FGD 1B, FGD 2B, FGD 3B who asserted that; *"There was a general negative attitude towards girls, this negative attitude devalued girls and women by minimizing their chance to be informed and literate"*. This means that society held discriminatory views toward girls which reduced their opportunities to access education and gain knowledge.

Respondents from the Korongoro Age set observed that girls grew up in environments where their potential was disregarded. Education and personal development were rarely prioritized as families and communities focused on traditional roles. Girls were seen as

having little influence or importance within the community often labeled as lesser members. Their voices and contributions were ignored reinforcing their low social status. With regard to effect of attitude towards girl child, respondents in Kaplelach Age set observed that in the 1990s, the situation had not improved significantly. Many communities still failed to acknowledge the capabilities and worth of girls. This lack of recognition led to limited support for their education, and many were unable to continue with school. Instead of being encouraged to grow and pursue their aspirations, girls were often guided into roles that kept their talents and voices in the background. Respondent FGD 1C, FGD2 C and FGD 3C stated that: *"In the 1990s, the community at large underestimated the influence and value of girls in the community, this greatly hindered their education"*. This implies that in the 1990s, societal attitudes devalued girls' contributions and potential, leading to limited support for their education and restricting their opportunities for learning and personal development.

Findings from the Kaplelach Age set revealed that negative attitudes toward girls persisted with little improvement from earlier decades. Communities continued to undervalue girls failing to recognize their potential and discouraging investment in their education. Many girls received minimal support to remain in school which hindered their educational opportunities. Across all three generations, girls faced persistent barriers rooted in long-standing cultural attitudes. Their dreams were often set aside, their voices quieted, and their potential left unexplored. These experiences reflect a broader pattern of neglect that affected not only individual lives, but also the progress of entire communities. Recognizing and addressing these deep-seated attitudes is essential to building a future where every girl has the freedom to thrive.

Information on preference of boy child in Sowe Age set illustrated that for many who grew up before and shortly after Kenya's independence in 1963, the preference for male children was deeply rooted in everyday life. In the Kipsigis community, boys were seen as the ones who would carry the family name forward and uphold the family legacy. They were considered the natural heirs a source of pride and strength for their families. This belief shaped how children were treated, often placing girls in the shadows, with less recognition and fewer opportunities to be seen, heard, or invested in. Respondent FGD 1A, FGD 3A reported that: *"From before Kenyan independence in 1963, the*

*Kipsigis community preferred boys to girls*". Kipsigis community valued boys more than girls favoring them in terms of attention, resources and opportunities including access to education. Another respondent FGD 2A asserted that: "*Boys were considered heir and carries of the family name*". This implies that in the community boys were valued because they inherited family property, responsibilities and lineage.

Findings from the Sowe Age set revealed that before and shortly after Kenya's independence the Kipsigis community strongly preferred male children over females. Boys were regarded as heirs who carried the family name inherited property and preserved lineage. This preference shaped family decisions, with boys receiving greater attention, resources and educational opportunities while girls were marginalized and undervalued.

With regard to effect of preference of boy child, respondents in Korongoro Age set showed that in the 1970s and early 1980s, these beliefs remained strong. Families often made sacrifices to ensure boys had better living conditions, more education, and greater chances in life sometimes at the direct expense of their daughters. Many girls grew up watching their brothers receive attention, encouragement, and resources, while they were expected to simply accept less. This experience quietly shaped how they viewed their place in the family and society, often feeling invisible or secondary in their own homes. For instance, respondent FGD 2C stated that: "*male children were the preferred gender*". In the community boys were favored over girls receiving more resources, and opportunities due to cultural preferences for the male gender.

Respondent FGD 2C and FGD 3C reported that: "*Family diverted sources to ensure that sons had better upbringing and were empowered most times at the expense of their daughters*". Families prioritized the needs and opportunities of sons over daughters often providing boys with education and support while limiting similar investments for girls. Findings from the Korongoro Age set indicate that preference for boys remained was there in the Kipsigis community. Families consistently prioritized sons diverting resources to ensure they received better living conditions, education and opportunities. Girls grew up watching their brothers supported and empowered while they were expected to accept limited attention and resources.

Findings from Kaplelach Age set observed that by the 1990s, the preference for male children was still felt, even in subtle ways. In casual conversation, people often counted sons first as if daughters didn't quite carry the same weight. Parents continued to make deliberate investments in boys: sending them to school, preparing them for the future, and handing down land or property. For girls, these same opportunities were rarely guaranteed. Many grew up with a quiet understanding that their roles and futures had already been decided for them. Respondent FGD3C, FGD 1C pointed out that: "*Boys were the preferred gender and often referred to when inquiring the number of children one had*". This means that boys were culturally valued more than girls, to the extent that people often counted only male children when asked about family size. "*Parents invested in their sons by educating them and assigning them their inheritance*".

Parents prioritized their sons' future by providing them with education and passing on family inheritance. Findings from the Kaplelach Age set revealed that preference for boys remained evident. Sons were counted first when families spoke about their children reflecting the higher value placed on males. Parents invested in boys ensuring their education, preparing them for future roles and securing their inheritance. Across all three generations, the preference for male children shaped how families made decisions and how girls experienced childhood. It affected who was educated, who was empowered, and who was heard. For countless girls, it meant growing up feeling less seen, less valued, and less supported not because of their abilities or potential, but because of long-standing beliefs about gender and worth. These stories reveal how deeply cultural preferences can shape lives, and how urgently they need to be acknowledged and transformed.

With regard to effect of Family's willingness to invest in girl child education, respondents in Sowe Age set observed that; "*Families were not willing to educate girls, for financial and cultural reasons*". Families avoided educating girls due to cultural beliefs and financial considerations prioritizing boys' education over that of girls. In the 1960s, many families were not willing to invest in girls' education. Financial limitations and cultural beliefs played a major role in this decision. Education was not seen as necessary for girls, and many families chose to prioritize other responsibilities or viewed schooling for girls as an unnecessary expense. Respondent FGD 2B, FGD

3B observed that: *"Families did not value girls' education and therefore not willing"* This implies that families placed little importance on educating girls. Respondent FGD2 B reported that: *"it was generally accepted that the in-laws were the beneficiary of education girls"*. This implies that families believed investing in girls' education was a loss since the benefits would go to the in-laws after marriage rather than the girl's own family.

It was commonly believed that educating girls primarily benefited their future in-laws rather than their own family. During the Korongoro Age Set there was still a general lack of support for girls' education. Families often believed that once girls married, their education would benefit their husband's family, not their own. This perception discouraged investment in girls' schooling, as it was not considered to bring value back to the natal home. Findings on Family's willingness to invest in girl child education, from Kaplelach Age set showed that in the 1990s, hesitation to educate girls persisted, though the reasoning began to shift. Some families feared that if a girl became too educated, she might struggle to find a husband. Concerns about marriageability influenced decisions, leading some parents to withhold educational opportunities in favor of preserving traditional expectations. Respondent FGD3C, FGD 2C: *"families feared that educated girls will not get husbands to marry them"*. This implies that families were concerned that educating girls might reduce their chances of marriage leading them to limit or avoid investing in the girls' education. Findings from the Kaplelach Age set in the 1990s reveal that families remained hesitant to invest in girls' education. Many families feared that educated girls might become undesirable for marriage believing schooling reduced their chances of finding husbands. As a result, girls were denied educational opportunities.

Findings from focus group discussion was supported by the interview schedules. According to interviewee EDL1, EDL2, EDL3 and EDL8; *"Parents and the community at large did not value girls' education, as they were considered lesser members of the community. This was a common practice as from in early 1960s to late 1990s. Before Kenyan independence in 1963 to early 2000 among the Kipsigis community, Male children were a sign of wealth and often referred to when in quiring the number of children a person has, in this regard their education and good upbringing was*

*generally valued. this was stemmed from the fact that they were considered heirs and carries of their families' legacies"* This implies that girls' educational attainment was significantly limited as the community placed greater value on boys as heirs and symbols of wealth. Resources and opportunities for schooling were directed toward male children. Girls were neglected and viewed as less important members of the community.

Interviewee EDL 5, EDL4 and EDL8 reported that; *"Families were not willing to educate girls in 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the underlying reason was the fact that the main beneficiary of her education were the in-laws. This has however improved in recent years with the rise of gender equality and increase of literacy levels in the community."* Kipsigis community generally undervalued girls' education seeing girls as lesser members of society. Families were reluctant to educate girls because the benefits of their education were perceived to favor their future in-laws rather than their own family. However, in recent years this trend has improved due to increased gender equality and higher literacy levels within the community.

From the 1960s to the 1990s findings revealed that the Kipsigis community consistently undervalued girls' education. Parents prioritized sons as heirs directing resources toward their schooling. Girls were seen as lesser members of society with little voice and their education was viewed as benefiting future in-laws rather than their families. Boys were empowered as heirs and symbols of wealth.

This was supported by educationist ED1 to ED10 who observed that; *"Girls are not given more attention like boys since after marriage, they will live away from the family. Boys are seen as the only ones to take care of parents at old age hence given more attention for better education. The girl child is seen to benefit the in-laws only after marriage, unlike the boy who remains with the parents, they are seen as a liability. Poverty in the society has led to women running for marriage even before the age of 18 and FGM was seen as the only passage to marriage, but since it was outlawed, it is not affecting so much on the rights of women to education"* This implies that girls received less attention and investment than boys because they were expected to marry and leave their families benefiting their in-laws rather than their parents. Boys were valued as

future caregivers and were given better education. Societal poverty also pressured girls into early marriages and FGM which limited girls' educational opportunities.

However, in contrast to this interviewees C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5 stated that; "*Attitudes towards girl child is very positive and many resources have been channel towards girls*" They also asserted that; "*Boys and girls are treated equally. Girls are given enough chances to attend schools as boys and families are willing to invest in girls' education as boys' education*" This implies that attitudes toward girls' education have changed positively with families now treating boys and girls equally. Girls are increasingly given equal opportunities to attend school and parents are more willing to invest in their education just as they do for boys. Findings reveal that from the 1960s to the 1990s the Kipsigis community generally undervalued girls' education prioritizing boys as heirs, caregivers and symbols of wealth. Families viewed girls as liabilities since after marriage benefits of their education went to in-laws. Poverty, early marriages and FGM further restricted girls' access to schooling. Resources and opportunities were mainly directed toward boys limiting girls' educational attainment. However, recent years show improvement due to rising literacy and gender equality with families increasingly willing to invest in girls' education.

Generally, across all three generations and interviews results shows limited family willingness to invest in girls' education was shaped by financial concerns, cultural norms and fears about the future roles of women. These attitudes significantly affected girls' access to schooling and contributed to long term gender disparities in education and development. Purewal, (2015) observed that more than one-half of the HOHs (52%) were found to be in favor of boys' schooling as compared with that of girls. According to Bendera, 1999; Malale & Masanja, 2020, societal expectations continued to favored boys' education over that of girls, particularly in rural areas. Parents perceived girls' education as unnecessary beyond basic literacy. Girls were often kept at home to assist with domestic chores and agricultural work, which took precedence over formal schooling.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

The study sought to determine the influence of selected cultural norms on women's educational attainment in Bomet east, Bomet County, Kenya. Four objectives guided the study: to determine the influence of gender roles on women's educational attainment, to determine the influence of rites of passage on women educational attainment, to determine the influence of marriage practices on women's education attainment, and to determine the influence of parental perception on women's educational attainment. The study adopted a historical, research design to gather the required data. A study target population of 7,081 people comprised of; 7056 women in the four age sets according to Kipsigis customs (*Sowe, Korongoro, Kaplelach and Kipnyige*), 5 chiefs, 10 educationists and 10 elderly persons in Bomet-East sub-county. The data was collected from 5 chiefs, 8 educationists, 10 elderly persons and 60 women. The data obtained was analyzed qualitatively using themes from each of the study objectives.

With regard to the dependent variable women's educational attainment information obtained from focus group discussion indicates that from the 1960s to the early 1990s girls' education among the Kipsigis was heavily constrained by cultural practices particularly FGM which forced girls to drop out around ages 12 to 14 after seclusion periods. This was supported by interviews which confirmed that very few women accessed education with most reaching only class 6 or 7. Cultural practices such as FGM at age 12 followed by two years of seclusion disrupted schooling. Under the 7.4.4 system limited professional opportunities meant most women who completed education became secretaries was the main available job. Early pregnancies further forced many to drop out of secondary school.

Information obtained on gender roles and women participation in educational attainment from women indicated that across the Sowe, Korongoro and Kaplelach age sets women's education was restricted by heavy domestic roles and male dominated decision making. Girls were often undervalued and denied opportunities in schooling and this hindered women's educational attainment. Similarly, educationist and elderly

women reported that women were assigned domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, caregiving and fetching firewood and water. This limited girls' access to schooling as parents prioritized household roles over education. Men dominated decision making leaving women with little say in matters like education and marriage.

Data obtained on rites of passage and women participation in educational attainment showed that FGM restricted girls' education in the Kipsigis community. In the Sowe, girls as young as 12 left school to undergo the practice followed by two years of seclusion preparing for marriage. During the Korongoro, most dropped out by class 3 or 4 for the same process marking adulthood. During the Kaplelach girls advanced slightly further to class 6 or 7 before FGM which marked the end of their education. This was confirmed by interviews which revealed that FGM was practiced among the Kipsigis with many girls leaving school. Chiefs however, noted that while FGM and marriage readiness are no longer practiced, girls' education still faces challenges such as early pregnancies and domestic chores.

Information on marriage practices and women participation in educational attainment from focus group discussion indicated that early and forced marriages reinforced by FGM and dowry payments were common in the Sowe, Korongoro, and Kaplelach age sets. Girls between 12 and 15 were deemed marriageable with little emphasis on their education. The exchange of dowry positioned daughters as sources of wealth. These practices hindered girls' education. Similarly, interviews revealed that in the Kipsigis community early, forced and arranged marriages were common and disrupted girls' education. Many were booked for marriage at birth and left school by class 3 or 4 as well as underwent FGM as part of marriage preparation.

Data on parental perception and women's participation in educational attainment from focus groups showed that the Kipsigis community placed little value on girls' education. Parents invested more on sons viewing them as heirs and symbols of wealth while girls were considered inferior with limited voice. Educating daughters was often seen as a waste as the benefits were believed to go to their future in-laws rather than their own families. This was confirmed by interviews which revealed that Kipsigis community largely disregarded girls' education favoring boys as heirs and symbols of

wealth. Girls were seen as liabilities since their education was believed to benefit in-laws after marriage.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The study aimed at determining the influence of selected cultural norms on women's educational attainment. The first objective sought to determine the influence of gender roles on women's educational attainment. Findings indicated that women were assigned domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, caregiving and fetching firewood and water which limited their access to schooling as parents prioritized household roles over education. Men dominated decision making leaving women with little say in matters like education and marriage. It can therefore be concluded that Women's education was limited by household responsibilities and male dominated decision making.

The second objective sought to determine the influence of rites of passage on women educational attainment. Information obtained from focus group discussions showed that girls as young as 12 in Sowe, Korongoro and Kaplalech age sets left school to undergo the FGM practice which was followed by two years of seclusion in preparation for marriage. This marked the end of their schooling interfering with their educational progress. Interview schedules indicated that girls were subjected to FGM at a younger age in preparation for marriage and marked the end of their education. Therefore, it could be taken to mean that FGM as a rite of passage was practiced among the Kipsigis with many girls leaving school.

The third objective sought to determine the influence of marriage practices on women's education attainment. Findings indicated that early and forced marriages driven by FGM and dowry traditions were widespread among the Sowe, Korongoro, and Kaplelach age sets. Girls as young as 12 to 15 were considered ready for marriage with minimal regard for schooling. Interview schedules indicated that early, forced and arranged marriages were common and disrupted girls' education. Many were booked for marriage at birth and left school as they underwent FGM as part of marriage preparation. It can therefore be concluded that marriage practices reinforced by FGM and dowry significantly influenced girls' educational attainment in the Kipsigis community.

The fourth objective sought to determine the influence of parental perception on women's educational attainment. Qualitative findings indicated that very little value was placed on girl's education. Parents prioritized investing in sons perceiving them as heirs of family wealth. Daughters were regarded as inferior and given little say. Educating girls was often seen as a way of benefiting their future in-laws rather than their own families. Interviews revealed that the Kipsigis community placed little value on girls' education prioritizing boys as heirs of wealth. Girls were perceived as liabilities as any educational gains were thought to benefit their in-laws after marriage. In conclusion, parental perceptions that favored sons as heirs while viewing daughters as liabilities significantly undermined girls' educational attainment.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study revealed the influence of selected cultural norms namely gender roles, rites of passage, marriage practices and parental perceptions on women's educational attainment. The study therefore makes the following recommendations:

- i. Sensitize communities on the importance of balancing household roles with girls' education through awareness campaigns and community dialogues.
- ii. Collaborate with local leaders and NGOs to raise awareness about the negative impacts of FGM on girls' health and education.
- iii. Enforce strict measures against early and forced marriages by engaging local authorities, elders, and religious leaders.
- iv. Launch community education programs highlighting the long-term benefits of educating girls for families and society.

### **5.4 Suggestion for further studies**

The study made the following suggestions;

- i. The study was mainly historical research design. A longitudinal cohort tracking girls from upper primary to post-secondary to measure how specific norms influence grade progression, transition and completion over time is suggested.
- ii. Assess the effectiveness of existing interventions that is; anti-FGM campaigns, alternative rites of passage, scholarships and reentry policies for young mothers on attendance and learning outcomes is suggested.

- iii. The study was undertaken in Bomet east sub-county. Studies in other locations on the influence of selected cultural norms on women's educational attainment is suggested.

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## **APPENDICES**

### Appendix I: Letter of Introduction

Dear Respondent

I am a master of education student at Chuka University researching “Influence of Selected cultural norms on women educational attainment in Bomet East sub-county, Bomet County.” Because of your significant experience and relevant expertise, you have been chosen to participate in this research.

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and used for academic purposes exclusively. No data collected will be used against you in this case, be free to feed the correct answers to the questions asked.

I will appreciate your effort and time to see the process a success.

Thank you

Yours Faithfully

Iven Chepkoech

## **Appendix II: Interview Schedule for the Chiefs**

This study seeks to determine the influence of selected cultural norms on women educational attainment in Bomet East sub-county, Bomet County, Kenya. Please feel free to give your opinion. No answer is right or wrong. Any information you provide will be kept secret. We will be very grateful for your help in this matter.

### **Section A: Interviewee Background information**

1. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. For how long have you served in this position \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section B: Educational Attainment**

4. What can you comment on the state of women participation in education in your location? How has it been since you have been in charge of this location? Probe for
  - i. Performance
  - ii. Attainment
  - iii. Professional achievement
5. What are some of the factors determining level of participation of women in education in your location?
6. What are some of the factors limiting women participation in education in your location?
7. How does marriage practices affect women participation in education in your location? Probe for effect of
  - i. Early marriage
  - ii. Forced marriage
  - iii. Arranged marriages
  - iv. Dowry systems
8. How does parental perception of value of education affect women participation in education in your location? Probe for effect of
  - i. Attitude towards girl child
  - ii. Preference boy child
  - iii. Family willingness to invest in the girl child

9. How do rite of passage affect women participation in education in your location?

Probe for the effect of

- i. Practice of female genital mutilation
- ii. Marriage readiness
- iii. Age of transition to adulthood
- iv. Puberty related rituals

10. How do gender roles affect women participation in education in your location?

Probe for effect of

- i. Domestic chores
- ii. Decision making power

11. Do you have any issue related to our topic of discussion you would like to comment on?

Thank you very much for your time

### **Appendix III: Interview for the Educationist**

This study seeks to establish the influence of selected cultural norms on women educational attainment in Bomet East sub-county, Bomet County, Kenya. As a professional in the area, your opinion is being sought on this important matter. Please feel free to answer the questions to the best of your ability. Any information you provide will be handled with utmost confidentiality. We are very grateful for your help in this matter.

#### **Section A: Interviewee Background information**

1. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Level of education
4. Field of specialization

#### **Section B: Educational Attainment**

5. What can you comment on the state of women participation in education in your location since independence? Probe for
  - i. Performance
  - ii. Attainment
  - iii. Professional achievement
6. What are some of the factors that has been determining level of participation of women in education in your location since independence?
7. What are some of the factors limiting women participation in education in your location since independence?
8. How has marriage practices been affecting women participation in education in your area since independence? Probe for effect of
  - i. Early marriage
  - ii. Forced marriage
  - iii. Arranged marriages
  - iv. Dowry systems
9. How has parental perception of value of education affected women participation in education in your area since independence? Probe for effect of
  - i. Attitude towards girl child

- ii. Preference boy child
  - iii. Family willingness to invest in the girl child
10. How has the rite of passage affected women participation in education in your area since independence? Probe for the effect of
- i. Practice of female genital mutilation
  - ii. Marriage readiness
  - iii. Age of transition to adulthood
  - iv. Puberty related rituals
11. How has gender roles affected women participation in education in your area since independence? Probe for effect of
- i. Domestic chores
  - ii. Decision making power
12. Do you have any issue related to our topic of discussion you would like to comment on?

Thank you very much for your time

#### **Appendix IV: Interview Schedule for the Elderly Persons**

This study seeks to establish the influence of selected cultural norms on women educational attainment in Bomet East sub-county, Bomet County, Kenya. You have been selected as a resource person with valuable insight to participate in the study. Please feel free to provide your honest opinion on all the questions. Any information you provide will be handled with utmost confidentiality. We are very grateful for your help in this matter.

#### **Section A: Interviewee Background information**

1. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Any past experience

#### **Section B: Educational Attainment**

4. Comment on the evolution of women participation in education in your area since independence? Probe for
  - i. Performance
  - ii. Attainment
  - iii. Professional achievement
5. What are some of the factors that has been affecting level of participation of women in education in your area since independence?
6. What are some of the factors that have been limiting women participation in education in your area since independence?
7. How has marriage practices been affecting women participation in education in your area since independence? Probe for effect of
  - i. Early marriage
  - ii. Forced marriage
  - iii. Arranged marriages
  - iv. Dowry systems
8. How has parental perception of value of education affected women participation in education in your area since independence? Probe for effect of
  - i. Attitude towards girl child
  - ii. Preference boy child

- iii. Family willingness to invest in the girl child
9. How has the rite of passage affected women participation in education in your area since independence? Probe for the effect of
- i. Practice of female genital mutilation
  - ii. Marriage readiness
  - iii. Age of transition to adulthood
  - iv. Puberty related rituals
10. How has gender roles affected women participation in education in your area since independence? Probe for effect of
- i. Domestic chores
  - ii. Decision making power
11. Do you have any issue related to our topic of discussion you would like to comment on?

Thank you very much for your time

## **Appendix V: Focus Group Discussions**

This study seeks to determine the influence of selected cultural norms on girls' educational attainment in Bomet East sub-county, Bomet County, Kenya. Please be perfectly honest in your answers to all questions. Any data you provide will be kept secret. We will be very grateful for your help in this matter.

### **Section A: Interviewee Background information**

1. Age set \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age of members
3. Highest level of education
4. What were some of the reasons that made you stop your education at that level?
5. What challenges did you face during your education? \_\_\_\_\_


### **Section B: Educational Attainment**

6. In your opinion, what has been the level of participation in education of your age mates who are women in your area? Probe for
  - i. Performance
  - ii. Attainment
  - iii. Professional achievement
7. What are some of the factors that has been affecting level of participation in education of your age mates who are women in your area?
8. What are some of the factors that have been limiting your age mates who are women from participating in education in your area?
9. How has marriage practices been affecting the participation in education of your age mates who are women in your area? Probe for effect of
  - i. Early marriage
  - ii. Forced marriage
  - iii. Arranged marriages
  - iv. Dowry systems
10. How has parental perception of value of education affected the participation of your age mates who are women in education in your area? Probe for effect of
  - i. Attitude towards girl child
  - ii. Preference boy child

- iii. Family willingness to invest in the girl child
11. How has the rite of passage affected the participation of your age mates who are women in education in your area? Probe for the effect of
- i. Practice of female genital mutilation
  - ii. Marriage readiness
  - iii. Age of transition to adulthood
  - iv. Puberty related rituals
12. How has gender roles affected participation of women in education in your area? Probe for effect of
- i. Domestic chores
  - ii. Decision making power
13. Do you have any issue related to our topic of discussion you would like to comment on?

Thank you very much for your time

## Appendix VIII: Chuka University Introductory Letter



**CHUKA UNIVERSITY**

Knowledge is Wealth (*Sapientia divitia est*) Akili ni Mali  
**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

Telephones: 020-2310512/18  
Direct Line: 020-268 7625  
postgraduate@chuka.ac.ke

P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka  
Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

REF: EM17/68711/23 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2025

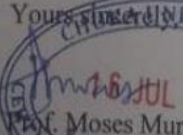
**Director  
National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation  
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete  
P O Box 30623, 00100  
Nairobi.**


Dear Sir / Madam,

**RE: IVEN CHEPKOECH**

The above-named person is a *bona fide* student of Chuka University pursuing MED in Educational Foundations proposal titled: **Selected Cultural Norms and Educational Attainment Among Kipsigis Women in Bomet East Sub-County, Bomet County, Kenya: A Historical Perspective**

His: Chepkoech has defended at the Faculty level and is now expected to conduct research. Any assistance accorded will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,  
  
Prof. Moses Muraya, Ph.D.  
DIRECTOR - 60400, CHUKA  
**BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**



## Appendix VIII: Chuka University Ethics Committee Authorization

**CHUKA UNIVERSITY**  
Knowledge is Wealth (*Sapientia divitia est*) Akili ni Mali

**CHUKA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Telephones: 020-2310513/18  
Direct Line: 0772894438  
Email: info@chuka.ac.ke

P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka  
Website: [www.chuka.ac.ke](http://www.chuka.ac.ke)  
**11<sup>th</sup> July, 2025**

**REF: CUIERC/ NACOSTI/835**  
**TO: Iven Chepkoech**

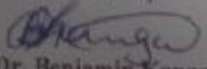
**RE: Selected Cultural Norms and Educational Attainment Among Kipsigis Women in Bomet East Sub-County, Bomet County, Kenya. A Historical Perspective**


This is to inform you that *Chuka University IERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *NACOSTI/NBC/AC-0812*. The approval period is 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2025 – 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2026.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Chuka University IERC*.
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Chuka University IERC*.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely  
  
**Dr. Benjamin Kanga**  
**SECRETARY**



**Appendix VIII: National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) Research Permit**


**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**  
 National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation  
 Ref No: **206122**

  
**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**  
 Date of Issue: **23/July/2025**

**RESEARCH LICENSE**



**This is to Certify that Miss. IVEN CHEPKOECH of Chuka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Bomet on the topic: SELECTED CULTURAL NORMS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG KIPSIGIS WOMEN IN BOMET EAST SUB-COUNTY, BOMET COUNTY, KENYA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE for the period ending : 23/July/2026.**

License No: **NACOSTI/P/25/4177237**

  
**Ag. Director General**  
**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

**Verification QR Code:**  


**NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.**

**See overleaf for conditions**