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African Culture & the Girl-Child Education:
The Case of Ilchamus community, Baringo County, Kenya

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Abstract

This research article underscores the cultural factors that influence girl-child education among the Ilchamus community. Various literatures were reviewed and gaps were successfully identified. It embraces descriptive research design. It utilises purposive and snowballing techniques since the initial research that culminated into an article was basically a mixed research. The sample size of the study was 350 respondents. It establishes that; the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), often linked with traditional rites of passage, is typically followed by early marriage, which disrupts girls' education. Additionally, early marriage typically curtails educational opportunities for girls, as they are often expected to take on domestic responsibilities and childbearing, leaving little room for schooling. In this regard, it concludes that; cultural practices like FGM and early marriages are deeply rooted barriers to girl-child education in the Ilchamus community, while the role of parents' education and cultural transitions reflect more nuanced influences on educational outcomes.

Keyword: Culture, Cultural factors, Education, Female Genital Mutilation, and girl

Introduction

The government of Kenya established Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2002 to meet the targets set by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which include Universal Primary Education (UPE) to be attained in 2030 and Education for All (EFA) to be achieved in 2015 accompanying Vision 2030. But given the gender differences observed in schools, where standard 8 boys enrol at higher rates and leave at higher rates than girls, this could not be feasible (Republic of Kenya, 1999). Gender-related issues and educational access have long been areas of interest for scholars. This is due to the high rates of waste that are present in Kenya's rural primary schools. Few pupils who register in remote primary schools finish the educational cycle, according to Orodho (2004) and Sessional Paper No. 1, (2005).

Gender differences can be found in Kenya's educational system with regard to completion and retention rates (Ministry of Education Report, 2003). As per the report of Girl Child Network (2003), achieving gender equity in Kenyan education is still an unattainable goal. Due to the gender gap, millions more girls than boys do not attend school. For

instance, the number of girls who dropped out of school in Sub-Saharan Africa varied from 20 million in 1990 to 24 million in 2002. 20% of girls drop out by standard four, and 65% at standard eight, according to FAWE and the Ministry of Education (State of the World Children's Report - 2004).

Kenya has demonstrated remarkable progress in achieving the goal of Basic Education for All (BEA), even though certain regions of the country remain unaffected. The areas most affected by gender disparities are those found in Arid and Semi-Arid Land Districts (ASAL), which include the North Eastern parts of the Rift Valley, Eastern Province, and Coast Province of Kenya. One of the ASAL areas in Kenya is Marigat Sub County, which is located in Baringo County in the Rift Valley region. It is imperative to address the cultural variables influencing the educational involvement of girls in Kenya's marginalised Ilchamus community. It is against this background that this study discussed this milieu.

Literature Review

The goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development is to guarantee that every girl and boy has equitable access to high-quality basic education by 2030. This is encompassed within SDG #4. However, for a variety of reasons, the objectives of universal primary education and education for all have not been met in many nations. Mwakio (2017) suggests that, particularly in developing nations, cultural variables have a greater tendency to impact girls' access to education than other aspects. Mwakio adds that customary laws and norms that the group upholds in order to sustain social reproduction are accommodated by the cultures of pastoral communities, to which the Pokot tribe belongs.

According to a 2018 report by Action Aid International Kenya, females are seen as little more than carers who don't require a formal education before getting married, therefore their job is to take care of the family rather than attend school. The majority of the girls in that study said that housework was something that was supposed to be done by them. These girls were aware, nevertheless, that parts of the obstacles preventing them from receiving a basic education were the chores. The guys who participated in the research interviews shared the same belief that girls ought to pitch in more cleaning duties. As part of their cultural upbringing, children are socialized to perform home duties from a very young age. These practices are among those that contributed to low education development among girls in Kenya and other countries. Mohamed, Mberia, and Muturi (2017) looked into the sociocultural factors in Somaliland that affect girls' involvement in school, such as parents' attitudes towards their children's education, gender preferences, religious views, and the influence of female role models. The survey found that some local communities undervalue the value of an education for girls, some book girls for early marriage, and some parents utilise their daughters as a source of income by obtaining dowries, all of which contribute to the lack of girls in school. While boys attend school, girls take care of their younger siblings at home and take care of household tasks. In a mixed-gender school, the girls feel culturally alienated from boys since they don't want to compete with them.

Raymond (2014) observed that although girls' education is emphasized in the Millennium Development Goals, a large number of girls in Tanzania are not enrolled in educational institutions. This situation is changing, but it is still a major concern in Tanzania, particularly at the secondary level. In pastoral communities, women and girls face an especially difficult situation where they are excluded due to their gender and their status as pastoralists. According to the study, certain cultural traditions also had a significant impact since they influenced or dictated a significant number of the community's decisions and practices.

Chebitwey (2013) used desktop data analysis and interviews to look into the effects of circumcision on females' school attendance and educational standards in West Pokot County's North Pokot District. For example, North Pokot has one youth facility in Alale trade centre and one vocational training centre in Kodich trading centre, but no middle-level college. The study discovered that given the majority of the population still engages in child labour, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM), educational equity was the most urgent problem affecting girls.

The study conducted by Chepleting *et al.* (2013) determined the impact of social-cultural factors on girls' involvement in FPE in the Kapenguria Division. The results indicated that boys were enrolled at a higher rate than girls, and if this pattern of enrolment persists, girls will be underrepresented in the educational system. This implies that there will still be a gender gap in enrolment that favours boys over girls during the course of the five years being higher than that of boys. The gender gap between boys and girls in primary schools will grow as a result of this. This disparity was discussed by the current study as well.

The goal of Oguta's (2013) study was to identify the variables influencing the secondary school enrolment of girls in Kenya's Migori County and District. One of the things preventing girls from low socioeconomic backgrounds from attending school is the absence of personal consequences. The participation of girl children in secondary education is

impacted by socio-cultural factors such as early marriages, male preference in the family, community initiation into adulthood, negative attitudes towards girls' education, cultural practices, and a sense of adulthood. The difficulties faced by pastoral community parents of disabled children in crisis zones were examined by Krop (2013). Kacheliba Mixed Integrated Primary School for the Physically Handicapped (PH) in Kacheliba Division was the study area.

Parents of disabled children, special education teachers, and ordinary teachers from Kacheliba Mixed Integrated Primary School in Kacheliba Division made up the study population. The results showed that myth, superstition, and self-blame are the root causes of the prevalent society attitudes on disability. The degree of instability and cattle rustling affected decisions about school enrolment, retention, and closure. Students with disabilities occasionally discontinue their education due to these factors.

Rotich, Kipkirui, and Mutisya (2014) evaluated the influence of sociocultural elements and community leaders on Maasai girls' academic achievement in Narok County secondary schools and their ensuing rates of university enrolment. Twenty secondary schools in Narok County participated in the study. They discovered that girls who participate in sexual activities perform less academically and become pregnant at a younger age. The data also showed a connection between early Maasai girl marriages and FGM. Additionally, it is linked to teenage pregnancies and females' involvement in sexual activities. This research has also demonstrated that parents in Narok County still fear their daughters may drop out of school due to pregnancy and may also transfer the family wealth to their marital homes.

Ochieng (2015) assessed the influence of social and cultural elements on the same. He looked at how curriculum relevance and quality affected retention rates and evaluated the role that accessibility to educational options plays in retention. The study focused on all 38 head teachers of the 38 public secondary schools in the Ndhiwa Sub-county as well as all 2,240 females enrolled in the public secondary school. It was discovered that socio-cultural variables have a detrimental impact on females' retention in Ndhiwa secondary schools since many parents cannot afford to pay for their kids' education.

Waswa (2015) looked into the variables influencing the advancement rates of female students in West Pokot Sub County of West Pokot County's primary schools. The findings indicated that cultural and economic factors had a more detrimental impact on the progression rates of girls than did economic factors. As intervention measures, government stimulus and ASAL money had less of an impact. The school nutrition project, the FGM campaigns, and the programs for the vulnerable kids, on the other hand, were more successful interventions in promoting the education of girls.

The consequences of female genital mutilation on girls' academic performance in West Pokot Sub County's primary schools were examined by Chematui *et al.* (2019). The study used a mixed research technique design, meaning that the triangulation convergence design is created using both quantitative and qualitative data. It was clear that FGM was either performed covertly or publicly. Female genital mutilation, early marriages, and child labour hindered many girls' involvement in school, which is why their performance was poor. Based on an interview with a respondent who testified to having openly abused and denigrated her female teacher from a community different from her own and who does not engage in FGM, calling her "clitoris" in her mother tongue, the study concluded that there is a correlation between FGM and educational performance. Her unworkable relationship with the victim teacher and everyone else caused her to drop out of school multiple times.

Methodology

This research adopted descriptive research design since it was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. It was conducted in Baringo South Sub County, specifically among the secondary schools in Ilchamus ward. It adopted purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The sample size of the study was 350 respondents who included the girls and teachers in those schools. Structure questionnaires, interview guides and focus group discussions were used to gather data that was thematically analysed and presented in form of verbatim, narrations, pie-charts and in bar graphs.

Findings and Discussion:

Findings

The researcher presented the findings robustly by use of tables and bar graphs and did interpretations as follows:

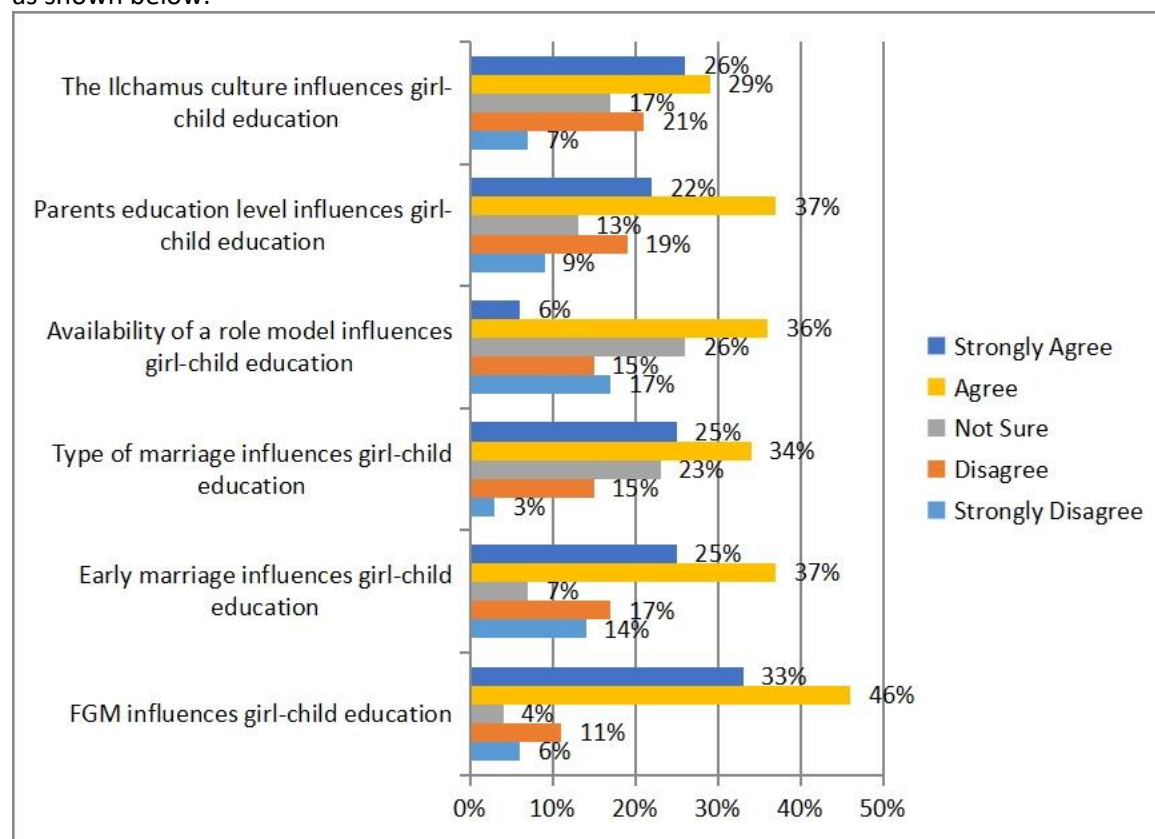
The cultural factors that influence girl-child education among the Ilchamus community

The table presents an analysis of various cultural and societal factors influencing girl-child education within the community. Each statement reflects different aspects of how cultural practices and family dynamics affect educational outcomes for

girls. The responses are categorized into five options: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Not Sure (NS), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA), with percentages and total counts for each category provided.

Statement	SD	D	NS	A	SA	TOTAL
FGM influences girl-child education	16(6%)	39(11%)	15(4%)	160(46%)	120(33%)	350(100%)
Early marriage influences girl-child education	45(14%)	60(17%)	25(7%)	130(37%)	90(25%)	350(100%)
Type of marriage influences girl-child education	10(3%)	50(15%)	80(23%)	120(34%)	90(25%)	350(100%)
Availability of a role model influences girl-child education	60(17%)	50(15%)	95(26%)	125(36%)	20(6%)	350(100%)
Parents education level influences girl-child education	30(9%)	65(19%)	45(13%)	130(37%)	80(22%)	350(100%)
The Ilchamus culture influences girl-child education	25(7%)	70(21%)	60(17%)	100(29%)	95(26%)	350(100%)

Out of 350 respondents, 16 (6%) strongly disagreed, 39 (11%) disagreed, 15 (4%) were not sure, 160 (46%) agreed, and 120 (33%) strongly agreed that FGM influences girl-child education. Additionally, 45 (14%) strongly disagreed, 60 (17%) disagreed, 25 (7%) were not sure, 130 (37%) agreed, and 90 (25%) strongly agreed that early marriage influences girl-child education. Regarding the type of marriage, 10 (3%) strongly disagreed, 50 (15%) disagreed, 80 (23%) were not sure, 120 (34%) agreed, and 90 (25%) strongly agreed that it influences girl-child education. The data is summarized in a bar graph as shown below:



The availability of a role model was also noted, with 60 (17%) strongly disagreeing, 50 (15%) disagreeing, 95 (26%) not sure, 125 (36%) agreeing, and 20 (6%) strongly agreeing that it influences girl-child education. Additionally, 30 (9%) strongly disagreed, 65 (19%) disagreed, 45 (13%) were not sure, 130 (37%) agreed, and 80 (22%) strongly agreed that parents' education level influences girl-child education. Lastly, 25 (7%) strongly disagreed, 70 (21%) disagreed, 60 (17%) were not sure, 100 (29%) agreed, and 95 (26%) strongly agreed that the Ilchamus culture influences girl-child education.

Discussion

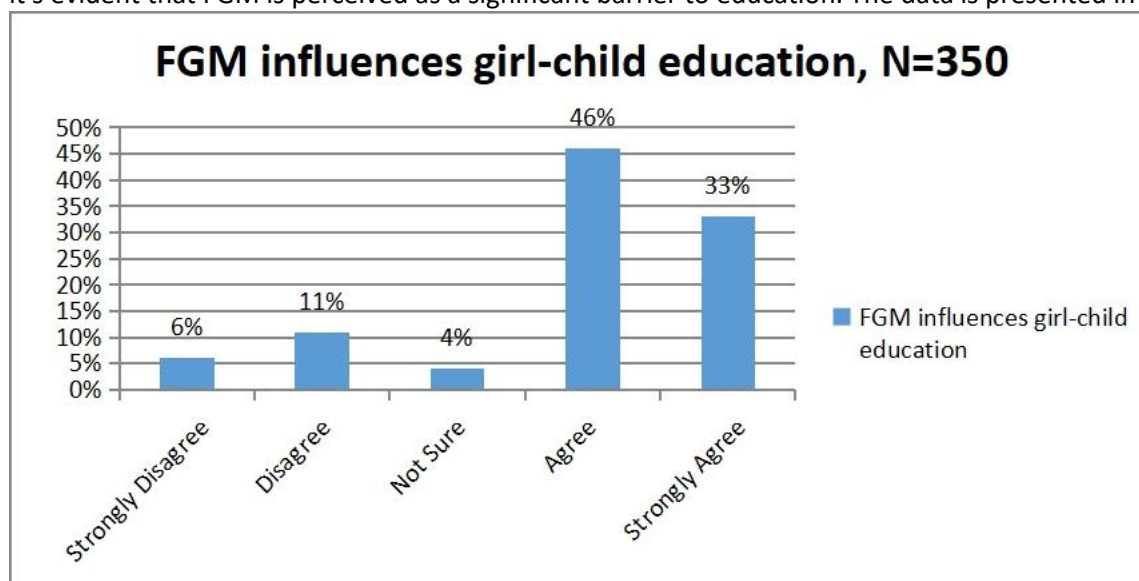
After the researcher presented the findings above, the next activity was to do a discussion of the results. This discussion was done adhering to the themes that emerged as follows:

The cultural factors that influence girl-child education among the Ilchamus community

The responses from 350 participants provide a nuanced understanding of how various cultural and social factors affect girl-child education within the Ilchamus community. The discussion was as follows:

Influence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on Girl-child Education

Out of 350 respondents, 16 (6%) strongly disagreed, 39 (11%) disagreed, 15 (4%) were not sure, 160 (46%) agreed, and 120 (33%) strongly agreed that FGM influences girl-child education. With 280 respondents (79%) agreeing or strongly agreeing, it's evident that FGM is perceived as a significant barrier to education. The data is presented in the bar graph as shown:



The practice of FGM, often linked with traditional rites of passage, is typically followed by early marriage, which disrupts girls' education. This data suggests a strong recognition of the negative impact of FGM on girls' ability to pursue and complete their education. In the oral interview, the respondent expressed a strong belief that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) significantly impedes girl-child education. They highlighted how FGM often leads to early marriage, which interrupts educational pursuits and severely limits educational opportunities for girls. This view aligns with the survey results where 79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that FGM negatively influences girl-child education.

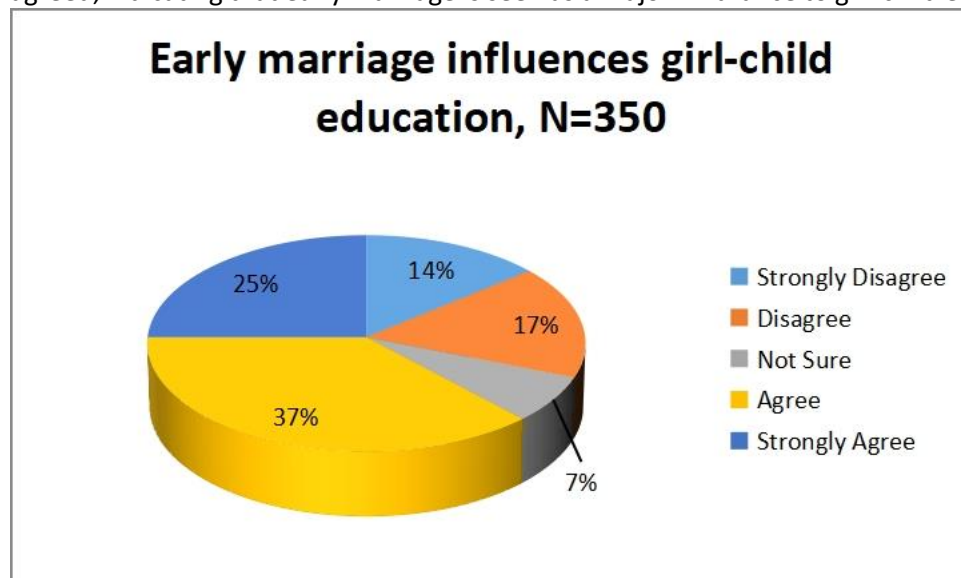
During the focus group discussion (FGD), participants shared their concerns about FGM and its detrimental impact on girls' education. They pointed out that FGM is frequently associated with cultural practices that prioritize early marriage over education, thus hindering girls' ability to continue their schooling. This aligns with the survey findings, showing that 79% of respondents see FGM as a significant barrier to education.

In the key informant interview, the respondent noted that FGM is a major obstacle to girl-child education, often leading to early marriages and subsequently preventing girls from completing their schooling. They emphasized that the practice disrupts educational trajectories and underscores the widespread recognition of FGM's adverse effects on education, consistent with the survey data where 79% of respondents acknowledged its negative impact.

The United Nations has identified Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a discriminatory practice and a violation of human rights (UN, 2007). Despite this, FGM remains a significant cultural practice in various communities, including the Ilchamus. Mwakio (2017) suggests that cultural variables, such as FGM, have a pronounced impact on girls' access to education, particularly in pastoral communities where these practices are ingrained in the social fabric. The *Daily Nation* reported a resurgence in FGM cases during the COVID-19 pandemic in West Pokot, highlighting the ongoing prevalence of this practice despite efforts to eradicate it (Maichuhie, 2020). This study corroborates these findings, as 79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that FGM is a substantial barrier to girl-child education, often leading to early marriage and subsequent disruption of educational opportunities.

Influence of Early Marriage on Girl-child Education

Regarding early marriage, 45 (14%) strongly disagreed, 60 (17%) disagreed, 25 (7%) were not sure, 130 (37%) agreed, and 90 (25%) strongly agreed that it influences girl-child education. A majority of 220 respondents (62%) agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that early marriage is seen as a major hindrance to girl-child education, as shown in the pie-chart below:



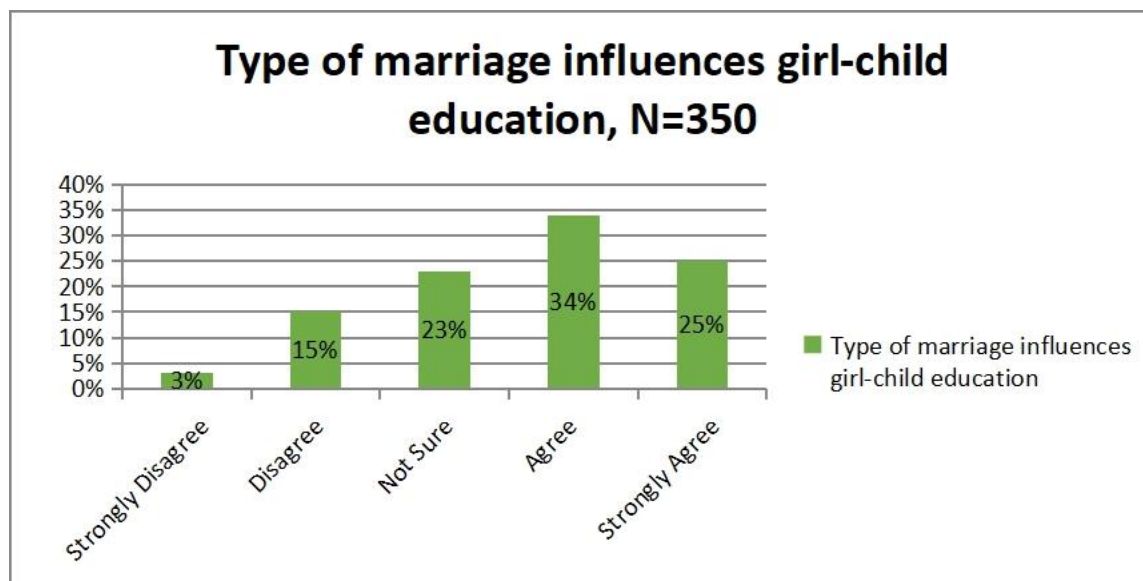
Early marriage typically curtails educational opportunities for girls, as they are often expected to take on domestic responsibilities and childbearing, leaving little room for schooling. In the oral interview, the respondent highlighted that early marriage is a significant barrier to girl-child education. They described how early marriage often forces girls to abandon their education to take on domestic roles and childbearing responsibilities. This perspective aligns with the survey results, where 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that early marriage negatively impacts girl-child education. During the focus group discussion (FGD), participants discussed how early marriage disrupts girls' education. They noted that girls who marry early are frequently withdrawn from school to assume domestic duties, which severely limits their educational opportunities. This consensus reflects the survey findings, showing that 62% of respondents view early marriage as a major obstacle to girl-child education.

In the key informant interview, the respondent emphasized that early marriage significantly impedes educational progress for girls. They pointed out that early marriage leads to a premature end to schooling, as girls are expected to fulfill domestic and parenting roles, aligning with the survey data indicating that 62% of respondents see early marriage as a substantial barrier to education.

Early marriage is another deeply entrenched cultural practice that hinders girls' educational prospects. UNICEF (2010) found that early marriage deprives girls of their right to basic education, often forcing them to drop out of school to assume domestic responsibilities and childbearing. Mwakio (2017) further notes that early marriages contribute to subpar academic performance and eventual school dropout. The present study supports these assertions, with 62% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that early marriage is a major impediment to girl-child education within the Ilchamus community.

Influence of Type of Marriage on Girl-child Education

The type of marriage was noted by 10 (3%) respondents as something they strongly disagreed with, 50 (15%) disagreed, 80 (23%) were not sure, 120 (34%) agreed, and 90 (25%) strongly agreed that it influences girl-child education. The 210 respondents (59%) who agreed or strongly agreed highlight that certain marriage practices, such as polygamy or arranged marriages, can affect girls' educational prospects. These practices may prioritize domestic roles over education, thereby reducing the likelihood of girls continuing their studies. The data is presented in the bar graph as shown below:



In the oral interview, the respondent emphasized that the type of marriage, such as polygamy or arranged marriages, influences girl-child education by prioritizing domestic roles over schooling. They noted that these marriage practices often lead to reduced educational opportunities for girls. This aligns with the survey findings, where 59% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the type of marriage impacts girl-child education.

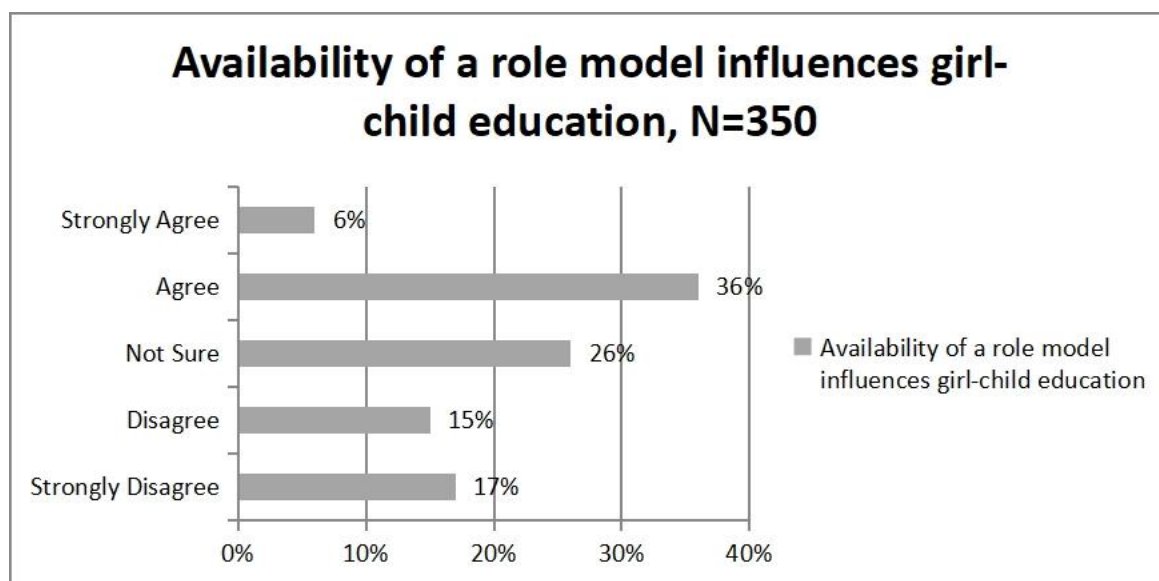
During the focus group discussion (FGD), participants concurred that certain marriage practices, like arranged marriages, can negatively affect girls' education. They discussed how these practices might force girls into domestic roles and limit their ability to continue their education. This view is consistent with the survey data showing that 59% of respondents see the type of marriage as a factor influencing educational prospects for girls.

In the key informant interview, the respondent highlighted that marriage practices, particularly polygamous and arranged marriages, impact girl-child education by often relegating girls to domestic responsibilities rather than educational pursuits. This perspective supports the survey results, where 59% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the type of marriage affects girls' educational opportunities.

Certain types of marriage, such as polygamy and arranged marriages, have also been identified as factors that can negatively impact girls' educational outcomes. According to Mohamed, Mberia, and Muturi (2017), cultural practices like early marriage and dowry payments often prioritize girls' roles in the household over their education. This study echoes these findings, with 59% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the type of marriage influences girl-child education, often to the detriment of educational pursuits.

Influence of Role Models on Girl-child Education

The availability of role models was another factor explored, with 60 (17%) strongly disagreeing, 50 (15%) disagreeing, 95 (26%) not sure, 125 (36%) agreeing, and 20 (6%) strongly agreeing that it influences girl-child education. The mixed responses, with 145 respondents (42%) agreeing or strongly agreeing and 110 respondents (32%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, suggest that the presence or absence of role models in the community plays a somewhat variable role in influencing girls' educational choices. The uncertainty among 95 respondents (26%) could indicate a lack of visible female role models who have achieved educational success, which might otherwise inspire girls to pursue their education as reflected in the bar graph below:



In the oral interview, the respondent reflected that the availability of role models significantly influences girl-child education, though the impact can vary. They noted that visible female role models who have achieved educational success can inspire girls to pursue education. However, the respondent also mentioned that the absence of such role models might contribute to a lack of motivation among girls. This aligns with the survey finding that 42% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that role models influence education, while 32% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

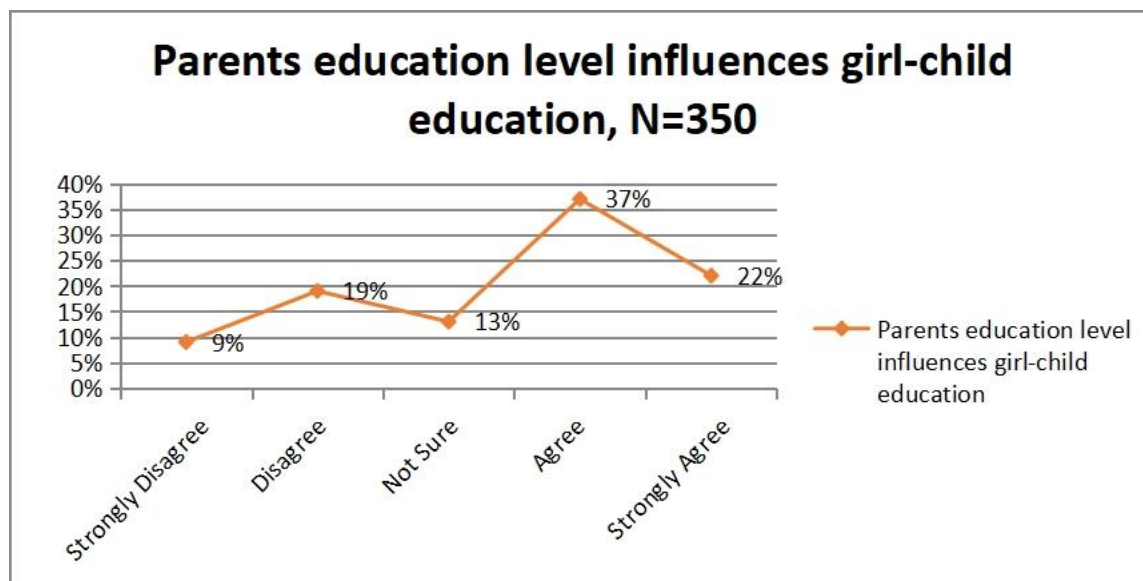
In the key informant interview, the respondent highlighted that while having role models can positively affect girls' educational aspirations, the effect is not uniform across all communities. They pointed out that the presence of successful female role models can encourage educational attainment, but where such role models are lacking, girls might feel less inspired. This perspective supports the mixed survey results, where 42% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed and 32% disagreed or strongly disagreed on the role models' impact on education.

During the focus group discussion (FGD), participants discussed how role models can inspire girls to pursue education, but acknowledged that this influence can be inconsistent. They observed that in some areas, the presence of successful female role models positively affects girls' educational choices, while in others, the lack of such role models leads to less motivation. This view aligns with the survey data, reflecting the mixed responses where 42% agreed or strongly agreed and 32% disagreed or strongly disagreed about the influence of role models on girl-child education.

The presence or absence of female role models is another factor influencing girl-child education. Raymond (2014) observed that in pastoral communities, where traditional gender roles are emphasized, girls often lack role models who have pursued education. This study reflects a similar trend, with 42% of respondents acknowledging the influence of role models on education, although the mixed responses indicate variability in the impact of this factor. The uncertainty among 26% of respondents may point to a scarcity of visible female role models in the Ilchamus community, which could otherwise inspire girls to continue their education.

Influence of Parents' Education Level on Girl-child Education

Regarding parents' education level, 30 (9%) strongly disagreed, 65 (19%) disagreed, 45 (13%) were not sure, 130 (37%) agreed, and 80 (22%) strongly agreed that it influences girl-child education. With 210 respondents (59%) agreeing or strongly agreeing, the data suggests that parents' educational background significantly impacts their children's education, particularly for girls. This data is presented in the line-chart below:



It is noted that, educated parents are more likely to value and support their daughters' education, while those with little or no education may not prioritize it, often due to economic pressures or cultural norms. In the key informant interview, the respondent emphasized that parents' education level significantly influences girl-child education. They noted that educated parents tend to value and support their daughters' education more, as they understand its importance and are better positioned to provide educational support. Conversely, parents with lower education levels may not prioritize education for their daughters due to economic constraints or lack of awareness. This perspective aligns with the survey findings, where 59% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that parents' education level affects girl-child education.

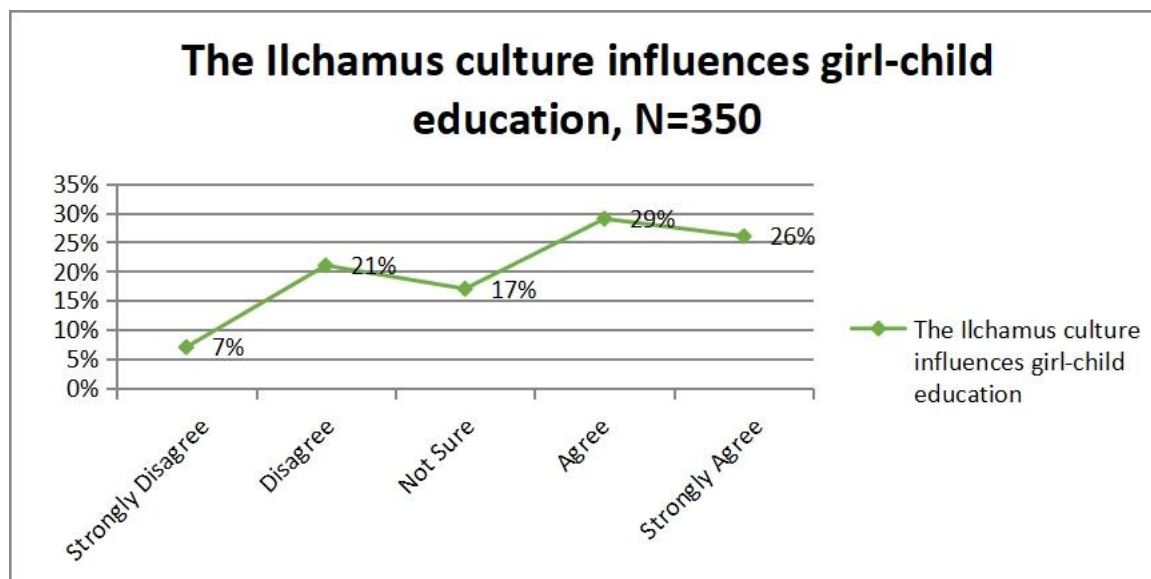
During the oral interview, the respondent shared that parents' educational background plays a crucial role in shaping educational outcomes for girls. They observed that educated parents are more likely to encourage their daughters to pursue education and are more proactive in addressing educational needs. In contrast, parents with less education may not place the same emphasis on their daughters' schooling, reflecting the influence of educational background on educational support. This view is consistent with the 59% agreement in the survey data.

In the focus group discussion (FGD), participants discussed how parents' education levels impact their children's education. They agreed that parents with higher education levels are generally more supportive of their daughters' educational aspirations, while those with less education might not prioritize schooling as much. This discussion supports the survey results, where 59% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the level of parents' education influences girl-child education.

Parents' educational background plays a crucial role in shaping their children's educational experiences. Ochieng (2015) found that sociocultural factors, including parental attitudes and economic pressures, significantly affect girls' retention in secondary schools. The current study confirms this, with 59% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that parents' education levels influence girl-child education. Educated parents are more likely to value and support their daughters' education, while those with limited education may not prioritize it, often due to prevailing cultural norms and economic challenges.

Influence of Ilchamus Culture on Girl-child Education

In terms of the influence of Ilchamus culture on girl-child education, 25 (7%) strongly disagreed, 70 (21%) disagreed, 60 (17%) were not sure, 100 (29%) agreed, and 95 (26%) strongly agreed. The fact that 195 respondents (55%) agreed or strongly agreed, while a significant 95 respondents (28%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicates that cultural practices and norms are perceived to have both positive and negative impacts on education. This dual perspective could reflect a community that is in transition, with some members holding onto traditional practices that limit girls' education, while others are more progressive and supportive of it. This information is presented in a line chart as shown below:



In the key informant interview, the respondent highlighted the dual impact of Ilchamus culture on girl-child education. They explained that while some traditional cultural practices, such as early marriages and gender roles, can hinder girls' educational opportunities, other aspects of the culture may support education through community support and encouragement. This nuanced view aligns with the survey data, where 55% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Ilchamus culture influences education in both positive and negative ways.

During the oral interview, the respondent discussed the complex influence of Ilchamus cultural norms on girl-child education. They noted that cultural practices can create barriers, such as prioritizing domestic roles over schooling, but also mentioned that there are efforts within the community to support girls' education. This perspective matches the survey findings, where a significant portion (55%) of respondents acknowledged the significant impact of culture on education, reflecting both supportive and limiting elements.

In the focus group discussion (FGD), participants examined how Ilchamus cultural practices affect girl-child education. They agreed that cultural norms have a mixed impact: some traditional practices restrict educational access for girls, while progressive views within the community are fostering educational opportunities. This aligns with the survey results, showing that 55% of respondents view Ilchamus culture as having a significant, yet mixed, influence on girl-child education. The discussion echoed the broader cultural context described in studies by Mwanahamisi (2015) and Rotich, Kipkirui, and Mutisya (2014), reflecting both supportive and restrictive aspects of culture.

Thus, the broader cultural context of the Ilchamus community has both positive and negative impacts on girl-child education. Studies by Mwanahamisi (2015) and Rotich, Kipkirui, and Mutisya (2014) highlight how cultural practices and societal expectations can either support or hinder educational opportunities for girls. The current research finds that 55% of respondents view Ilchamus culture as having a significant influence on education, with some cultural practices limiting girls' access to education, while others may be more supportive.

Therefore, from the preceding discussions, the researcher observes that cultural factors significantly impact girl-child education within the Ilchamus community. Practices like FGM, early marriage, and certain marriage types are substantial barriers, as reflected by the majority of respondents recognizing their negative influence on education. The mixed responses regarding the influence of role models and parents' education level suggest that while these factors can positively impact girls' education, their effects are inconsistent due to varying community values. Conflict theory complements these findings by highlighting how cultural norms and traditions perpetuate social inequality, particularly in education. The power structures within the Ilchamus community maintain these practices, which disproportionately disadvantage girls by restricting their educational opportunities. Conflict theory posits that these cultural factors are not merely individual choices but are embedded in the broader societal conflict between maintaining tradition and striving for educational equality, thereby reinforcing systemic barriers to girl-child education.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that cultural factors significantly influence girl-child education within the Ilchamus community. The data shows that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early marriage, and specific marriage types are major

barriers to education for girls. With 79% of respondents acknowledging FGM as a negative influence, and 62% identifying early marriage as a hindrance, these cultural practices are seen as major impediments that force girls to abandon their education early.

The role of marriage practices, such as polygamy and arranged marriages, also impacts educational outcomes, with 59% of respondents agreeing that these cultural norms prioritize domestic roles over schooling. Parents' educational levels further contribute to this dynamic, with 59% of respondents highlighting that educated parents are more likely to support their daughters' education. However, the availability of role models showed mixed responses, with only 42% agreeing that they positively influence education, possibly due to the scarcity of visible role models in the community. The influence of Ilchamus culture itself is both positive and negative. While some cultural norms encourage education, others, like early marriage, hinder it. Conflict theory helps explain this, suggesting that these cultural practices perpetuate systemic inequality and restrict girls' educational opportunities. The power structures within the community maintain these practices, creating a significant barrier to achieving educational equity for girls.

In sum, cultural practices like FGM and early marriage are deeply rooted barriers to girl-child education in the Ilchamus community, while the role of parents' education and cultural transitions reflect more nuanced influences on educational outcomes. Addressing these systemic challenges requires culturally sensitive approaches to shift perceptions and promote educational equality for girls.

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