

## Effects of Sociocultural Practices Contributing to Inhibiting Female Students from Completing Primary Education: A Case of Mkalama District – Singida – Tanzania



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**ABSTRACT:** The study aimed at finding out the effects of sociocultural practices contributing to inhibiting female students from completing primary education. Descriptive survey research design and mixed method approach were employed. The sample comprised of 15 female primary school students, 8 head teachers 3 Ward Executive Officers (WEOs), 3 community traditional leaders and 1 District Educational Officer (DEO) (primary). Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The study came out with the following findings, some sociocultural practices leads to: hopeless and isolated female students at school, prepares girls for marital responsibilities than education, some girls fail to deliver their academic abilities. The study recommended that, parents and guardians need to be the centers of changes and valuing education to females as they value males, nevertheless strict laws which are protecting educational rights to all children should be observed so that no barrier to education is caused by the social cultural practices.

**KEY WORDS:** Social-cultural practices, and Primary education

### INTRODUCTION

Sociocultural practices are those customs and values that community practice for their rituals, traditions and identity. Ngaiza (2002) in the study about perception of parents on girls' education in United States observed that, scholars who have focused on gender issues often treat all aspects of education as working to the disadvantage of women. Gender imbalance between men and women is still noted although not as much as in other countries such as Eastern Asia and Africa.

Kainuwa & Njeemah (2013) asserted that, women are left behind in terms of access, support and educational opportunities due to cultural bias in developing countries. This has motivated us to carry out this study since Tanzania is among the developing countries and studies shows that there are such cultural practices in the country. Our study tries to indicate the effects of such gender imbalances to female students from completing their primary education.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study identifies the effects of social cultural practices which inhibit female pupils from completing primary education in Mkalama district in Singida region Tanzania. It is expected that the findings of the study may have multiple benefit to various stakeholders, parents and educational planners in handling educational matters to female learners. Nonetheless, the study assumes that the awareness created by it may contribute to the panacea of problems that female pupils face toward their way in realizing primary education.

### METHODS

The study used questionnaires and the interviews as the main tools of the data collection whereby questionnaires were presented via paper and pencils and interviews were conducted through face to face. Pilot study was done to test for validity and reliability of the instruments. The sample size of the study was 30 people. This comprised of 15 female primary school students, 8 head teachers 1 from each primary school of the sampled schools, 3 Ward Executive Officers (WEOs), 3 community traditional leaders

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and 1 District Educational Officer (DEO) (primary). We used simple random sampling to make selection of 3 WEOs then stratified sampling was employed to get 15 female students under study.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Table 1. Effects of Socio-Cultural Practices Contributing to Inhibiting Female Students from Completing Primary Education (n = 30)**

Item	Af(%)	Uf(%)	Df(%)	Tf(%)
Some students who are culturally isolated tend to feel shy and lose morale to go to school	62.5	25	12.5	100
Initiated girls became physically and mentally ready for marital status	75	00	25	100
Initiation ceremonies force girls to stay away from school for some time while others fail to come back to school after ceremony	75	12.5	12.5	100
Girls fail to deliver their academic abilities because of the teaching they get from the traditional dances	62.5	12.5	25	100
Education to girls seem to be regarded as luxurious by the members of the community	50	12.5	37.5	100
Traditional stereotyping makes a girl to be much attached to domestic duties than school	75	00	25	100
FGM produces helpless and isolated girls at schools	62.5	12.5	25	100
Some traditional dances end up late in the midnight, this increases school truancy among girls	75	00	25	100
Early pregnancy is sometimes enhanced by some traditional norms such as, initiation ceremony	50	25	25	100

Note: Af = Agree frequency, Uf = Undecided frequency, Df = Disagree frequency, and Tf = Total frequency.

Having a glance on the table above it can be realized that initiation rites has effects on girls realization of their goals to education, because girl becomes physically and mentally ready for marital status than education (75%). This study asserts that, girls who are initiated seem to be much prepared for motherhood responsibilities than going on with educational opportunities. This is contributed by initiations since elders teach girls the way to satisfy a husband and other matrimonial responsibilities. In one of the interviews the respondent said:

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*Respondent p: 'In initiation rites girls are more taught on handling their husbands and family as future mothers than going for further education'*

Thus, the central theme of initiation teachings is preparing a girl child for motherhood tasks leading to lowering down her concentration towards schooling. HakiElimu (2010) contented that, most of the girls are forced to be married after passing through traditional rites. This contributes to affect psychologically a girl, and hence develops negative perceptions upon school as a result many of them drop studies. Initiation ceremonies within the communities are normally conducted in countryside areas where there are widespread traditions and customs. Ayoub (2010) in support of this finding explained that, once a girl is initiated is likely being arranged for matrimonial accountability to experience what she was taught during initiation period. Nevertheless, girls who went through initiation ceremonies reflects themselves as grownups, and some of them see school as an institution for teenagers. It can therefore be revealed that, initiation rites create a room for a girl get married to materialize the ideas lent from initiations, thus she fails to complete her education.

Moreover, initiation ceremonies contribute to the forcing of girls to stay away from school for some time while others fail to come back to school after ceremony (75%), portrayed the negative influence of initiation rite practice towards female students' education efforts. Initiations arrangements in the communities is done in a selected area far from normal shelters where girls are required to stay there for a certain duration. This finding was in agreement with Kainuwa & Najeemah (2013) which argued that initiation rites oblige girls to stay out of schools for a certain period of time while studies are going on. The study found that, under some circumstances the schoolgirls fail to come back to school after the ceremonies. Initiation practice leads girls to learn motherhood roles of which they become interested to rehearse, therefore, the chance of failing to complete their education becomes rampant.

The directives and knowledge girls receive during initiation are beyond their actual age. Initiation rites in the communities reflect practice and belief about suitable roles for adult life. Omari (2006) in support of this finding explains that, mother and aunts discourage their daughters from studying instead, they convince girls to marry, cook for their husbands, deliver and rear children. On the other hand, this practice is related with supplying primary knowledge on reproduction, marriage, puberty and sexuality to female children. It can as a result be claimed that, most parents do not take attention about education of their daughters because they do not value the benefit of it. The perception of dis valuing girls' education drives parents to opt to allocate their daughters to matrimonial answer abilities such those learn from initiation rites. Thus, this hinders girls' right to complete their primary education.

Notwithstanding, traditional stereotyping makes a girl to be much attached to domestic duties than school (75%). In the sub-item on traditional stereotyping makes a girl to be much attached to domestic duties than school, the responses portrayed the effects of traditional stereotyping to many girls. A related finding was made by UNESCO (2005) which reports that, girls are forced to participate more in household activities than school activities. Traditional stereotyping increases chances for female students fail to recall most of the things they formerly learn at school than male students do. This was also noted in the interview session when respondents said:

*Respondent x: "You know most of the girls when they come back from schools have to make sure they work together with their mothers in household activities like cooking, collecting firewood, and making sure the family is in place"*

*Respondent y: "In most of our culture girls needs just to know reading and writing then get married, it is worthless to educate girls because they will be married to other clans then no benefit to your clan, but they if they know taking care of families then it will be a great appraisal to the clan where she is married"*

Taylor (2006) is in consensus with this view that, female students lack enough time to do revision of the matters they learn after school hours, because they spend much of their time on domestic chores. It was uncovered from the study that, traditional stereotyping concedes the opportunity for male students to do well in classes and complete primary school successful comparing to girl students. Domestic chores too, which are being performed by girls and women in the community, are considered not helpful for yielding profitable economic status comparing to which are done by males. Parsons & Bales (2014) comes in accord that, women undertake more non-economical deeds while men occupy in learning more profitable economic tasks. The research revealed that, the reflection of traditional stereotyping upon girls in the community, is much influenced by their cultural beliefs about the role of women in the society, that is, the role of motherhood. These gender disparities in the family and in education position girls into the narrowed apprehended characters of wives and mothers (Kimego, 2007; Mtinda, 2015). Women are traditionally groomed to be the bearers and makers of traditions identity. This makes parents inspire their daughters to attend traditional arrangements for their proper identity in the society. It can hence be safely concluded that, girls are overwhelmed with household chores in many families. Girls spend more time in household duties before going and after coming from school. This slows down their education morale and accelerates their failure to complete education.

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Nonetheless, in the sub-item on some traditional dances end up late in the midnight, this increases school truancy among girls 75%, the finding shows that, such practice has impact towards girl's education. It was disclosed from this study that, there is the famous traditional dance known as 'Nkininda' which is normally held during harvest season. During such dance people of all ages and sex are allowed to participate, and it sometimes ends up late in the night. A similar report was done by UNESCO (2002) that, factors such as social-cultural practice leads to, early marriage, and pregnancy. 'Nkininda' dance exposes girls to various activities such as getting entangled with a male person, early pregnancy and marriage. These speeds up the chance for female student not to complete their education.

In addition, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) produces helpless and isolated girls at school 62.5%, yielded high score to show evidence that, such cultural practice has an uninvited influence upon girls' education. FGM signifies all conducts which comprise either partial or total elimination of the external female genital organs for non-medical motives (UNICEF, 2013). The finding from the current study shows that, FGM is normally conducted by traditional practitioners mostly in rural areas who are called 'ngaribas'.

*Respondent z: 'Girls are mutilated so that they become less stimulated by sexual hormones and that once they are married, they cannot easy cheat their husbands'*

From the interview response above, female genital mutilation is used as a controlling mechanism of unfaithfulness behavior especially when they get married. This finding is in agreement with Pesambili & Mkumbo (2018) earlier cited which reports that, traditionally, the central idea behind FGM is to control fleshly stimulation of girls so that they become satisfied with their husbands.

Girls who are mutilated in the traditional community face several consequences such as early marriages, psychological upset, and parents' negative attitudes towards their education, lose interest of going on with school. UNICEF (2014) corresponds with this view that, after a girl has undergone mutilation she suffers from severe pain, bleeding, shock, urine retention, bacterial infection, open wounds in the genital region, frequent bladder and urinary tract infections, infertility and child delivery-related contradictions. It appears that, girls who succeed to escape FGM suffer from isolation and shame from their peers who have been mutilated. This makes some girls run away from their homes because they feel being disrespected, ultimately they fail to complete their education. FGM practice needs girls to stay out of school either temporarily or permanently, and those who disagree to undertake FGM become dis-valued in the community (Msuya, 2017). The study also disclosed that, girls who are not mutilated are prohibited to cook for in-laws, cannot get married and sometimes can be divorced if it is revealed, she got married without being mutilated. It can as a consequence be appealed that, some women are being mutilated after they get married, especially when they encounter difficulties related to take in children and repeated miscarriage. This is because the in-laws find guilty that, the wife is considered responsible for that unfriend outcome. Thus, the current research study was set to find out if such practice has any impact to female student on completing their primary education.

Apart from the above arguments, students who are culturally isolated tend to feel shy and lose morale to go to school 62.5, the respondents displayed that, some cultural practices such as FGM are discriminatory against female students. This influences girls to shyness and many of them turn to see no value to continue with education. Girls who reject to abide with their community cultural conducts are normally isolated and sanctioned from various deeds. Pesambili & Mkumbo (2018) were in agreement with this view that, FGM acts as a barrier to many girls towards their efforts of continuing with education because, the effects resulting from that practice like isolation, consequently, leads to psychological suffering. Psychological misery finally leads girls to be unable to complete education especially at primary level.

It emerged from the current study that, biased cultural practices in the community serve as the interfering agents to female students' education and that, girls unapproachability to education makes them be in danger of failing to complete education career. Some parents decide to withdraw their daughters from school when they see education as a conflicting factor with cultural norms such as FGM and marriage (UNFPA, 2010). Teenage girls are being taken out of school to prepare them for the traditional marriage occasion. It can consequently be safely said that some girls who are culturally alienated normally escape from their families to live with the family of their relatives, such as aunts and uncles until they reach mature ages. This makes girls engage in undesired behaviors which at the end of the day leads them fail to complete their education.

The sub-item on girls fail to deliver their academic abilities because of the teaching they get from traditional norms (62.5%), discloses the view that, girls are gifted different talents and abilities, but they become unable to practice them because of the presence of uninvited cultural conducts in the community. Most traditional teachings girls get diminish their capabilities on the basis of their femaleness. It appears that, girls are mostly coached towards motherhood answerabilities. Such knowledge cannot enable girls to uncover their academic capacities because they consider themselves as subordinates before men. This finding fits well with that of Eitzen (2000) which argued that it was measured a social shortcoming for a female student to be talented because

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of negative cultural perception from the community. The findings of this study show that, parents in the community mentor their daughters about how they should act, be respectful and how they should often speak out in different situations, simply because they are girls. Such teachings are being provided through various traditional experiences a girl is borne to, such as initiation rites. During the interviews, a respondent pointed out that:

*Respondent p: 'It is not normal and is a shock in some of the families and our communities when a female student performs well academically than a male student'*

The view of the respondent *p*: seems to be in line with the study by Amadi (2013) which pointed that, teachers were able to recognize smart boys, but were often amazed to learn that, girls could also be considered academically intelligent. It can thus be claimed that certain communities have no trust in the concept of girls' education, capabilities and women empowerment.

The sub-item on initiated girl is likely to be prepared for motherhood responsibilities to show experience she got during initiation period (62.5%), the respondents' responses showed that, initiations ceremonies have a negative role to play to the arrangements of a girl towards matrimonial accountability. It emerged from this study that, teachings girls get during initiation period largely influence them to be good wives and mothers when they get married. The moment a girl passes initiation rites psychologically develops her physical stimulation that creates a room for a girl to indulge into disloyalty affairs with men in order to go through the teachings she got (Ayoub, 2010). It can be explained that traditional lessons' openness enlarges the want for the initiated girl to rehearse what she was trained during initiation rite session. This becomes an obstacle to her school continuity because after doing the rehearsal they automatically develop negative interest to wards education.

Although, education for girls seems to be luxurious activity by the community members (50%), yet displays the presence of low concentration upon educating girls. Girls who are reared in the communities and groomed for matrimonial responsibilities than education. The current research study revealed that, parents on the basis of traditional view have the mandate to opt to send their daughters to school or not and no cultural bound to be accountable for. Community members do not see and value the benefit of educating girls. Many parents consider girl's education as loss of investment. HakiElimu (2011) is in agreement with this finding that, in some parts of Tanzania, education for girls is seen as a luxury thing, and when a female student gets back home from school, she is obliged to fulfill domestic title roles instead of doing school assignments and exercises. The tendency of not valuing girl's education makes many parents to opt educating boys, with a belief that, boys can get admission to civil service work compared to informal and cheap work of their sisters (UNGEI, 2014). This maybe contributed by the masculine nature of the communities that put the boys as the first receiver of social cake including education to the detriment of girls. It can at this point be concluded that, even if a certain parent knows the importance of sending a girl to school, so long traditions have no bounds to adjust for conflicting effects, they can remain vague to back up their daughter towards education.

All above, early pregnancy is sometimes enhanced by some traditional norms such as, initiation ceremony (50%), traditional customs among other factors donates a lot to early pregnancies among many school ongoing female students. Traditional conducts such as FGM, initiation rites and traditional dances expose girl to infidel behaviors than education. Mollel & Chong (2017) are in consensus with this study that, several cultural practices attract some parents to pull girls out of school immediately when they reach puberty stage. This is to prepare them to be responsible mothers of the family when they get into marriage. Such situation increases girl's vulnerability to the risk of discontinuing with education.

Girls in the communities are exposed to unethical actions because of attending traditional dances and initiations. Such practices disclose them to male aggressiveness which many times result into early pregnancies, early marriage and finally failure to complete their primary education. HakiElimu (2010) opined that, in some areas of our country there still happening initiation ceremonies which subsidize girls to early physical relationship with men which finally springs school withdrawal. The current research study observed that, in most cases the cultural practices through which girls pass at early maturity, have the theme to introduce girls to social and spouse related tasks as women. This tendency has negative end product on girls' education. It seems that, many girls who become wide-open to unpleasant traditional practices fail to complete school. It can consequently be contended that, traditional practices such as initiation rites leads girls to lack access to productive incomes deeds which can enable them to opt for better choices. This situation softens and sub standardize them to gender based violence occurrences which at the end hamper their education continuity.

### CONCLUSION

This study was done in one district in Singida, it cannot be representative enough for the effects of sociocultural practices contributing to inhibiting female students from completing primary education for the whole country. Nevertheless, it may save as the reference point for the wider studies to be conducted in other areas. Since Tanzania has many tribes with different cultural practices which might not be the same all over the country. Withal, education for girls is very important as they can participate in

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developmental issues as boys. This can be realized in different political, economic and social affairs, due to the reason that their participation is valuable as boys.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare they have no conflict of interest.

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