

The Persistence of Negative Cultural Practices and Its Impact on Girls Access to Education: A Study of Makonde Ethnic at Newala District, Southern Tanzania

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Abstract

This study examined how the rites of passages ceremonies, early marriages, child preference and attitudes of community on girl's education contribute to drop out and low academic performance among female pupils at Newala District Southern Tanzania. The findings indicated that rites of passages ceremonies attendance contribute to drop out and poor academic performance of female pupils in rare cases. While early marriages forced female pupils to drop out from a school and for those who managed to complete standard seven most of them failed their final exams due to the fact that psychologically they consider themselves as wives and no longer pupils. The majority of respondents 66.6% teachers and 83.3% head teachers did not agree the idea that sons enjoy the preference of parents with regard to schooling compared to girls. The school committee (66.7%) suggested that in order to reduce dropout rates and improve female pupils' academic performance there is a need for the whole community to change their perceptions towards the importance of educating girls. This was supported by 68.0% female pupils, 83.3% teachers, 100% head teachers. The study recommends the government to involve communities to put more effort to discourage and abolish any kind of cultural practices that segregate girls their rights to education. Also the government should establish a policy that allows girls who become pregnant during school to go back to school after delivery to continue with their studies.

Key words: Newala, rites of passages, puberty, Millennium Development Goals, Makonde

Introduction

Education can be considered as learning in which knowledge, skills and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching training, research or simply through autodidacticism (Mbilingi, 1991). Culture is a learned behavior in this sense it is considered as a sum total way of people's life in a given area at a given time. It includes customs, traditions, beliefs, values, norms, arts, crafts, science, technology, economic systems, burial ceremonies, wedding, language etc Sewell, (2005).

Culture is the physical manifestations of the group as exhibited in the objects people make, cloth up, shelter, tools, implements, utensils etc. Therefore, culture is evident in the day to day activities of the people and at the same time these activities are influenced by the geographical location. This means culture may be dynamic (Brown, 1963). Culture is an important thing in any society though differs from across societies. For example, in some aspects, the way individuals practice some aspects such as: worshipping, economic activities, marriages or dressing differ across societies. In this sense, culture conveys a sense of identity for a certain society. The society is the one which transmits people's perspectives, beliefs and practices. On the one hand, culture can be defined as an implicit in social life that means it comprises non-materials like people's behaviours or customs, beliefs and on the other hand, culture comprises material things like house, clothes Sewell, (2005).

Tanzania is a nation which is made up of different people with diverse cultural practices. Cultural practices are range of activities or patterns of social interactions which cover many aspects of daily life that influence behaviour of individuals and the entire society like initiation ceremonies (marriages, puberty or wedding). Some cultural practices have positive impacts on social economic development" for example, moral values like hardworking, self-respect, personal cleanliness (Suda, 1996; Lopez, 2001). While other practices can have

negative impact to the society, these include those harmful practices which limit one to have access to socio-economic development (UNICEF, 2005; Ras-Work, 2006).

Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) are a form of discrimination; they violate the human rights of affected individuals, particularly women and girls. They arise from gender inequality and discriminatory values, which lead to unequal power relations in societies and to violence against women and girls (Ras-Work, 2006). Common for most harmful practices is that they have devastating consequences on the child's life, development, health, education and protection. Harmful Traditional Practices can affect girls and boys. However, because the causes of HTPs lie in deep-rooted gender inequalities, girls are the most affected especially in rural and impoverished areas, where prospects for girls are limited. Some examples of such HTPs are forced and early marriages, female genital mutilation, and the preference for sons over daughters, gender segregation in some issues like land, education, property and division of labour (UNICEF, 2012; Boyden, *at el.*,2014).

The government of Tanzania has however taken some steps to end or limit any cultural practice that jeopardize people's rights (HakiElimu, 2011 and UNICEF, 2012). One of the step include the implementation of the long-term prospects of the Darker Frame work for Action which contained a time-bound goal (Goal 5) devoted specifically to gender parity and equality in education. Moreover, special attention had been paid to women and girls in other goals; for example, goal two stipulates that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities will have access to a complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality (UNICEF, 2012)

Concept of Education

Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which knowledge, skills and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching training, research or simply through autodidacticism (Mbilingi, 1991). As a part of culture enlightens the society; education therefore can easily solve problems in life. Shabbir, *et al.*, (2003) defines education at different levels as one of the major instruments of social change and it is the force which brings changes in the traditional outlook of the people, and it develops insight for judging things in their contexts.

Basic education as per Tanzania Educational Training Policy (URT) (1995), is a primary/ elementary education which means the first stage of formal learning provided to children from the ages of about 5 – 13 years. In this stage a child is given compulsory literacy, numeracy, creativity and communication skills and it is normally available without charge but may be offered in a free-paying independent school. Primary education provides a foundation of knowledge, insuring moral growth for good citizenship and acquiring social skills appropriate for proper childhood development.

The Rites of Passage and Early Marriage as a Factors Limiting Girls' Education

Rite of passage is a celebration of the passage which occurs when an individual leaves one group to enter another (Bell, 2003). It involves a significant change of status in society which involves many things such as birth, puberty, death and marriage. They are all celebrated and characterized by ritual killing of animals, dancing and feasting. Puberty for girls involves separation of girls from other people for a period to mark the changing status from youth to adulthood. Kimego (2007); Mushi, *et al.*, (2010); Ayoub (2010) and; Declan (2015); argued that during puberty ceremonies girls sometimes under 14 ages are forced by their parents or guardians to stay away from others for a

considerable period of time where they are taught, moral instruction, introductory knowledge on reproduction, marriage, rules and taboos of the society, social responsibilities, take care of the family and do household chores.

Different scholars and researchers argue differently on rite of passages effect on access and achievement in education to female pupils (Temu, *et al.*, 2011), indicated that during rites of passage girls are taught sexual practices despite their young age, and they are encouraged to practice their newly acquired knowledge not only with boys but also with older men. These practices ultimately contribute to both early marriage and pregnancies leading to girls' pupil dropout from schools and under performance to those continuing with studies due to lack of concentration on studies and or psychological disturbance as a result of the sexual education so acquired together with the demand for practice of the same. After the ceremony, the girl is declared ready for marriage therefore they refused to proceed with school (Ayoub, 2010). If a girl says no to have sex with a man she would definitely be regarded as an outcast and will no longer be accepted in the community.

According to International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) (2006) and the Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls (IPPF), defined child marriage as a marriage before the age of 18 years which applies to both boys and girls, but the practice is far more common amongst young girls. Mtengeti, *et al.*, (2008) and UNICEF (2014) reported that an early marriage is one of the most well-known violations of children's rights and it is a global issue but rates vary dramatically, both within and between countries. Also, UNFPA (2013) the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reported that the rural-sub-Saharan Africa Countries have the highest child marriages, for instance Niger 75% and Chad 68%.

Despite near-universal commitments to end child marriage, one in three girls in developing countries will probably be married before they are 18. One out of nine girls will be married before their 15th birthday. Most of these girls are poor, less-educated, and living in rural areas. Over 67 million women 20-24-year-old in 2010 had been married as girls. Half were in Asia, one-fifth in Africa (UNFPA, 2012). UNICEF in its research reports that in Africa about 42% of girls are married before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2005). Also, UNFPA in its report estimated that, about 14.2 million girls under 18 will be married every year in developing countries especially in rural areas; this translates into 39,000 girls married each day and---this will rise to an average of 15.1 million girls a year, starting in 2021 until 2030, if the problem is not addressed (UNFPA, 2012). The UNFPA global databases, 2015, based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) show that in 1990, 2015, 2030, and 2050 about 160, 275, 360 and 465 million girls are at risk of child marriage respectively (UNFPA, 2015).

Mtengeti, *et al.*, (2008) observed that the problem of early marriages is more visible in Tanzania especially in rural and poor urban and specifically in some parts of the coastal areas where formal education has not been a priority. Poor families marry their young daughters to reduce the number of children they need to feed, clothe and educate (Naveed, *et al.*, 2015). Social pressures within a community can lead some families to wed young children for example, they believe marrying girls before they reach puberty will bring blessings on families, protect young girls from sexual attacks and violence and see it as a way to ensure that a daughter will not become pregnant out of wedlock and bring dishonour to the family (UNFPA, 2013 and Naveed, *et al.*, 2015).

Mesaki, (1997) and Maghimbi (1997) argued that some initiation ceremonies when girls reach puberty they are not allowed to go to school instead they are kept indoors and hence whether she agrees or not she is obliged to obey to wait for weeding arrangement. As soon

as the parents realize that their daughter has reached puberty, they withdraw her from school for “hibernation”. Wilcox *et al.* (2004) added that during the hibernation period girls are not comfortable coming to school covering themselves with *Khanga*. Such practices which are common in many African countries and Tanzania in particular may deprive the right of a girl child to have basic education thus reducing the promotion of women educated.

Community Preference and Attitudes on Girls Education

The preference for sons over daughters is strong in many societies. Parents prioritize educating sons with various reasons thus retaining family name, inheriting property, provision of old-age security and social prestige to parents. Most parents’ perceptions on educating girls have little incentives to bear the costs simply because they join their husband’s family and take with them the benefits of education (Pande, *et al.*, UNICEF, 2012). According to Isiugo-Abanihe (1994), most countries of Africa the preference for male children is one of the major causes of high fertility. The preference for a particular sex derives from the perceived value or benefits of that particular sex to parents (Karki, 1988). They believe that to educated girls lack relevant knowledge on household work and men would not be ready to marry such girls. Caring for siblings is considered the responsibilities of the older children some girls are made to stop school to care for their younger siblings and to return to school when their siblings are of school age (Karki, 1988). However, parents who are literate see the importance of educating their daughters as there is a common slogan that says “educating a woman is to educate the whole nation while educating a son is to educate a person”.

Therefore, this paper sought to find out how cultural practices such as the rite of passages, early marriages, child preference and attitude of the community towards educating women affect access and

achievement of girls' primary education. The information will be useful to education stakeholders and community at large on the social cultural limitations on girls' education in primary schools and the way forward.

Methodology

Research Approach and Design

The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The researcher collected the related through the review of the documents, questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion.

Methods of Data Collection

In the nature of this study the document search was used to collect some primary information regarding pupils' school attendance, dropouts and performance. This enabled the researcher to cross-check the consistency of the information collected through the questionnaires and interviews. Both questionnaires and interviews were employed to pupils, teachers, heads of schools, DEO and school committees to collect information concerning their understanding and perceptions on the extent Cultural practices such as rites of passages, early marriages, child preference affect female pupils' access to education.

Area of the Study, Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The samples for the study were drawn from six primary schools with, 205 participants including 36 primary school teachers, 6 head teachers, 144 pupils and 18 female school committee members and

one DEO through purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques.

Mtwara Region is one of Tanzania's 30 administrative regions (Fig 1). The regional capital is the municipality of Mtwara. According to the 2012 Tanzania National Census (URT, 2013), the region had a population of 1,270,854, which was lower than the pre-census projection of 1,374,767. The Mtwara region is situated in the southernmost regions. It lies between longitudes 38° and 40°30" east of Greenwich. Situated between latitudes 10°05" and 11°25" South of the Equator. It borders Lindi region to the North, the Indian Ocean to the east and separated by the Ruvuma River from Mozambique in the South. To the west it borders Ruvuma region.



Fig 1: Map of Tanzania Locating Study Area

The region is divided into five government administrative districts and seven local government authorities. The districts are namely; Mtwara, Tandahimba, Newala, Masasi and Nanyumbu. The corresponding local government Authorities are Mtwara-Mikindani Municipal council, Mtwara District council, Tandahimba District council, Newala District council, Masasi District council Nanyumbu District council and Masasi town council.

Data Analysis

Since the study involved both qualitative and quantitative data, the data analysis was done both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative technique was used to identify the magnitude of the problem and its data were analyzed and calculated in tables with percentages while qualitative technique used to investigate respondents' views where they were presented and interpreted.

The findings revealed different views from different respondents who were female pupils, head of schools (HoS), the District Education Officer (DEO), school committee members and teachers on whether or not the rite of passages is good, contribute to drop out and lead to low academic performance (Table 1).

Firstly, the researcher wanted to explore whether it is good for female pupils to attend rites of passages ceremonies. 80 (55.5%) of Female pupils, 05 (71.4%) of HoS and DEOs, 18 (100%) of school committee and 18 (50%) of teachers supported ceremonies attendance simply because female pupils are trained good morals and be hardworking in domestic chores such as cooking, fetching firewood, looking after young siblings, doing agricultural related activities and keeping themselves clean. Having this knowledge will prepare them for womanhood. On this report other scholars maintain that rites of passages or initiation ceremonies aim to introduce the girls into a world of adults for example, puberty period which marks the passage from childhood to adulthood, helps girls develop into critical thinking to be committed to themselves and to community as a whole (Wilcox, *et al.*, 2004).

Results and Discussions

Table 1.1: The Influence of Rites of Passage in limiting Female Pupils Primary Education

	Female Pupils			Head Teachers &DEO			School Committee			Teachers		
	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree
It is good and beneficial for female pupils to attend the rites of passage ceremony	80 (55.5%)	12 (8.3%)	64 (44.4%)	05 (71.4)	00 (0%)	02 (28.5%)	18 (100%)	00 (0%)	00 (0%)	18 (50%)	00 (0%)	18 (50%)
The rites of passage influence female pupils' dropout	38 (26.33)	11 (7.6%)	95 (65.9%)	01 (14.2%)	00 (0%)	06 (85.7%)	00 (0%)	00 (0%)	18 (100%)	20 (55.5%)	00 (0%)	16 (44.4%)
The rites of passage contribute to low academic performance among female pupils	49 (34.2%)	08 (5.5%)	87 (60.4%)	02 (28.5%)	00 (0%)	05 (71.4%)	00 (00%)	02 (11.1%)	16 (88.8%)	20 (55.5%)	00 (0%)	16 (44.4%)

A person who has undergone initiation is expected to be a changed person who could positively contribute in community debates and decision-making (Christopher, *et al.*, 2000). One head teacher interviewed had this to say,

“.....Participation of female pupils in rites of passage ceremonies aimed at giving and training them about self-awareness, cleanliness and reproductive health..., when children are aged (matured) enough to know what is good or wrong, so this tradition does not in any way affect schooling nor influence female pupils' dropout.... after all it is normally conducted during school vacation...”

It was apparent therefore, that rites of passages should be followed and maintained to their knowledge and experience. An ancient anthropologist Van Gennep (1960) quoted in Blumenkrantz, *et al.*, (2010) described that rites of passages are community-created and *community directed* experiences that guide and transmit cultural values and knowledge to an individual or individuals. Initiation rites according to Mwaipaja (2000) are traditional practices that have been practiced for a long time and are important and meaningful to the people that practice them (Wilcox *et al.*, 2004). Ignorance of the female pupils, long distance from home to school, laziness, uncondusive of both home and school environments and sometimes parents have little education hence little or no encouragement to girls therefore, make female pupils less motivated to attend to school.

On the other hand, 64 (44.4%) female pupils, 02 (28.5%) HoS and DEO, and 18 (50%) teachers did not support that female pupils should attend rites of passages ceremonies. This group of respondents pointed out that initiation ceremonies are not good for

female pupils to attend because they clash with the school calendar, which automatically lead them end up failing in class for having missed over months of schooling. This response corresponds to what Ouma (2013) observes, that initiation ceremonies are scheduled to take place during the school holidays, but the process begins earlier and extend, leading to absenteeism from school. Also, respondents mentioned that trainings and instructions received during the initiation period do not encourage formal education but rather they push the girls to be submissive and do what is right within their culture which is becoming good sexual partners to their future husbands and good mothers to their children. As one of the female teacher wrote in the questionnaire:

“.....instructions and trainings given to young female attending rites of passage ceremonies are far beyond their age, since children are exposed into learning sexual activities which end at polluting their mind....., children are then tempted to practice (try) what they learn, ultimately, they end at loosing concentration in studies, misbehaving to teachers, becoming prostitutes, getting pregnant and or underperforming academically or altogether....”

The above view concurs with Chisamya, *at el.*, (2012) and Ayoub (2010) as they observed that during initiation ceremonies a girl is trained how to satisfy a husband when in contact with him sexually as a result affect concentration on academic affairs. Wilcox, *et al.*, (2004) put emphasis on this argument by stating that with this type of training the girls were lured into leaving the formal education and they enter into the adult world of marriage and child bearing. Kessler (2000) argued that positive rites of passage for young people in are

sorely lacking in today's society instead they are forced to learn some irrelevant things. In this argument Blumenkrantz (2010) adds that the contemporary use of this term "rites of passage" has obscured its true meaning and value.

The Rites of Passage Influence Female Pupils' Dropout

In the second question the researcher wanted to know if the rite of passage influences female pupils' dropout. Majority of respondents asserted that attending rites of passages does not influence the dropout among female pupils as indicated by 95 (65.9%) of female pupils, 06 (85.7%) of HoS and DEO, 18 (100%) of school committee and 16 (44.4%) of teachers. One of the teachers involved in the study wrote this way:

.....rites of passage do not influence dropout of school girls, a female pupil may decide to drop from studies for whatever reasons not necessarily participation in the rites of passage, dropout in this country is common in all regions and all districts....., do you want to say that all regions experiencing dropout in this country is because of the influence of rites of passage? Rites of passage do not influence dropout nor poor academic performance...."

This implies that the excessive drop out of female pupils from school is in rare cases caused by rites of passages ceremonies attendance. Respondents believe that dropout of female might be due to the failure of the families to provide these school girls with school requirements as a result pupil themselves involved to look for the school writing materials, uniforms and school fees which make them

not to attend school regularly thus some may opt to quit the school. These arguments correspond to what Makiya (2009) found that pupils do not come to school regularly because of the negative influences in their lives including problems with families, mob psychology and/or fear of punishment, poverty etc.

In the same question however, few respondents commented that attending rites of passages ceremonies causes female pupils to drop out from school as represented by 38 (26.33%) of female pupils, 01 (14.2%) of HoS and DEOs, and 20 (55.5%) of teachers. The respondents disclosed further that soon after the girls have been introduced to the rites of passage, the concentration on sexual activities increases hence losing interest in schooling. Their views were in line with the observation made by Kimego, (2007) and Ayoub, (2010) who argued that participation in initiation ceremonies forces girls to stay away from schools for a considerable period of time while studies are going on and in some occasions the school girls refused to come back to school after the ceremonies. Odaga and Heneveld (1995) advanced evidence which showed that initiation ceremonies bring dilemmas for girls, affecting their school attendance and academic performance and even leading to dropout. Initiated girls found it difficult to return to formal school or to concentrate of their own studies because the next expectation is marriage. In another study by Chimombo, *et al.*, (2000) found that initiation ceremonies contributed significantly to school dropout as ceremonies that involve dances are mostly performed at night as thus most of the girls may spend inordinate time practicing the dances as a result pupil themselves absented in school the next day due to tiredness and late nights.

The Rites of Passage Contribute to Low Academic Performance among Female Pupils

In this particular sub-task, the respondents were asked to give their views whether the rites of passages contribute to low academic performance among female pupils. The findings revealed the majority disagreed with the idea that rites of passages contribute to low academic performance as represented by 87 (60.4%) of the female pupils, 05 (71.4%) of head of schools and DEO, 16 (88.8%) of school committee and 16 (44.4%) of teachers. Findings indicated that an initiation ceremony is not connected to poor performance because during the practice girls are taught discipline – to work hard, to respect, to be punctual etc. the poor academic performance of female pupils might be because of poor or cruel parental supervision, punitive parents with unclear disciplining orientation, break-up of families and lack of family values, deviant behaviours of girls themselves, poor relationship between teachers and female pupils and poor lesson preparation by teachers. On these (Wilcox, *et al.*, 2004) maintained that trainings expected female girls to acquire leadership skills, commitment and loyalty to their country, self-respect and self-discipline. Respondents involved in focused group discussion (FGD) emphasized that, the tradition of rites of passages was important for introducing young girls to the values of their society and to their new responsibilities as useful members of society therefore, it does not in any way lead to low academic performance among female pupils.

On the other hand, 49 (34.2%) of female pupils, 2 (28.5%) of HoS and DEO and 20 (55.5%) of teachers agreed that the rites of passage contribute to low academic performance among female pupils. They said that low academic performance is due to irregular attendance/frequent absenteeism, lack of time to do school related activities and lack of concentration on education as most of the time ceremonies are conducted during the lesson sessions. If pupils involved in the initiation ceremonies obvious do not attend school regularly therefore, it is virtually impossible for them to receive the instruction necessary to keep up with the level of their classmates and

earn passing grades. Also this group of respondents asserted that initiation ceremonies are centred on sex practices and after “*unyago*” girls are encouraged to have sexual relationship. These findings concur with what were observed by Ayoub (2010) and Mbilinyi (1985) who argued that during the rites of passage girls are taught how to perform sexual activities successfully despite their young age and encouraged to practice their newly acquired knowledge with boys and old men. As this psychologically disturbs their brains they would not behave well as students nor concentrate on study tasks, which in turn lead to poor performance.

Early Marriages

Different groups of respondents were asked to provide information on whether early marriages influence dropout and lower academic achievement to primary school girls. Their responses were quite different. Some of the respondents through interview and discussion supported the idea that there is connection between early marriages and dropout as well as poor academic achievement to female pupils. Sahbani, et al., (2016) asserted that early marriage is a barrier to girls’ education as young girls drop out of school to get married which negatively impacts academic performance. Respondents emphasized that female parents wanted their daughters to adopt mother roles earlier simply because parents need to reduce family financial burden. Williamson (2014) argued that in low-income families, the lack of economic alternatives contributes to the practice, as marriage to an older man may be seen as bringing economic security and raising family income through the bride price. UNFPA (2013) and UNICEF (2005) added that the problem of early marriages is more marked in those societies lacking formal educational opportunities. Also Mtengeti, et al., (2008) observed that some families believed early marriages would be beneficial to the girls and their families since they would remove the risk of promiscuity and of pregnancy before marriage, which bring shame to the family.

Also it was learnt from the findings that marriages in most of the societies specifically in rural and coastal areas are given more priority than education. Both parents and their daughters still believe that the marriage is more important for a female child than education as it makes a girl to excel in her life if at all she gets someone to marry. Traditionally it is known that once a pupil girl prepared to get married obviously psychologically consider herself as an adult and not a school pupil, so the learning success starts to slow down and it is a ticket for her to drop out of school or she opt to complete standard seven with poor performance (Blumenkrantz, *et al.*, 2010). In this regard one teacher wrote this:

".... there are some female pupils who are married off soon after the release of primary school leaving examination results. This tells that these pupils were not concentrating on schooling... if you trace carefully you can note that even the preparation for the wedding ceremony started sometimes before the release of the examination results.... which means that some female pupils prepare themselves to fail their examination in order to justify their desire for early marriage....to them passing examination is a misfortune."

The findings suggest that traditional and low income were the most powerful predictors of early marriages. It was explained that students who exposed into early marriages are usually missed classes as such they fell behind their peers in classroom work performance and finally dropped out from school due to pregnancy and childbirth. Davis, *et al.*, (2013) added that marriage and pregnancy have been identified as some of the key factors forcing girls to leave school. Nguyen *et al.*, (2012c) asserted that some girls may be more willing to marry early or their parents may be more inclined to have them marry early. Similarly, Nguyen, *et al.*, (2012c) maintain that because of

girls' low academic abilities, they may be less interested in pursuing their education may also marry earlier and might have dropped out of school even in the absence of marriage

Those respondents who denied the idea commented that, there is no influence of early marriages on female pupils' dropout. Nowadays there are no parents or guardian who force or encourage their daughters to drop out of schools in order to be married as the tradition of early marriage to school girls has no room as the community has now changed and sees the importance of educating girls. One the female pupils involved in FGD had this to say.

"...to be frank I have never head even from friends of mine that they are dreaming of dropping out of school for the purpose of getting marriage nor have I heard or seen a parent forcing or encouraging his/her daughter to drop out of school in order to be married..... our dream is to study up to university and our parents encourage us so...."

The above quotation reflects those societies who see the importance of female education in a society. One of the respondents during interview said that the tradition of early marriage to school girls was practiced in the past; it has no room in the society.

Child Preference and Attitudes of Parents on Girls Education

In this task the researcher wanted to explore the perceptions of communities towards female education and whether there is preference to educate sons than daughters. The findings obtained from different respondents 144 female pupil, 18 school committee, 06 heads of schools and 36 teachers are indicated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Responses on the Attitude of the Community Towards Girls' Education and Child Preference

Statement	Female Pupils			Teachers			School Committee			Head Teachers		
	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
Sons are given more priority than daughters in their education	26 (18.0%)	00 (0.0%)	118 (81.9%)	12 (33.3%)	00 (0%)	24 (66.6%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)	18 (100%)	1.0 (16.6%)	0.0 (0.0%)	5.0 (83.3%)
Preference to educate boys than girls in your community	18 (12.5%)	00 (0.0%)	126 (87.5%)	12 (33.3%)	00 (00%)	24 (66.6%)	00 (0%)	00 (0%)	18 (100%)	1.0 (16.6%)	00 (0%)	5.0 (83.3%)

The majority of respondents represented by 118 (81.9%) of female pupils, 24 (66.6%) of teachers, 18 (100%) of school committee and 05 (83.3%) of heads of schools disagreed with the idea that sons are given more priority than daughters in their education. The findings reflect that the preference for sons' education is fast disappearing in some societies. Following the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) and the *Education for All* (EFA) campaigns communities see the importance of educating their daughters. Education is vital to ensuring a better quality of life for all children and a better world for all people, but if girls are left behind, those goals can never be achieved (Hadden, *at el.*,1996; Schultz, 2002). Due to this all most equal opportunities are now given to both boys and girls in terms of their education. The African proverb says "If we educate a boy, we educate one person and if we educate a girl, we educate a family and the whole nation" (Offorma, 2009). This means that by sending a girl to school, she is far more likely to ensure that her children also receive an education with a claim that investing in a girl's education is investing in a nation. Herz (1991) added that educating girls stimulates economic growth and it improves the wellbeing of women and gives them more agencies in their communities and countries. This is because the more education a woman has; the more likely it is she can earn a higher income, which will go to benefit her family. By supporting this one of the teachers wrote this in a questionnaire.

..... In the previous days, parents were reluctant to spend money for the education of their daughters, since it was believed that education given to girls has nothing good to her parents, it would rather benefit her husband.....but nowadays the community has changed a lot, they have begun to appreciate the importance of educating girls and they do so."

On the other hand, few respondents asserted that sons are given more priority in the community in terms of education as represented by 26 (18.1%) of female pupils, 12 (33.3%) and 1 (16.6%) of the heads of schools. From this perspective it was learnt that the problem of son's preference is still persist in some communities. These findings are consistent with Malekela (1994); UNICEF (2005); Ayana (2016); Sumra, *at el.*, (1998); and Lin, *at el.*, (2003) arguments that some parents are reluctant to invest in their daughter's education by fearing that if the girls were sent to school, they would become pregnant and their schooling would be terminated and the money spent on their education would become wasted. Sons continue the family lineage while daughters are married away to another household. Sons typically are responsible for supporting parents in their old age, and daughters fulfil the son's roles when sons are not available. This, therefore, makes the education of sons more attractive to parents. As such the costs of education, both direct costs (e.g. school fees, books, uniforms, etc.) and opportunity costs (e.g. loss of household help and in some cases, wages) are more readily absorbed for sons than daughters (Lin, *at el.*, 2003). Girls, upon marriage, join their husband's family and take with them the benefits of education, makes parents to have little incentives to bear the costs of educating their daughters (Herz, *et al.*, 2014; Mensch and Lloyd, 1998, Edewor, 2016).

Conclusions

This paper investigated how cultural practices such as the rite of passages, early marriages, child preferences and attitudes of the community towards educating women affect access and achievement of girls' primary education. On the basis of the findings recounted above, a number of conclusions were drawn.

Most respondents claimed rites of passages ceremonies had no connection with girl's drop out or poor academic performance this perhaps the knowledge of the society on the effects of these

ceremonies is not enough. Sometimes female pupils themselves are not serious with their studies which at the end complete standard seven with minimal ability to comprehend, read and write simple sentences in Kiswahili and in English or cannot write even their names thus such pupils may opt to dropout from school instead of wasting time.

There is a close link among child marriage, puberty, traditional beliefs and poverty. Parents or guardians with economic hardship are often tempted to marry off their daughters after reaching puberty even if they are still in school to obtain bride price which they believe will remove the family from financial burdens and at the same time remove their daughter from the risk of getting pregnancy before marriage.

In relation to child preference and attitudes of parents on girls' education, majority of the respondents argued that parents whether educated or uneducated have desire to educate their daughters. However, some factors such as, economic hardship, ignorant and large family size obstruct in acquiring education by the girls.

Recommendations

The Government of Tanzania and community at large believes that sexual activity is expected to be delayed until after a learner has completed formal schooling, so as to allow him/her to pay maximum attention to and derive maximum benefit from the educational programme, and so as to allow sexuality to be practised within a safe and emotionally mature relationship. It is hereby recommended parents, church, community and traditional leaders to join forces with the school in providing guidance along these lines as a matter of course. However, it recognizes due to negative culture in different Tanzanian society young people may be pressured into making unwise decisions, in which case pregnancy is consistently the most common family-related reason given by respondents in the study

area. The Ministry of education and culture must consider the student returns to school after she gave birth, she must be reinstated to the status she held when the leave began, which should include giving her the opportunity to make up any work missed.

The student should be allowed to choose how to make up the work. At this point it is recommended that the Open University or any other institution running the ODL to consider developing courses for secondary school students or primary school which will be the avenue students after they deliver to have access to online courses and finish up their studies.

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