

Factors Contributing to School Dropouts among Girls in Ooloolua Ward, Kajiado North Constituency, Kajiado County, Kenya

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Abstract: The study was to explore the leading factors of girls' dropout in Ooloolua Ward, Kajiado North Constituency, Kajiado County, Kenya. The study was aimed to determine the socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to school dropout and to suggest strategies which can be used to curb the problem. The study employed an exploratory research design using purposive sampling with a sample size of 15 participants which included 10 girls who had dropped out in school and 4 key informants who were working closely with the children. The data was collected using two Interview Guides. The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis. The results revealed that early marriage, female genital mutilation, and valuing a boy than a girl were some of the cultural factors that were contributing to dropout of girls from school. Furthermore, the findings showed that economic factors such as low income and girls working to generate income for their families contributed to dropout of girls in Ooloolua ward Kajiado North Constituency, Kajiado County, Kenya. Also, the findings showed several strategies to curb girls from dropping out school included enforcement of policy by government, parents to provide basic needs and offer parental care to their children. The study recommended that government and other stakeholders to sensitize the society on the importance of educating the girl child; the government to push measures that will prevent girls from getting early marriage and unhealthy relationships with older men; and to sensitize parents towards providing equal opportunities to their children and especially in providing their basic needs including education.

Keywords: Cultural factors, Economic factors, Curbing strategies, School dropouts, Girls

I. INTRODUCTION

School dropout is not a new term in Kenya and other Sub-Saharan African countries. Although the rates have reduced significantly since 1970, the number of school dropouts compared to those who enrol is significantly high (UNESCO, 2018). Globally, as of September 2021, more than 29 million children dropped out of primary school compared to 48 million in 1970 has been reported. UNESCO (2018), records that 9% of children enrolled in primary schools worldwide drop out indefinitely. Although both boys and girls drop out of school, education inequality based on gender is prevalent in society. Every child, male or female has a right for quality education in Kenya. The quality of education is measured not by the number of enrolments, but by the number of successful completions. Unfortunately, most children in

South Saharan Africa do not have the privilege to complete and enjoy the fruits of their education. Most girls go barely beyond primary school due to socio-cultural and economic factors (Shahidul & Zehadul, 2015).

The above factors affect girls and boys alike. For instance, lack of money for school costs can affect either boys or girls, thus keeping them out of school. However, girls are known to be more vulnerable to these factors such that in similar circumstances where girls are forced to drop out of school, boys are more likely to continue with education (Ouma et al., 2017). According to UNESCO (2021), 10% of girls drop out of primary school compared to only 8% of boys. Other studies have been conducted on school dropouts based on demographic factors like region, culture, and gender, among others. Gender, however, has proven to be one of the most prevalent factors in education inequality in relation to dropout. The current study aims at exploring the cultural factors, economic factors contributing to dropouts of girls in school. Also, the study aims at exploring the strategies that can be used to prevent dropouts of girls in school.

II. LITARATURE REVIEW

Cultural Factors Contributing to Girls' Dropouts

A complex interaction of factors works simultaneously to determine a student's success in the academic journey. Cultural factors, however, play a huge role in determining an individual's completion of education (Dagnew, 2017). This is because culture provides the values that are held by a society that brings them together (Jawad & Waheed, 2014). The cultural values can however pose a potential for disrupting social advancements even economically. This can be seen in terms of access to education, especially for the female gender (Kiambati, 2020).

In a society that is benefit-oriented, parents still find no importance to educate girls when they believe that they would soon be married and eventually not help them. In African traditional society where girls were married off immediately after circumcision, it was believed that educating a girl would make them rebel against the cultural morals and become prostitutes (Kiambati, 2020). Although this belief has been overtaken by time, parents still prefer to invest in boys

while they give out their daughters for marriage at a tender age. Girls' dropout is more prevalent in developing countries due to backward cultural beliefs, early marriages, and early pregnancies. A study conducted by Otieno, Okatta, and Muhingi (2018), on "Socio-economic Implications of underage sexual relationships Girls were also forced to leave school to carry out household chores as their parents went out to work for wages (Moraa & Chamwei, 2017). In East Kamagambo, Rongo, Migori County" show cultural practices like funeral night dance music influence school attendance and the performance of the pupils. The scholar observed that pupils who attended the night music were more likely to drop out of school as a result of early pregnancy and early marriages.

Despite the abolition of barbaric cultural practices and beliefs like Female Genital Mutilation, early marriages are still a major challenge in education, especially in low-income countries (WHO, 2018). There are still parents who believe that a girl is ready for marriage as gets to puberty. Although forced marriages have diminished in society, such girls are exposed to the risk of early marriage through neglect. When a parent cannot provide for the essential needs of the girls, they are forced to seek ways of meeting these needs. One of the ways is finding a possible suitor, engaging in sexual activities for money, or engaging in cheap labour. These factors increase the risk of early marriages. According to Huri (2010), early marriages among girls in the rural areas in low-income countries led to an increase in the rates of school dropouts among girls. The scholar explains that parents found no benefit in taking a girl to school as they would soon be married off. In Afghanistan, it was realized, that early marriage was the highest cause of school dropouts among the girls (World Bank, 2018). Jawad and Waheed (2014) also explain that despite the evidence that education provides girls with better marriage preparation, the parents continue to believe that education will raise the cost of marriage for the girls. Human Rights Watch (2022), posited that 40% of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa get married before they are 18 years. They continue to say that girls who are married "young are often denied a range of human rights" including discontinuation of their education, health risks, and domestic violence.

Early pregnancy is also a cultural factor that has led to an increase in the rate of school dropouts for girls (Huri, 2010; Jawad & Waheed, 2014). Research conducted on the characteristics that predispose a girl to early pregnancies shows that girls with poor performance, low economic status as well as the vulnerability of girls, pose a risk factor in the dropout of school (Shahidul & Zehadul, 2015). According to Kenya Data and Health Survey (2014), over 13, 000 teenage girls drop out of school due to pregnancy. Between July 2016 and June 2017, 28, 932 girls between the age of 10 and 14 years got pregnant (Muturi, 2021). These figures show that one in every 5 girls drops out of school due to pregnancy.

Cultural beliefs have also played a role in the rate of school dropouts in schools (Rani, 2012). Yassin (2020) claims

that African parents are more concerned with the role of girls at home since they were supposed to take care of the children and prepare meals, therefore is no need for education. In some areas, the girls are only allowed to attend religious classes which provide the skills necessary for marriage (Huri, 2010). This is mostly observed in the rural areas as the traditional values are stronger compared to the urban areas.

Economic Factors Contributing to Girls' Dropout

The economic conditions of a family affect their ability to take children through education. Boys and girls are affected alike. However, access to education has always been biased and skewed towards the male gender (Otieno, Karanja, & Okuku, 2021). This is in relation to the parental investment in a child's education. The male child has always been given a preference for exposure to educational institutions (Shahidul & Zehadul, 2015). The authors elaborate on this occurrence in that the parents preferred to invest in the male child's education so that they would take care of them in the future in return. This preference is especially noted in situations where the family has a limited source of income. Therefore, a family's financial situation may place a girl at risk of dropping out before they have completed their studies (Huri, 2010). The cost of education is high and has also been a factor that has led to an increase in the rate of school dropouts among girls.

Despite the education costs being similar for both genders, parents are unwilling to pay for the girls, preferring to spend it on boys. This comes as a result of the cultural belief that girls seize to belong to their families when they get married. In Kenya, it has also been noted that the higher the school fees increase the higher the likelihood of the girls dropping out (Jawad & Waheed, 2014). A survey carried out by UNICEF(2019), shows that access to proper school equipment and theft are major factors.

Parents' inability to meet the costs of educating children leads to the exposure of children to economic activities to complement their parents'. One of the respondents in a research carried out in Tanzania explained that since his parents were not able to buy him uniforms and books, yet he was so ashamed to wear a torn uniform, he preferred to work to help his parents raise some household income (Ouma et al., 2017). The research also showed that most learners who leave school for waged labor engage themselves in activities like Artisanal mining, farming, and small businesses while most girls get married. The kind of household also influences the ability of girls to complete school. Children from single-parent families and polygamous families are more susceptible to school dropout. This is because it is difficult for such families to raise enough income for the school and household needs (Kalinga, 2013).

Other economic factors that lead to increased school dropout include the death of parents and leaving responsibilities to the children. According to Ouma et al. (2017), absenteeism and loss of interest in education are also major contributing factors to school dropout. Some learners discontinue school because after frequent absenteeism due to

household chores and economic activities, they are unable to catch up with the rest. Absenteeism leads to poor academic performance, which also encourages loss of interest and consequently total discontinuation (Nyaga, 2010). Kaur and Kaur (2018), also found out that girls who cannot afford sanitary products, proper underwear, and other essential needs are more like to drop out of school due to their inability to manage their menstrual hygiene. Menstruation and menstrual hygiene in itself is a major factor in early marriages and early pregnancies.

Strategies to Curb Early School Dropout among Primary Girls

The issue of early school dropouts has been in existence for a long period, and different policies have been established to mitigate the increased dropout rate while trying to increase the opportunities available for a girl to receive an education. Cultural factors have been a concern as observed in various literature. Policies on these factors such as the prevention of early marriages have been established to increase a girl's ability to access school (Shahidul & Zehadul, 2015). With the creation of such policies, there has been a necessity to prohibit such practices from happening by educating the communities on the need for educating girls. It is necessary to change the family's mindset as well as the overall community on the value of a girl's education. This helps to increase women's empowerment.

Education is a strong tool in empowering a woman by equipping her with the skills to become economically productive. Free education provides a girl the opportunity to access knowledge which empowers her to become a resourceful member of society (Shahidul & Zehadul, 2015). This has helped to solve the issue of the economic inability of the parents to pay for the education. Yasin (2020), confirms that this policy has provided an opportunity for many girls, especially in the rural areas to develop themselves and their families. This shows that the policy has had positive effects on the issue of school dropouts. In Kenya, free education has provided this avenue but cultural factors continue to play a great role in reducing access to education. Huri (2010), elaborates that the communities continue to hold a negative attitude toward this as well as the deeply rooted patriarchy in the community. The author encourages the importance of mobilization and sensitization of the community members to educate the uneducated and semi-educated rural parents about the benefits of a child's education. The introduction of stipends in motivating the enrollment of the girls in schools has been recommended to increase the drive for the girl to access an education (Shahidul & Zehadul, 2015).

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that you choose to integrate the different components of the study coherently and logically, thereby, ensuring you will effectively address the research problem; it constitutes the

blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data (Tayie, 2005). The study employed an exploratory research design. The advantage of using this approach was that it allows collection of qualitative data through interviews (Leavy, 2017). The exploratory approach allowed understanding cultural factors, economical factors and preventive strategies to curb the dropout of girls from school.

Target Population

According to WHO (2018), school dropout is a major factor in hindering the achievement of one of the sustainable development goals-education in developing countries. Kenya, being one of them, has recorded high rates of school dropout from the primary level. Owing to that girls are more vulnerable to school dropout, the study will focus on girls who have dropped out of school to engage in economic activities or to get married. The study targeted 14 participants which included 10 girls who have dropped out of school and 4 key informants who were a manager, social work, counsellor and a parent.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The research study employed purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a non-probability approach where the researcher uses his or her judgment to select respondents who meet the requirements of the study. Through purposive a sample size of 14 participants was selected to participate in the study. Out of the total sample size, 10 participants were girls who had dropped out school at one point and 4 key informants from different careers such as manager, counsellor, social work and a parent.

Research Instruments

The data for the study was collected using two Interview Guides, one for girls who had dropped out of school and the second for the key informants. The interview guide for girls contained four parts. The first part collected data on the demographic details of the participants which included age, gender, class, religion and parental status. The second part collected data on cultural factors that lead to dropout of girls in school. The third part collected data on the economical factors that lead to dropout of girls in school. The fourth part collected data on strategies of curbing girls from dropping out of school.

The second interview guide was used to collect data among the key informants. The interview guide contained four parts. The first part collected data on the demographic details of the participants including age, gender, educational level, religion, marital status and the career type. The second part collected data on cultural factors that lead to dropout of girls in school. The third part collected data on the economic factors that lead to dropout of girls in school. The fourth part collected data on strategies of curbing girls from dropping out of school.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher had identified 10 girls who were in a rescued centre in Oloolua ward and 4 key informants who were working closely with them. Prior to the interviews, the research had informed the participants and had gotten the permission from the school to collect the data. Before, interviewing each participant, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the participants were given the consent form to fill together with their demographic details. The participants were informed that the interview was to take 30 minutes to 1 hour and that it was to be audio recorded only for the academic purposes. The participants who were emotional were given counselling services later. The researcher thanked every participant for accepting to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected from interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. This method extends beyond identifying and evaluating the study issue to interpreting various parts of it (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis is meticulously coding the data and then reporting on the patterns found in the data.

IV. RESULTS

The study was set out to explore the factors contributing to school dropouts among girls in Oloolua Ward, Kajiado North Constituency, Kajiado County, Kenya. The findings were presented in the order of the objectives that guided this study. The study was to explore the cultural and economic factors contributing to school dropouts among primary girls in Oloolua Ward, Kajiado North Constituency, Kajiado County, Kenya and to find out what strategies can be used to curb dropout among primary girls in Oloolua Ward, Kajiado North Constituency, Kajiado County, Kenya. Using thematic analysis, the themes from the data collected was identified and supported by verbatim from the participants. Before presenting the findings as per the objectives, the study presented the demographic details of the participants.

Demographic details of the participants

The study presents the demographic of the participants. There were two groups of participants in which one of them composed of girls who had dropout out school and the second one was composed of the key informants. The demographic details for the girls who were interviewed captured their age, gender, class, religion and parent's marital status. The demographic details for key informants captured the age, gender, religion, educational level and work designation. The demographic details are provided for each group separately.

Demographic Details for Girls interviewed

The study presented the demographic details of the girls that were interviewed. The results are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Details for Girls

Participant No	Age	Gender	Class	Religion	Parents Marital Status
P1	15	Female	7	Christian	Married
P2	11	Female	5	Christian	Married
P3	14	Female	8	Christian	Single Mother
P4	16	Female	7	Christian	Single Mother
P5	12	Female	6	Christian	Single Mother
P6	15	Female	7	Christian	Married
P7	14	Female	8	Christian	Single Father
P8	13	Female	7	Christian	Single Father
P9	14	Female	7	Christian	Married
P10	14	Female	8	Christian	Married

The participants were between ages of 11 years to 16 years. All the participants were girls. They were between class 5 and 8. They were all Christians. Five of them were from married parents and the rest were brought up by either a single mother or father.

Demographic Details for Key Informants

The study presented the demographic details of the girls that were interviewed. The results are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Details for Key Informants

Key Informants Number	Age	Gender	Religion	Educational Level	Work Designation
KI 1	37	Female	Christian	University	Manager
KI 2	42	Male	Christian	College	Social Work
KI 3	40	Male	Christian	University	Counselor
KI 4	24	Female	Christian	University	Parent

The age of key informants' ranged between 24 and 40 years. In regard to gender, they were equally represented in the study. They were all Christians, majority of them having a university degree. They were all professionals in different field except one participant who was a parent.

Contribution of cultural factors to school dropout among girls in Oloolua Ward

Early marriage

Some participants reported early marriage as one of the cultural factors contributing to drop out of school among young girls in primarily school. The girls are forced to be married by older men. The society perceives them in terms of wealthy and therefore, they force them to early marriage. This is clear from a key informant, who said,

You know I come from Kikuyu community but I have worked in this community for over ten years, what I have observed is that mostly girls are married off at early age and therefore,

many are denied chances of being in school. Compared to boys, there is more boys in schools than girls (P1).

These theme is supported by another key informant who said *“Most girls are married off to old men especially those who don’t have parents or have no school fees since no one want to take the responsibility of paying school fees”* (KI 2). The aspects of girl’s dropout of school as a result of forced to be married by older men was echoed by a girl participant who said, *“All of us we are equal in our society but when the girls dropped out of school they were married off early to older men who had more than wives. I feared to be married to those men and this has made me to be serious in my studies”* (P10).

Female genital mutilation

Few participants pointed female genital mutilation as a cultural factor leading girls’ dropout out school. It is connected with early marriage. When girls are taken through the exercise of genital mutilation, they are considered to be mature and ready for marriage and therefore, they are forced to early marriage and end up dropping out of school. This is strongly expressed by a key informant who said, *“In addition, in our centre most girls come from Maasai community and these are the girls who have been rescued after their parents threatened them to subject them for female genital mutilation (FGM) and others dropped out of school after they were rescued from early marriages”* (KI 1).

Value of a boy child than a girl child

Value of a boy child than a girl child was a cultural theme that was expressed by almost all the participants including the key informants and the girl’s participants. The boy child is given priority in education than a girl child because they are ones to be breadwinners in the family unlike girls who will be married. This was strongly expressed by a key informant, who said,

The society supports girl child education but not the same level as boys because they believe that once a girl succeeds the family that marries her are the ones that shall benefit from the fruits of the education. Men are believed to be the breadwinners in their families so their education is more considered hence the girl’s education is being neglected (KI 3).

The theme was also supported by another key informant who shared that boys are given the first priority in education compared to girls. She said, *“The attitude is negative since the boy child is given the priority to education compared to girls, this is experienced when they are sent home for lack of school fees the boy child is sent back to school while a girl child is helping in the kitchen for some days”* (P4).

Furthermore, the theme was supported by the girls’ participants. One of the girl participants shared that boys are given the first priority in education while girls are forced to be married by order men. She said, *“In my culture as a Maasai,*

boys are more valued than girls and they are given priority when it comes to education and that makes me feel bad as a girl and when I grow up I would like to make sure that more girls are going to school instead of being married off to old men” (P1).

Contribution of economic factors to school dropout among girls in Olooua Ward

Low income in families

Low income in families came out as an economical contributing factor to dropout of girls in school. Majority of the family’s work in low earning jobs which them unable to provide basic needs to their children including education. This was echoed by a girl participant who said, *“I am educating you so that you can know about herself, become better person and have a good family, because my parents did not take me to school since they did not have money.’ My mother would tell me every time she visited me”* (P7). Moreover, the theme was supported by another girl participant who said, *“In some cases there are some families maybe they don’t have money or they may don’t care about their children or they get married early because they want their brothers to go to school”* (P8). Also another girl participant emphasized on the same theme when she said, *“Lack of money or they believe that the girls cannot study or sometimes the parents refuse to take the girl child to school they want someone to marry the girl when the parent give her child or a girl the girl child cannot go to school”* (P9).

Unhealthy relationships with opposite sex

Due to economic challenges girls are forced to have boyfriends in order to cater for the basic needs and especially if the parents are not in position to provide. Engaging in boy/girl relationships can easily lead to early pregnancy or marriage. Most of the participants reported to have boyfriends in meeting their basic needs. A key informant said, *“Most girls who are still living with their parents meet their basic needs from their parents, others who have engaged in early relationships get their basic needs from their boyfriends”* (KI 1).

Likewise, the theme was supported by another key informant, who said,

I can imagine the basic needs are like food, clothing, shelter, medication and education, which most girls get from their families, but this depends with age as there are those who are young and have boyfriends who support them. For those who have been guided well by their parents they meet their needs without depending on others (KI 2).

Furthermore, another participants pointed out that some girls get basic needs from their boyfriends when she said, *“Girls meet their basic needs through support from their families, from their boyfriends and fiancés, part-time employment while others have their businesses that generate income to cater for their basic needs”* (P3).

Responsibilities in generating income

Participating in generating income for the family emerged as an economical factor that leads girls to drop out of school. Some girls are involved in small business of the parents and others sell sweets in streets which exposes them to vulnerability. Others have been employed to generate some income for the family which puts them at the risk of dropping out of school. A key informant said, *“In this area I have noted that most girls help their parents in their house chores and after school they participate in casual jobs like washing clothes, selling sweets in the streets, tilling other people’s farms while others are told by their parents to beg on the streets”* (KI 1).

Still another key informant supported the same theme when he said, *“Since most parents have established their small businesses, some girls are engaged in assisting their parents in running these businesses and others are given some responsibilities which help in generating income for their families”* (P2). Likewise, the theme was supported by another key informant who said, *“Most girls are involved in family businesses, others are employed and they remember to invest at home, there are those who do farming and earn income encouraging and motivating others to do the same. Still there are those who teach their families on how they can generate income”* (KI 3).

*Strategies for curbing school dropout among girls in Olooua Ward**Government policy enforcement*

The enforcement of government policy came out as one preventive measure to curb dropout of girls in school. The government needs to provide resources that will enable the girl child complete school. The chiefs are ought to ensure the policies are implemented. A key informant said, *“I think through the government policy enforced by the chiefs’ to ensure every girl child is going to school even after early pregnancy. The government has all the resources and powers in ensuring that the school heads, chiefs and ‘Nyumba Kumi’ leaders have put more efforts to instil a policy on education for the girl child”* (KI 1).

The theme was echoed by another key informer who said, *“The government should tighten the existing laws for instance, in case a girl has been abused the perpetrator should be jailed for others to learn. More advocacy need to be done, making life-skills as well as guidance and counselling to be compulsory in schools”* (KI 2).

Encouragement

Encouragement was pointed out as a way helping girls to complete their schools. Boys and girls need to be treated equally and encouraged in their studies. They ought to be given moral support by parents, teachers and the society at large. A key informant emphasized on this when he said, *“I think by being attentive to girl’s needs, encouraging them by talking on the importance of education and being treated*

equally as boys within the society will help them complete their studies” (KI 3). Another key informant still emphasized on the same theme when he said, *“Girls like boys need moral support from their parents as well their teachers and the society at large, provision of required items, mentorship and parents need to be available for them”* (KI 2).

Provision of basic needs

Provision of the basic needs was outlined by majority of the participants as a way preventing girls from dropping out of school. When the parents make effort of providing the basic needs for children, they are likely to have humble time to complete their studies. This was echoed by a key informant, who said, *“I believe that if parents ensure that the girl child is getting all basic needs, giving them guidance, offering counselling and accepting them even when they have done a mistake will make them feel cared for in return they become more responsible and independent”* (KI 2). This theme was supported by another participant who said, *“Parents need to provide for girls’ basic needs, have a positive mind towards the results of girl child education and talking to girls on the importance of going to school”*(P3).

Parental guidance

Majority of the participants pointed parental guidance as one of ways of curbing girls from dropping out of school. The parents need to offer guidance of their children on importance of education. Also, they need to guide their children on proper relationships with the opposite sex in order to avoid early pregnancies that will lead them to drop out of school. This strongly emphasized by a key informant who said,

I think parents were need to know that they were once children and they should be able to guide and advice their children in the right way. Their roles is to give guidance on do’s and don’ts while relating with the opposite sex, parents need to tell their children that making friends with the opposite sex is key and normal in their development but also ensure that relationship is healthy and beneficial to both (KI 1).

Another key informant supports the same theme when said,

It is true parents have a role to play in guiding girls in their relationship with the opposite sex, however, some parents neglect that role to teachers which becomes hard for girls to understand how they need to relate with the opposite sex. Lack of guidance from parents lead to most girls engaging in sexual activities that results in early pregnancies and others getting sexually transmitted diseases while others attempts abortion which is risky to girls and their unborn child (KI 2).

The theme also came out clearly from the girl’s participants. A girl participant said,

My parents tell me that I should not play with boys because they will destroy my life. When I was in class six

I had a boyfriend and he used to come to our house, one day my parents found him in the house, they talked to both of us and advised us that we need to relate in a respectful way knowing what was important to us, our education (P2).

The theme was supported by another girl participant who said,

My parents told me that not all boys are good and for men that I must obey them. They gave me a story when they were young like me how they were advised by their parents. They told me patient is very important in life and I should work hard while knowing who my friends are (P4).

Likewise, the theme was echoed by another participant who said,

My parents told me not to fetch water in the evening and stop following bad company, adding that I should stay away from men and boys. They told me that loving myself will help me know what is good for me and that I should obey those who are older than me and they mean for me (P5).

V. DISCUSSION

The study was set out to explore the cultural and economic factors contributing to school dropouts among girls in Oloolua Ward, Kajiado North Constituency, Kajiado County, Kenya. In addition, the study was to explore the strategies to prevent dropout of girls from school. Some participants pointed female genital mutilation as a cultural factor leading girls' dropout out school which is connected with early marriage. When girls are taken through the exercise of genital mutilation, they are considered to be mature and ready for marriage and therefore, they are forced to early marriage and end up dropping out of school. These findings were consistent with findings of WHO (2018) which found that despite the abolition of barbaric cultural practices and beliefs like Female Genital Mutilation, early marriages are still a major challenge in education, especially in low-income countries. There are still parents who believe that a girl is ready for marriage as gets to puberty. Although forced marriages have diminished in society, such girls are exposed to the risk of early marriage through neglect.

Majority of participants expressed that the boy child is valued more than a girl child in the society. The boy child is given priority in education than a girl child because they are ones to be breadwinners in the family unlike girls who will be married. The findings of this study were in agreement with the findings of Yassin (2020), who claims that African parents are more concerned with the role of girls at home since they were supposed to take care of the children and prepare meals, therefore is no need for education. The findings were further supported by Huri (2010), who found that in some areas, the girls are only allowed to attend religious classes which provide the skills necessary for marriage. Likewise, the findings of this was in line with the findings of Karanja and Okuku (2021), who found that access to education has always

been biased and skewed towards the male gender. This is in relation to the parental investment in a child's education. The male child has always been given a preference for exposure to educational institutions (Shahidul & Zehadul, 2015). The authors elaborate on this occurrence in that the parents preferred to invest in the male child's education so that they would take care of them in the future in return.

Almost all the participants pointed low income as one the major economic factors contributing to dropout of girls in school. Majority of the families earn low income which makes them not to be able to provide all the basic needs to their children including education. The findings were consistent with findings of Huri (2010), who found that early marriages among girls in the rural areas in low-income countries led to an increase in the rates of school dropouts among girls. The scholar explains that parents found no benefit in taking a girl to school as they would soon be married off. In Afghanistan, it was realized, that early marriage was the highest cause of school dropouts among the girls (World Bank, 2018). Also, the results were consistent with findings of Huri (2010), who noted in situations where the family has a limited source of income, a family's financial situation may place a girl at risk of dropping out before they have completed their studies. The cost of education is high and has also been a factor that has led to an increase in the rate of school dropouts among girls.

Participating in generating income for the family emerged as an economical factor that can lead girls to drop out of school. Some girls are involved in small business of the parents and others sell sweets in streets which exposes them to vulnerability. Others have been employed to generate some income for the family which puts the girls at the risk of dropping out of school. The findings of this study resonated with the findings of Ouma et al. (2017), who reported that parents' inability to meet the costs of educating children leads to the exposure of children to economic activities to complement their parents. The research also showed that most learners who leave school for waged labor engage themselves in activities like Artisanal mining, farming, and small businesses while most girls get married. The kind of household also influences the ability of girls to complete school. Children from single-parent families and polygamous families are more susceptible to school dropout. This is because it is difficult for such families to raise enough income for the school and household needs (Kalinga, 2013).

The enforcement of government policy came out as one preventive measure to curb dropout of girls in school. The government needs to provide resources that will enable the girl child complete school. The chiefs are ought to ensure the policies are implemented. The results this study was in agreement with findings of Shahidul and Zehadul (2015), who reported that policies play a critical role in preventing early marriages. With the creation of such policies, there has been a necessity to prohibit such practices from happening by educating the communities on the need for educating girls. It is necessary to change the family's mindset as well as the

overall community on the value of a girl's education. This helps to increase women's empowerment. Moreover, Yasin (2020) confirms that this policy has provided an opportunity for many girls, especially in the rural areas to develop themselves and their families. This shows that the policy has had positive effects on the issue of school dropouts.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the cultural factors such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, and valuing boy child than a girl child as well as economic factors such low income and girls working to generate income for their families have contributed to dropout of girls in Olooua ward Kajiado North Constituency, Kajiado County, Kenya. In order to ensure that girls complete their education, there is need of enforcement of policy by government, parents to provide basic needs and offer parental care to their children.

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