

Relationship between Life Skills Training and Retrogressive Cultural Practices among Adolescent Girls in Marie Adelaide Rescue Center, Ewuasso Oonkidong Ward, Kajiado County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Retrogressive cultural practises are social norms that are practiced in different communities that are out dated in modern time and detrimental to the well –being of an individual. They are found among both men/boys and women/girls. In digital era retrogressive cultural practices are still existing particularly among adolescent girls/ boys in some cultures. They impact the lives negatively. This study seeks to find out the relationship between life skills training and retrogressive cultural practices especially among the adolescent girls of Ewuasso Oonkiidong, Ward, Kajiado County. The study adopted embedded concurrent mixed research design. The study equally used census to collect data from 125 adolescent girls from Marie Adelaide Rescue center and purposive sampling technique to collect data from 10 key informants. The study was guided by Social Cognitive Theory Bandura, (1977) complemented by Rational Emotive Behavioural theory by Ellis Beck Corey, (2013). Questionnaires and in depth interview were used as data collection instrument. The data were analyzed using correlation and themes to measure the influence of life skills on retrogressive cultural practice. The findings demonstrated that there was an inverse correlation and a significant relationship between life skills training and retrogressive cultural practices $r = -0.116, -0.58, .595$ respectively and $p > 0.05$. The study recommends that the local government should continue with the fight against retrogressive cultural practices, schools should provide platform into different cultural practices and provide adequate time to teaching life skills to the adolescents to help them in transformation process. Community should get involved in fight against retrogressive cultural practices to enable adolescents achieve attitudinal, transformational and behavioral changes. Education policy makers to integrating transformative life skills training as compulsory in education sector.

Key words: Life skills, retrogressive cultural practices, Adolescent girls, Female genital mutilation, early forced marriage, Teenage pregnancy

BACKGROUND

Retrogressive cultural practices are in existence in the modern time these are cultural values, norms and beliefs that are upheld consistently over time by a community and they are considered as community standard way of life (Ogundipe, 2020). However, some of these cultural values, norms and beliefs are harmful with negative consequences and detrimental to the person subjected to them, although some communities consider them as acceptable and normal. Among the retrogressive cultural practices include: Female genital mutilation, early forced marriage which result in increase of teenage pregnancy.

Globally studies have shown a declining trend in the frequency of retrogressive cultural practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) (Ayenew et al 2024). UNICEF (2022) confirms that over 650 million girls/women around the world today experience retrogressive cultural practices and not only girls/women that are affected for retrogressive cultural practises are likewise found among men as well. In Latin America Kohno, et al, (2020) realised that a quarter of women marry as adolescent before the age of 18. The factors that are identified as influencing early forced marriage are low autonomy in decision making, inadequate problem solving skills, insufficient negotiation skills and lack of critical thinking skills. Nabaneh and Muula (2019) confirmed that retrogressive cultural practices such as female genital mutilation is still a common practice that remains widespread among adolescent girls. They likewise noted that efforts to curb retrogressive cultural

practices had been made by various stakeholders, among strategies that had been recommended is education.

In Bangladesh UNICEF, (2019) confirms that many young girls marry before the age of 20. Kabir Ruhul (2019) identified traditional cultural norms and beliefs as significant factors that perpetuate retrogressive cultural practices among women/girls. Mubaiwa et al (2022) noted that during Covid -19 retrogressive cultural practices are still prevalent in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya, they asserted that efforts to reduce retrogressive cultural practices are sometimes weak and difficult because of community beliefs. They continued to recommend that efforts should be made in individual and collective levels to ensure the rights of girls are upheld. Koskey, J, A and Mooka, E (2023) continue to assert that socio cultural factors are among the aspects that influence the spread of HIV/AIDS among girls/women in Kenya. They acknowledged female genital mutilation practice as one of the major contributor of the virus in pastoralist community. Lotwel O and Gervasio, (2021) identified retrogressive cultural practices as impending women/girls from participating in social development.

Njati and O. Abel, (2024) stipulates that cultural beliefs, distress education among adolescent girls in Kajiado community. They claim that youth attitude towards different cultural practices affects how they live their contemporary life. They cited that among the retrogressive cultural practices in Kajiado County female genital mutilation takes the lead with (42%) followed by early forced marriage (30%). They concluded that sensitization of the community members against retrogressive cultural practices to be carried out in public meetings, community based organizations, churches, schools, local television, radio stations, socio media and print media platform. They further recommended that Nyumba Kumi Initiative should follow closely homes under their jurisdiction to prevent female genital mutilation practitioners and stop their services to take place. Mwenda et al (2020) reaffirm the recommendations as significant strategies of eradication of retrogressive cultural practises among adolescents. They emphasized that these factors are more effective than law enforcement in bringing about mind set transformation and changes in life. Mutava et al (2023) further affirm that in Wajir County in Kenya retrogressive cultural practices are the main factors that are hindering adolescent girls from completing basic education.

In Latin America Camire and Fernandos (2019), noted that risky behaviours among the adolescent have been reduced through promotion of life skills education which they acknowledged as a significant aspect and vital in reducing risky behaviours among the adolescent. This view was bolstered by Warda and Mohammed (2020) in Iran, when they explored the significance of life skills among young people. They acknowledge that life skills training brings a positive effect on people's quality of life and emotional regulation. Again, in Iran Babael, (2023) admitted that substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, violence and bully among the adolescent are common practises. He, affirmed that life skills education has been named as an element that reduces substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, violence and bullying among adolescent and foster in them self-confidence and self-esteem.

In Africa, Egypt, Behna University Sayed, et al (2019) reported that individuals who had been taught life skills when they are adolescent are less likely to engage in risky behaviours. Furthermore, Education Development trust organization during Covid 19 crisis noted high increase in teenage pregnancies and early marriages among adolescent girls it identified life skills education as a potential intervention for prevention and reduction of unintended pregnancies and early forced marriages among adolescent girls during times of crisis. The organization confirmed that life skills training approach was recognized as one of the intervention that could assist in addressing some of the unique difficulties that are faced by adolescent in times of crisis. Tal and Geraldine (2020) acknowledged that integrating life skills education in the life of adolescent is a significant strategy that could enable the adolescent to embrace life holistically and could strengthen social networks and interpersonal connections. They equally admitted that life skills training is an effective mean that can enable adolescent girls to refrain from abuse and prevent them from entering into inappropriate marriages before they have made conscious decision.

Waruingi et al (2022) in South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe noted that the education system has been shifted from content-based to competency-based curriculum and life skills training was named as an aspect that enable learners acquire knowledge and abilities to make informed decisions in their learning. Similarly, life skills education has been demonstrated as helping adolescent improve the chances of succeeding in life. They argue that the aim of competency-based curriculum is to increase student's productivity

both in and out of the classroom through imparting necessary life skills.

In Kenya unveiling of CBC (Competency Based Curriculum in education has identified as an aspect that assist learners to acquire basic knowledge and skills that enable them to develop holistically to become innovative in and out of school. More so, it was affirmed that CBC has aided in making education more holistic in order to produce learners who are fully equipped and skilled to think critically to the challenges of live, to judge consciously and help to look for appropriate solutions to solve challenges in life (Amutambi, 2019). Life skills education consists of behaviours, mindsets, non tangible skills that can be integrated to academic leading to personal and professional success (DeJaeghere, J., & Murphy-Graham, E 2022).

Thus, these studies show life skills training as a component that complements education systems to enable adolescents embrace life in all its aspects. Equally, the studies demonstrate that life skills education has grown great attention among education policymakers and researcher as a significant aspect for future achievements. Prasannah, G. (2022) comments that life skills training offers working skills which are able to bring changes in perceptions, opinions, mindset, attitudes, and beliefs in the lives of the adolescents and enable them to solve the problems that occurs in their daily living. He further says that life skills education is the only element that can enabled the forthcoming generations develop new values, negotiate with tensions and dilemmas of future and enable them to take up responsibilities to carve their future. Therefore, life skills education is designed to help learners generate new values, examine themselves, collaborate, critically thinks and be creative. More so life skills training challenge the adolescents assume responsibility to search answer for their life and solutions in light of one's experience and education by considering person's culture.

Reflecting from these findings the results indicate that retrogressive cultural practices are in existence in our modern time and life skills training has been used and introduced in school context aiming at offering holistic education to the learners. Despite of, this growth and expansion, adolescents' girls especially from pastoralist community are still among those subjected to retrogressive cultural practices. Thus, this study seek to investigate the relationship between life skills training and retrogressive cultural practises among the adolescent girls from pastoral community in particular Ewuasso Oonkiidong Ward, Kajiado County. Scarce studies have been carried out on the relationship between life skills training/education and retrogressive cultural practises especially in pastoralist communities. Thus, this study explore adolescent girls in Marie Adelaide Rescue Center Ewuasso Oonkiidong Ward, Kajiado County a pastoralist community. The aim is to provide literature and to inform education policy makers, government and community.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Maasai in Ewuasso O'onkiidong Ward, which is on the outskirts of Ngong town, Kajiado County. Kajiado County is mainly occupied by Maasai people although other communities in Kenya are also found in the County in a smaller number. Maasai' are a pastoralist community with deeply entrenched cultural and traditional norms and beliefs. The community keeps some socio cultural norms in which some of them are retrogressive cultural practise such as female genital mutilation, early force marriage which result to teenage pregnancy. The study used concurrent embedded mixed method design which applies both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study used 135 participants, 125 adolescent girls in which Census method was applied and 10 key informants selected through purposive sampling technique method. The instrument for collecting data were questionnaires for quantitative data the questionnaire was tailored by the researcher and taken through the process of piloting scoring 0.7 points. For qualitative data the study used in depth interview to obtain qualitative data through an interview guide. Data was analysed using statistical package for social science (SPSS), version 26. Descriptive analysis was used to obtain the mean value and Pearson correlation and Qualitative data through themes.

Ethical Considerations

Before obtaining data the researcher ensured the right permissions were obtained. An introduction letter from Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), research permit from the National Commission for Science and Technology and innovation (NACOSTI), authorized document from the location of research, assent from adolescent and a field assistant.

Sample Characteristics

The study targeted 135 participants 125 adolescent girls and 10 key informants. The adolescent girls' age was between 10-18 years and were from different social economic backgrounds. Their levels of education varied from junior high school, senior secondary and technical institutes.

RESULTS

The study sought to find out the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable of the sample. This would be helpful in identifying the strategies that could be help in curbing retrogressive cultural practises in the individual.

Retrogressive Cultural Practices

Table 1, Exhibit the retrogressive culture practices among the adolescent girls in Ewuasso Oonkiidong Ward, Kajiado County

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female Genital Mutilation is a common practice in my culture	89	4	5	4.74	.440
Female genital mutilation is practiced at a high rate in my community	89	4	5	4.74	.440
Female genital mutilation is a backward practice and harmful to the well-being of women/girls	89	4	5	4.99	.106
Early forced marriage is rampant in my culture	89	2	5	4.96	.334
Early forced marriage denies women/girls their human rights	89	4	5	4.99	.106
Early forced marriage comprises integral development of adolescent	89	4	5	4.99	.106
Teenage pregnancy prevalence rate is high in this area	89	4	5	4.99	.106
Teenage pregnancy is caused by early forced marriage	89	4	5	4.99	.106
Teenage pregnancy endanger the health of adolescent girls	89	4	5	4.99	.106
Valid N (listwise)	89				

The findings show that retrogressive cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, early forced marriage and teenage pregnancy are in existence results indicate that early forced marriage female genital mutilation and teenage pregnancy mean score $M > 4$.

Retrogressive cultural practices are being practiced in this community since it is part of the cultural only they are carried out secretly, our Kenya government prohibited practice such as female genital mutilation but it is still

practiced in some area but common practise that is openly practiced is early forced marriage, if a girl become pregnant when in school there slim chances for her to continue with her study. Records of these practises are rarely found you can obtain some data only in school when the head teachers seek a rescue center to rescue some girls other information can be acquired from the health facilities.

Levels of Life skills

The table 2 assesses the level life skills training among the adolescent girls,

Levels of Life Skills					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-awareness Skills	89	8.00	15.00	13.2472	1.47156
Negotiation Skills	89	7.00	15.00	11.6742	1.86946
Assertiveness Skills	88	8.00	15.00	12.0455	1.86873
Valid N (listwise)	88				

The results in this table indicate mean score of $M > 13$, $M > 12$ and $M > 11$ of self -awareness skills, assertive skills and negotiation skill respectively. Negotiation skills show a slight difference in the mean. This findings imply that the life skills training is being offered among the adolescent girls but negotiation skill is slowly embraced.

In Maasai culture women and girls are categorized as one group all are termed as “Enkerai” or “In kera” singular and plural respectively meaning a child or children especially the older men cannot address a woman whether married or not, child or adolescent girls in any other way, meaning even if you a woman who is married, in Maasai culture you remain a child, meaning you cannot be trusted with decision making everything has to be decided for you. Thus, life skills such as negotiation skill is a challenge because you cannot negotiate with a child to make important decision, but if life skills training will continue the next generation of men will be more inclusive in allow girls/women to be involved in decision making processes and encourage them to develop life skills which will enable them to make conscious and responsible personal choice.

Another interviewee said

In school setting life Skills training is not something new many of the schools has adopted the training and integrated it in the curriculum only that it not given adequate time. Mostly, the time allocated to life skills training is given to the subjects that are examinable and thus, life skills training is omitted because it is not part of academic work. We thank the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) which integrates life skills such as communication, critical thinking, problem solving and self-efficacy. However, life skills such as self-awareness, assertiveness, decision making and confidence need to be emphasized as well.

The table 3 represents the relationship between life skills training and retrogressive cultural practices

Correlations between life skills and retrogressive cultural practices					
		Overall Cultural Practice Score	Self-awareness Skills	Negotiation Skills	Assertiveness Skills
Overall Cultural Practice Score	Pearson Correlation	--			
	N	89			

Self-awareness Skills	Pearson Correlation	.075	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.486			
	N	89	89		
Negotiation Skills	Pearson Correlation	-.116	.554**	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.280	.000		
	N	89	89	89	
Assertiveness Skills	Pearson Correlation	-.058	.559**	.729**	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.595	.000	.000	
	N	88	88	88	88
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Table 3 the results demonstrate that there is an inverse correlation between retrogressive cultural practices and a significant relationship between retrogressive cultural practices and life skills training with $p > 0.05$.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study indicate that retrogressive cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, early forced marriage and teenage pregnancy that occur as a result of the latter two practises are still existing in the modern time. Katundano, (2020) affirms the findings as he conclude in his study that cultural practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting and early forced marriages remain common in Africa continent and continue to be limiting girls education in Africa continent. Mobolaji et al (2020) more connote high prevalence rate of child marriage continues to remain a public health and development concern in Nigeria, although campaign against the practice and policy have been established by Nigeria government to fight the practise, the prevalence of child marriage shows that the issue remains unabated.

Koriat (2022) continues to support the findings as he asserts in his study on cultural practices and academic performance of girls in Kajiado County. He confirms that retrogressive cultural practice are still prevalent in Kajiado County and they affect the academic performance of girls. The commonly retrogressive cultural practices are female genital mutilation and early forced marriage. Andiema, N. C. (2021) emphasizes that retrogressive cultural such as female genital Mutilation, early child marriages are high in West Pokot regardless of interventions by government and Non-Government Organisations over the years. These retrogressive cultural practises have hindered the advancement of girls academically. Like wise he mentioned teenage pregnancies among teenage girls as high and affecting their education ultimately ending up ruining their future. He continues to affirm that traditional cultural values and norms are highly regarded in pastoralist community among them is the retrogressive cultural practises which are detrimental to wellbeing of adolescent girls/women such as menstruation restriction. Mutaya et al, (2023) support the findings for they found in their research that some of retrogressive cultural practises such as menstruation are termed as taboo by some culture. This has led to girls' harassment and embarrassment by boys especially when they soil their dress accidentally leading to some adolescent girls dropping out of school. More so, in Nepal the findings revealed that different restrictions toward girls such as limiting girls/women food and movement during menstruation are observed this practise has led some girls/women being malnourished. Furthermore, this practise has resulted to some of adolescent girls are unable to access educational facilities thus limiting them from holistic empowerment. Chirongoma, S. (2021) again asserts despite several global, regional and national legislations against retrogressive cultural practises, the practises continued to exist in our modern times among both girls and boys but girls are extensively affected.

The study shows that life skills education is being imparted among the adolescent girls in pastoralist community

some of the life skills that are offered include; self-awareness, assertiveness and negotiation skill. However, findings of the study indicate that negotiation skills are less practised. Mwanyika, S. F. (2020), asserts the findings from his study in Tanzania, he reveals that lack of negotiation skills among adolescent girls in adolescent girls from pastoral community has led to early marriage and increase in teenage pregnancies and has been facilitated by compulsory traditional customs. Again, Mclay, K. (2020) affirms the result of this study from his study on the practise of beading that he carried out among Samburu girls. He found out that the girls who get involved in beading practise normally involve themselves in sexual activities although the practise is supposed to be non sexual. He confirms that the findings show that girls do not have power of negotiating the terms of the relationship so they end up being exploited sexually.

In addition the findings continue to demonstrate that life skills training is being taught among the adolescent yet retrogressive cultural practices are still present. The report from the interview a participant explained the factors that attributed to the perpetuation of retrogressive cultural practices. He echoed, that life skills training is affected by socio cultural and traditional norms that are found in pastoral community women/girls do not have rights decided life for themselves as Stats et al (2022) reinforced this results as they pointed out in Maasai culture girls/women find it difficult to make decisions regarding their lives because they still have to maintain cultural beliefs and traditions thus, do not have much say as pertain choices about their lives. Social cognitive theory the main theory applied for this study affirms the results as it states that individual behaviours are learnt through interaction of the person with other in the social context. The individual tends to repeat the social norms that are reinforced through reward and refrain from the behaviours that are discouraged through rewarding (Stajkovic & Sergent, 2019).

Nevertheless, social behaviours are believed to be functions of an individual's perspective of reality for the interpretation the individual has is generally subjective (Conner & Norman, 2015). Thus, since the adolescent girls learn the socio cultural practices from their context some of the socio cultural practices are retrogressive, it require the individual adolescent to think critically in order to decide consciously on which cultural practices are detrimental to one's life and which promote life. The complementary theory of rational emotive behavior theory was found to be helpful for it denotes that human beings have potentials both to act constructive and destructive ways. They are said to have a strong innate and learned dispositions to frequently be self-helping and "rational," as well as self-defeating and "irrational,". Human beings are endowed with the capacity for both rational and irrational thought, which attributed to the upbringing of an individual. The theory furthermore, explains emotional/psychological disturbances are not only triggered by biological factors but also by environmental conditions. The REBT theory further notes children are basically taught certain superstitions, taboos and prejudices to adhere to by their parents and their society (Dryden & Ellis, 2014). Therefore, by the adolescent identify the irrational beliefs and unhealthy socio cultural practices they are enabled to decide consciously to leave retrogressive cultural practices and adopt the healthy practices.

Ellis, D. J. (2021) continues to contend as he reinforces the Rational Emotive Behavioural theory. He says that individuals learn irrational thinking from significant others from childhood but they maintain them by creating irrational dogmas by themselves and strengthening them through self-defeating beliefs, through autosuggestion process and self-repetition. The individuals continue to behave as if these self-defeating beliefs and negative self-talk are useful. Thus it is out of their own repetition of child hood indoctrinated irrational thoughts, rather than an individual parent's repetition, that keeps dysfunctional attitudes alive and operative within them. Thus, according to him people do not need to be accepted and loved, even though this may be highly necessary. The individual need to be taught how one can feel undepressed even when one is unaccepted and unloved by significant others. This theory help individual to take the fully responsible of life with no blame towards other and themselves. Similarly, it encourages the individuals to fully accept themselves with their imperfection. This, reinforce the findings of this study that retrogressive cultural practice can be fought through personal and collective responsibility and one way of achieving personal initiative is through life skills training. Through this the adolescent girls are enabled to make conscious choice to take responsibility of their own life.

The results again, found out a significant relationship between life skills training and retrogressive cultural practises. This indicates that there are other more factors that could affect the relationship between life skills and retrogressive cultural. Nawaz, A (2022) concurred with the findings for in his study carried out in Pakistan noted that poverty and education levels predominantly affect the adolescent girls in making conscious decision in

regard to retrogressive cultural practices, He found out that, the adolescent girls with low level of education and from poor background have limited social exposure and they are more likely to be influenced to retrogressive cultural practices than their counter parts who have attained high education level and from high economic background. Mkamanga, E, et al (2022) affirm the findings of this study in their research in Malawi. They identified poverty as among the factor that contribute to increase of adolescent girls dropping out of school in Malawi and revealed likewise poverty lead adolescent girls to engage in early sex. Similarly, the findings of this study equally found a significant relationship between life skills education and retrogressive cultural practices meaning that the study used a small sampling size compared to the population of adolescent girls who experience retrogressive cultural practices.

The findings further indicate that there is a inverse correlation between life skills and retrogressive cultural practices. Thus, this implies that the observable pattern between life skills and retrogressive cultural practice indicates that if life skills increases the levels of retrogressive culture are likely to decreases. Nash, et al., (2019) support this result in their study on the issue of teenage pregnancies and other retrogressive cultural practices in Malawi, they designated that through promotion of life skills training number of teenage pregnancy among adolescent girls has declined in the rural areas. In Ethiopia, Yitbarek et al. (2022) claimed that the study carried in Ethiopia testing traditional school-based paradigm of education among pastoralist children. The research revealed that children were not provided with the education that would help them fully participate in society. Thus, the researcher recommended to education policy makers to integrated life skills training in the formal school curriculum to serve the pastoralist community effectively and equip the pastoralist children with the appropriate education to enable them in the future to participate fully in society. Bansal & Kapur, (2023), emphasized on the findings they affirmed that significant of life skills education among the adolescent is of paramount if life skills training is intertwined with the school curriculum it will be instrumental in providing values to adolescents that will be of great help in the future. More so, Ravindra et al (2017) confirm the findings they found that adolescent girls who have received life skills are self-aware, confident in their own abilities, and able to negotiate, behave purposely in life and are able to successfully navigate their social and cultural environments.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study attempted to examine the relationship between life skills training and retrogressive cultural practices among adolescent girls. The testing of reliability and validity of self -tailored data collection instrument assures validity and trustworthiness of the study findings. However, the study depended on a small sample selected from Kajiado County which might be limited. Similarly, the study examined retrogressive cultural practises among adolescent girls in which adolescent boys might be experiencing retrogressive cultural practices too.

CONCLUSION

The study contributes to the understanding of the relation between life skills training and retrogressive cultural practices. Equally, the study contributes to the understanding of the efficacy of social cognitive theory and rational emotive behavioural therapy and their impact to help in reducing retrogressive cultural practices among adolescent girls. The findings of the present study add to the literature that life skills training is significant aspect in fight against retrogressive cultural practices. However, the findings of the study show that there are other factors that can affect retrogressive cultural practises among adolescent apart from life skill training such as cultural norms, beliefs, and tradition, age and economic level. Thus, this study recommended that awareness could be created among education police makers, government and the community that life skills training is a significant element that could help in the fight against retrogressive cultural practices among adolescent. Self-awareness, assertiveness and negotiation skills should be the early course of action and the preventive measure against retrogressive cultural practice. Rescue centers and schools should continue with support of providing life skills training to help adolescent girls against retrogressive cultural practices.

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