

# Influence of Patriarchal Culture and Early marriage on Learner Academic Progression of Public Secondary School Students in Lagdera Sub-County, Kenya

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**Abstract:-** Education is an important priority for any country and it remains a very basic right that every child needs to get since it plays an outstanding role in the development of any country. However, academic progression in public secondary schools especially in the North Eastern parts of Kenya has consistently remained low over the years despite subsidized education. Therefore, the objectives of this study were to investigate the influence of patriarchal culture and early marriage on learner academic progression in public secondary schools in Lagdera sub county in Garissa County in Kenya. The study embraced a descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling was used to sample 301 respondents. Data was collected by use of questionnaires. The expected findings of this study may be significant by providing greater insight to the administrators and managers of schools into the factors that contribute to low academic progression among secondary school students in Lagdera sub county and also may serve as a reference point for education administrators to raise awareness and concern among parents teachers and students in partnership to solve the problem of dropout thus helping the ministry of education to reduce education resource wastage by monitoring learner progression at all levels.

**Key words:** Patriarchal Culture; Academic Progression

## I. INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy is a social system in which the father or the male is the head of the household having authority over women and children (Karmanae, 1992). The Somali are known to be a patriarchal society hence men make rules and dominate business and government as the woman main value is to support a man (behind a good man is a woman), bear children and housekeeping duties. UNICEF (2001) revealed that most pupils who enter primary school 48% of boys and only 29% of girls complete the cycle. As a result, girls are educated to know how to read and write and to be better mothers rather than for employment while boys are educated to get employment. In India, the birth of a girl is seen as an occasion of heartbroken sorrow and despair even in relatively affluent and educated families. A girl is seen as a burden given the fact that she will get married elsewhere and leave her natal family. On the other hand, a male child is more likely to gain full education, gain employment and pursue a working life intending to marry later. The women in India are deliberately

denied the opportunities for growth in the name of religion and sociocultural practice.

Northeastern province is largely composed of Somalis who are a patriarchal society as result accord women and girls' lower status. The society generally views girls to belong to other people and thus source of investment to the family hence are 'married off' before they get spoilt. According to Wanjiru (2007) girls are socialized to know that their brothers' education is more important than theirs hence very ready to drop out of school for the sake of their brothers. According to Mbatia (2005), the enrolment of boys in ASAL areas was higher than that of girls throughout the years covered by the study, education of sons is considered an investment and security for old age. This emphasizes the importance of educating boys.

Despite having an advantage in terms of access to education over girls the boys still face challenges in education in addition to their schoolwork, boys also have to help their parents with fencing and help in branding livestock during market days (Khalif, 2008). Noor (2003) notes that in Mandera district, distance between home and school is a major problem to girls since many parents do not allow their daughters to walk alone as a result they are kept out of school unless there is somebody preferably an elder brother to accompany her in school. This decision usually bounds to affect the girl child in her academics in schools.

According to Juma (1994), girl's education is also affected by them required to contribute to household chores. They are sometimes taken away from school to help in the home, nurse babies, clean the house, fetch firewood and water, cook food and milk cows. as a result of such household duties incorporated with long distances makes the child overwhelmed both at school and at home. Noor (2003) further observes that distance between school and home affects girls more than it does to boys since parents are afraid to let the girls walk alone unless she is accompanied by an elder brother. Security in and out of the school is of utmost concern for most girls since some girls who walk long distances to school end up being raped and sexually abused by boys and

male adults. Building boarding schools as a solution to curb the problem of distance between the school and home has not solved the problem. Khalif (2008) revealed that despite the presence of boarding schools in Garissa municipality, there is no girl boarding since a girl should not stay away from her parents or adult relatives. Also, women or girls who acquire high levels of education are not considered to be wife material "hence most men do not prefer them for marriage. As result of this notion, women are disadvantaged to acquire education to further levels.

According to article 1 of the convection on the Rights of the child (UNICEF, 2005), early marriage refers to any marriage of a child younger than 18 years old. Vue (2000) did a study on perception of early marriage and future education goals for young females in United States. The results of her study revealed that adolescents with high educational expectation were significantly less likely than others to become pregnant. Vue also found out that motherhood at the age of 14 and 15 meant an end to academic aspirations to girls regardless of motivation or achievement due to gender roles assigned to young girls. She suggested that there should be individual and group counseling in elementary and middle school to serve as early prevention for deterring early marriage for young female adolescents. Palamuleni (2011) conducted research on social economic determinants of age at marriage age in Malawi. He found that marriage varied by age rural urban, residence, religion, ethnicity and wealth. Palamuleni points that early marriage and consequences of early childbearing are related to high fertility, low status of women and adverse health risks for both the mother and the child. He recommended that public education should be provided to the people in Malawi to ensure majority are aware about the consequences of early marriage.

Further, Bayisenge (2010) examined the effects of early marriage in Rwanda. Using qualitative method, she noted young girls and boys who got married were most likely being forced into having sexual intercourse with their usually older husbands. He also pointed that this had severe negative health consequences as the child is often not psychologically and sexually mature. Bayisenge further states that girls who marry young between age 14-15 inevitably have children very early and many children because their knowledge of using contraceptives is very low and hence cannot talk about using a family planning method. He recommended that there should be a joint effort to formulate and implement marriage policies and strategies in order to safeguard young girls especially through promoting education of girls since if sufficiently prolonged it helps to delay age of marriage.

Nurrudin (2001) conducted a study on behalf of UNICEF on the perceptions of early marriage among women who married early in Barangay. He used qualitative research utilizing focus group discussion (FGD) and individual interviews of married women who married early from Barangay. The researcher focused on the topics such as optimum age for marriage, reasons or factors for getting married early and the advantages

and disadvantages of early marriage. Results showed that these women who got married early due to reasons like love and sexual desires, poverty, freedom from the bondage of strict parents, forced marriage and to have their own living. Some was due to the influences of television, media, friends and peers. Among the advantages of marrying early was financial stability, having a direction in life, having children to help in household and formworks. Nurrudin however found that making immature decisions in selections of mates led to early separation and marital problems.

Osakwe and Osagie (2010) did a study on perception of parents on the value of education to girls in delta central senatorial district in Nigeria. They found that parents did not consider education to girls as of high value because of the high dropout rate attributed to early marriage. As a result they recommended that there should be no gender difference hence parents should bridge the gap of differential treatment among their children.

It can be concluded therefore that education is an important priority for any country and it remains a very basic right that every child needs to get since it plays an outstanding role in the development of any nation. Academic progression in public secondary schools in Lagdera sub-county in Kenya has consistently remained low over the years (Njeru & Orodho 2003). Various intervention measures such as construction of temporary schools, provision of relief food, introduction of Free Primary Education and Subsidized Secondary Education in pastoralist's areas has been undertaken to address this issue. Despite the policy framework and interventions to enhance Education for All (EFA), many students in North Eastern Counties are not in school. Many students are substantially denied the basic human right to education due to participation in some Cultural practices which include early marriage and patriarchal culture. The practices involve young boys and girls who are of school going age. It is against this realization that the study intends to investigate the influence of cultural practices on student's academic progression in Lagdera Sub-county, Kenya.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Lagdera Sub-county in Garissa County in North Eastern part of Kenya using descriptive survey research design. A total of 301 respondents were selected for the study. Questionnaire was the main data collection instrument. The research findings have been presented in narrative form, frequency distribution, tables and percentages,

## III. RESULTS

This section provides results on the stages of school dropout among the secondary school students and the cultural practices that tend to influence academic progression.

*Stages of school drop-out among secondary school students in Lagdera sub-county*

The study sought to establish the stage at which students in secondary schools drop out of school. The respondents were also asked to describe school drop-rate by gender in order for the researcher to understand various elements that come into play and causes school drop-out among students. From the study, it was established that 12.1% of girls drop out of school in form one compared to 05.01% of boys who drop out of school at the same stage. The study further established that 18.03% of girls drop out at form two while 11.53% of the boys drop out of school at the same level; 12.82% of the female students drop out at form three compared to 6.45% male students who drop out of school at the same stage. Lastly, the study found out that only 5.21% of girls drop out at form four while at the same time, 2.13% of boys drop out of school at the same level. These findings show that school drop-out among girls in the county is higher compared to boys. It is also an indicating that school drop-out among both boys and girls in the region is high when they are in form one and form two as opposed to when they are in form three and four.

Table 1 Stages at which secondary school students drop out of school

Gender	Form 1 %	Form 2 %	Form 3 %	Form 4 %
Female	12.1	18.03	12.82	5.21
Male	05.01	11.53	6.45	2.13
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.11</b>	<b>29.56</b>	<b>19.27</b>	<b>7.34</b>

*Cultural practices that affect secondary school students in Lagdera sub- county*

The study sought to establish various practices that affect secondary school students in this region. The major cultural practices under consideration in the study are nomadic practices, early marriage and patriarchal culture. The frequency within which students were found to experience these practices were varied depending on the family size and the location. Students were asked to choose the practices of which they have fallen victims and thereafter state the frequency within which they have fallen victims to such practices. According to the study, 19.21% of the students have fallen victims of nomadic practices all the time while 22.63% have fallen victims to the nomadic practices most of the time. The study further revealed that 19.3% of the students rarely fall victims to nomadic pastoralism while 33.32% have never fallen victim of nomadic life. Findings of the study also revealed that 62.34% of the students have fallen victims of early marriage all the time, 32.56% of the students stated that they have fallen victims of early marriage most of the time, while 11.23% stated that they have rarely fallen victims of early marriage. Concerning patriarchal culture, 25.78% of the students agreed that they have fallen victims all the time, 23.67% of them stated that they have fallen victims most of the time.

Table 2 Cultural practices that affects lives of secondary school students in Lagdera Sub-county

Cultural practices	All the time %	Most of the time %	Rarely %	Never %
Early marriage	62.34	32.56	11.23	5.21
Patriarchal culture	25.78	23.67	19.24	11.63

**Influence of patriarchal culture on learner academic progression**

Regarding the influence of patriarchal culture on learner academic progression, it was established that 24.91% of the respondents strongly agreed that customs and traditions in the region affect academic progression of secondary students. The study further revealed that 22.61% of the respondents agreed that customs and traditions do influence academic progression while 16.27% disagreed that customs and traditions do not affect progression while the remaining 18.00% strongly disagreed that customs and traditions never influence academic progression. This is an indication that the culture is based on following the customs and traditions to the latter, which has adversely affected academic progression since some students have to be out of school for some time to help in ritual performance. Concerning male dominance society, the study established that 23.72% of the respondents strongly agreed that male dominance can influence academic progression among students while 32.17% agreed that male dominance can have effect on academic progression.

It was further revealed that 17.21% of the respondents were undecided while 16.40% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. The study also established that 10.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that male dominance has no effect on academic progression among students. There is indication that male dominance has impacted pressure on the value of women in the society as a result priority put on educating boy child compared to girl child. The findings of the study also showed that 25.78% of the respondents strongly agreed that women are oppressed in this society. A further 28.52% of the respondents agreed that indeed women have no say in this region while 17.21% of the respondents were undecided. The study also established that 13.58% of the respondents disagreed upon this statement while 14.91% of them strongly disagreed. These results are as shown in table 1.

Table 3 Effects of patriarchal culture on learner academic progression of students

Statement	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Customs and traditions	24.91%	22.61%	18.21%	16.27%	18.00%
Male dominance society	23.72%	32.17%	17.21%	16.40%	10.5%
Women oppression	25.78%	28.52%	17.21%	13.58%	14.91%

*Influence of early marriage on learner academic progression*

Socio-cultural factors have got varying effects of academic progress of students depending on the region and how strong the cultural practices are rooted in their areas. The study also sought to establish the relationship between early marriage practices on academic progress of students in the area. The respondents were asked to state the extent to which early marriage have affected academic progression of the students and according to the data obtained. Here, 42.65% of the respondents agreed that the influence of early marriage on academic progression of the students is very high, 28.13% of the respondents are of the opinion that the influence of early marriage is high while 21.87% said that the influence is low. The study also established that 7.35% of the respondents said that early marriage does not have any influence on academic progression of students. Early marriage was found to have more influence on academic progression of female students compared to the male students due to the fact that this has been the culture of most of the community living in Garissa County. These results are summarized in table 2.

Table 4 Relationship between early marriage and academic progression among students

Factor	Level of Influence			
	Very high %	High %	Low %	No Influence %
Early Marriage	42.65	28.13	21.87	7.35

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Patriarchal culture was found to have negative effects on academic progression of the learners in Lagdera Sub- County. The male dominated cultures leaves very little room for other members of the community or society especially women and girls to make decisions on matters concerning their own welfare. The study established that women are not allowed to have a say on the number of children they should have and the size of the family which in turn affects the resources at the family's disposal. Large families therefore experience strain on the available resources which in most cases cannot support education of all the children in the family while small families were found to have enough resources that caters for education of their family members. The findings of this study reveal that male dominance of and excessive subordination of females, domestic and gender-based division of labor, and higher patriarchal proclivities among men in LagderaSub- County are some of the ingredients of a patriarchal society. These issues make the achievement of proper education difficult for women. Major decisions were found to be made by men at the expense of women in the society. The culture was also associated with FGM which affects the health of the girls of school going age making them unable to attend school and classes after undergoing the cut.

Early marriage has got varying effects of academic progress of students depending on the region and how strong the cultural practices are rooted in their areas. Early marriage was found to lead to high level of dropout among female students while the effect as found to be low among male students. It therefore follows that early marriage affects more negative effects on the female students compared to the male students. It was further established that early marriage leads to digressed focus on academics as well as withdrawal from school and high level of school dropout.

#### V. RECOMMENDATION

The government needs to partner with local community, faith-based organization, community-based organizations and NGOs in the area to educate the community on the importance of departing from the patriarchal cultures and beliefs and how such beliefs have negatively affected the academic progression of learners from the community. The locals need to be educated on the right to education for every child and the need for the community to support their children and abandon cultures such that are not consistent with the children rights.

The community needs to be educated on the importance of having their children especially daughters getting married at the right age when they are both physically and emotionally mature to handle matters relating to marriage. The government through local county administration should put more effort towards ensuring that that early marriage and other cultural activities that deny the students right and opportunity to attend school and classes regularly are dealt with.

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