PAPANDA

Education For Community Transformation: The Influence of Socio-Cultural Practices Toward Schooling of Maasai Young Women of Monduli District -Tanzania

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Abstract:

The Tanzanian Government has made several efforts to guarantee the accessible and equitable education to all children irrespective of their race, creed or sex. However, there are some predominant socio-cultural practices which are impediments to young women's education. Using a case of Monduli district -Tanzania, this study explored the influence of socio-cultural practices toward schooling of Maasai Young Women. A cross- sectional research design was adopted to obtain a sample of 120 respondents. Data were collected using Questionnaires, Key Informants' Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) methods and analysed by using IBM-SPSS. 20.0 and content analysis. Overall, the study found that, Nomadic Lifestyle, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Early Marriages are tremendously affecting schooling of young Maasai women. While the two earlier mentioned practices were found to waste a lot of girls' learning hours; the latter has been causing a substantial number of school girls to drop out. Subsequently the girls became vulnerable to illiteracy of which jeopardizes their chances to participate in community development projects as well as in decision-making process. The illiterate people are not always invited to participate because they do not understand the nitty gritty of their participation. In order to eliminate these harmful practices, it is recommended the government and other stakeholders to create or strengthening community awareness campaigns and capacity-building programs.

INTRODUCTION

In a course of adhering to the World Declaration of Education for All (EFA) of 1990, the world national governments and other educational stakeholders have been committing huge investments to ensure the accessible and equitable education to all people irrespective of their race, creed or sex (Bior, 2019). However, despite of the huge investments in education which is supported by the general conviction that education is a basic right for all people, but there is some socio- cultural practices which are impediments to the education of a girl child (Kabeer, 2017: Smith & Sandford, 2022). Hellen, (2017) found that socio-cultural factors such as parents' attitude on girls' education, religious beliefs and gender preference are negatively affecting schooling of girls in the respective communities. This has become a basis for a substantial number of young girls being subjected to lower enrollment and/or highly dropping out from schools compared to their boys' counterparts (Gyasi et al, 2023). Liberal feminist theory has been fueling women's rights movement as it focuses on analyzing gender inequality and how girls miss opportunities in a diverse context. According to liberal feminist theory Women's autonomy is an important aspect of seeking their wellbeing but there are several socio-cultural practices which are embracing patriarchal structures of which undermine women rights in various aspects including education aspect (Bailey, 2016). UNESCO, (2014) found that in the entire world there are over 5.5 million girls who are out-of-school while the Net Enrolment Rate at primary school level is 56% for girls and 61% for boys. Malik, (2021) found that in Sub -Sahara African countries the gap in secondary school and tertiary education enrollment is alarming whereas in Angola and Eritrea only 20% girls are enrolled, 23% in Ethiopia and Malawi, 35% in Zimbabwe and Zambia and only 5% in Somalia.

Girls in African pastoral societies have been among the mostly marginalized in education aspect. Pressures have been exacerbated by climate change and other long-term trends of change like demographic change, commercialization, land access as well as conflict among communities which have tended to force men of pastoral communities to move away from one area to another for searching of water and pasture, leaving women behind to manage the household issues (Catley and Ayele, 2021). In Ethiopia for instance, the girls of pastoral communities of Afar and Somali which constitute an estimated population of 1.9 and 4.2 million respectively do not enjoy their right to basic education. The provision of basic education of good quality has been negligible to the mentioned pastoralist communities due to various reasons including their mobile life style and low knowledge on the value of basic education particularly for girls (Agu et al, 2018). Agu et al, 2018 continue to assert that, while the national average for share of out of school children is 31.5%, but the proportion in the Afar and Somali pastoralist communities is alarmingly very high accounting for 87.4% and 78.6% respectively. The Karamoja pastoral communities of Uganda have been also affected by this marginalization whereas there is strong evidence that the education offered in formal schools is "ill-aligned to the values, culture and lifestyle of the Karamojong, rendering it inconsequential to their lives and livelihoods" (Brown at al. 2017). According to KRSU, (2022) the Karamoja pastoral community has the highest percentage of Uganda's population with either no schooling or incomplete primary education by 79.8% of all females and 64.8% of all males.

The Maasai who occupies arid and semi-arid rangelands in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania is another African pastoral society and it is often described as the people of the "cattle complex" because their existence is based on livestock production (Tiampati, 2015). Maasai are popular in strictly embracing their culture and traditions (Madodi, 2022). Beside the globalization challenges influenced by technological advancement and western cultural civilization the Maasai have been independent-minded people who maintained their traditions (Nyangena, 2017). One of the most harmful traditions practiced by Maasai is to undermine the women in almost all aspect of life. The Maasai is highly patriarchal with women consistently positioned at the bottom of the social hierarchy as the men are having a higher level of authority over women and their families (URT, 2015). Maasai women are not allowed to make decisions concerning their own well-being let alone the decisions in the family or community (Mtey, 2020). As a result, Maasai women's participation in various social economic aspects is very minimal (Madodi, 2022).

In order to address this marginalization on women, particularly the unfair treatment of girls in education that were attributed by some harmful socio-cultural practices, the educational stakeholders have been making several efforts targeted to support the upholding of the stature of education as a 'fundamental human rights for all' (Heizer, 2005). Thus, all the world national governments have not only committed by signed to implement the United Nation Conventions that guarantee provision of free Compulsory Basic Education for all children irrespective of their sex and ethnicity but also, they were involved in a number of conferences and forums to emphasize the accomplishment of education agenda (Agana and Millar, 2015). Among the remarkable conferences that were prepared in this regard are the Jomtien World Conference of 1990 on Education for all by 2000; and the world summit for children of 1990 which were all came up with the United Nations Convention and agreement on the implementation of all children rights (Saliu and Aleru, 2018). At the Regional level, similar efforts were done whereby there were conducted such conferences like the International Conference on Assistance to the African Child of 1992 and Pan African Conference on the Education of Girls of 1993 (Muhammed, 2000). Other conferences conducted in the African context are including those of 1977, 1979, 1981, 1984 and 1994. All these conferences were prepared to emphasize the African countries to join the efforts of the international community by signing and adopting various international resolutions, declarations and plans of actions laid to eliminate the inhibitions and bottlenecks to girls and women empowerment (Saliu and Aleru, 2018).

In Tanzanian context, the government has taken various measures to demonstrate its willingness and commitment to comply with the international protocols, charters and Convention

aimed at addressing all issues which hamper young women's general social welfare including their educational rights. The government has among other things established the Ministry of Community Development, Women and Children in 1990 for coordinating women affairs (Madodi, 2022). The Ministry formulated the Women and Gender Development Policy of which among other things it has introduced strategies to sensitize communities to eliminate all socio- cultural practices which are barriers to young women's educational rights (GoT, 2000).

Despite of all these proven efforts made to address all practices which are hindering women general women wellbeing and girls' educational rights in particular, but yet many previous studies have revealed several socio-cultural practices which are still barriers to girls' education (Mohamed et al, 2017; U.N. Children's Fund, 2022; Gyasi et al, 2023). Nevertheless, there is limited information on these previous studies to have assessed how these factors have been influencing schooling to girls of pastoral communities in Tanzania. Thus, in order to map the extent on how socio-cultural practices have been influencing girls of Pastoral communities to attain their educational rights, and in regarding the highlighted unique characteristics of Maasai in comparison to other pastoral communities, this study has chosen it as a case study. On the other hand, the study will make substantial additions to the current body of literature which interplay between socio-cultural and their impact on girl child education. This is based on the general assumption that if social cultural factors which affect girls' education are not exposed; they are likely to cause some continuous impediments on the future social wellbeing of women and other marginalized groups.

METHODS

The study was conducted in Monduli District, Arusha -Tanzania which has an area of 6,419 square kilometres. The district is a home to the Maasai community among other Maasai communities of Kenya and Tanzania. According to URT, (2015) the Maasai are nomadic pastoralists community who are engaging in keeping domestic animals mostly cows. Apart from the big number of cattle kept by Maasai in other Maasai dwelling districts of Longido, Ngorongoro, Arumeru and Kiteto, Monduli is forming a biggest portion of livestock whereby there are around 4.6 million livestock which are kept in a grazing located land of 1,055.475 square kilometers of the district. The choice of this district was based on this fact that let alone the fact that the Maasai community counts among the popular African communities who are strictly embracing their culture and traditions. Compared to other mentioned African pastoral communities particularly those residing in Tanzania like Ilparakuyo (Wakwavi), Barbaig, Kurya and Ilarusa (Waarusha), the Maasai community is unique as it is forming the largest pastoral group of East Africa. The Maasai live in temporary mud huts which is influenced by the cultural tendency of pastoral communities to move from one area to another to search pastures of their livestock. Some of the qualitative data were generated through Focused Group Interviews using a checklist. A cross-sectional design was used to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. In this regard, a total of 120 respondents were sampled from 8 wards to represent 20 wards of the district. The main respondents were; students and teachers from primary schools. Other respondents were; - traditional/Influential community leaders, parents and primary school students who have dropped out of school. Other key informants who were involved are government officials from villages up to villages levels. These are 4 Influential community members, 8 Village Executive Officers and 8 Village Chairpersons, 4 Ward Community Development Officers and 4 Ward Executive Officers. The respondents were selected through simple randomly and purposively sampling. Purposive sampling was used to sample such key informant's individual such as females who dropped out of basic schools because of their knowledge and experience in the subject of study. Basing on their relevant information other respondents who were sampled through Purposive sampling were teachers and the mentioned government officials. In order to avoid biases, the simple random sample was used to select such respondents like students and community members who in this regard are parents. The fish- bow method of simple random sampling was employed. Stratified random sampling technique was used to divide the target population into strata on the basis of subgroups. While the quantitative

data were analyzed using International Business Machines-Statistical Package of Social Science (IBM-SPSS. 20.0) to produce descriptive statistics, the qualitative data were subjected to content analysis to present respondents' opinions on the influence of socio-cultural practices on schooling of young Maasai Women.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Prevailing Socio - Cultural Practices Harmful to the education of Maasai Girls

In order to get insight on how socio -cultural factors affect Maasai young women's education, it is first of all important to identify those socio- cultural practices which are prevailing and the reasons as to why they continue to prevail in respective community. (See findings in table 1).

Table 1. The Prevailing Socio- Cultural Practices which Impede Girl's education

Attribute	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nomadic lifestyle		
YES	80	66.7
NO	40	33.3
Early Marriages		
YES	81	67.1
NO	39	32.9
Female Genital Mutilation		
YES	83	69.1
NO	37	30.9
Reasons for the prevalence of these Socio- Cultural Practices		
Preserving the Communities' traditions	91	76.4
Ignorance/lack of awareness	29	23.6

Source: Field data, 2024

Nomadic Lifestyle

According to the information depicted from table 2, majority of respondents by 80% affirmed that Maasai pastoral communities live a nomadic lifestyle. This finding is in line with that of Onyima, (2019), who found that African pastoralism is a system of livestock rearing involving moving and living in marginal environments with marked seasonality, and movement of livestock all year round to pastures rather than bringing fodder to herd. According to Madodi et al, (2022) due to the scarcity of livestock pastures caused by the effects of climate changes the Maasai pastoralists are living a nomadic lifestyle. They have no permanent settlements as they are alternate living in either in the **'ronjoo'** the temporary dwelling, made away from the pastoralist's original home or **'boma'** the original dwelling they live during the pastures' high season. Ahmed et al, (2014) found that the traditional Maasai as it is for other pastoralists, are living a seminomadic lifestyle which involve the movement of herds of livestock over vast areas of land in search of areas with good livestock pastures.

Early Marriages

Early marriage which is also known as child marriage is any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years before the girl is physically and physiologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and child bearing (Ruth, 2014). In order to get insight whether Maasai community is practicing early marriages the present study explored this aspect. The study revealed that a majority of respondents by 67.1% indicated that, their community is engaging in early marriage practices (See results in table 1). The finding is in line with that of Elias, (2011) who found that Maasai young girls are socialized to become sexually active at a young age through being in sexual relationship with the **"Moran"** and then this becomes the basis of early marriage. Elias, (2011) continue to assert that, Women in Maasai society do not belong to a specific age set system like men but through marriage

they can be promoted to an elderly higher age grade. **"Moran"** are active Maasai young boys who attain a significant adolescent growth stage of which is linked to warrior hood (Ronoh et al, 2010).

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is any procedure that involves partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs mostly done for cultural reasons whereas as world widely it is approximated that 140 million girls have experienced the cut with an average of two million girls being at risk of circumcised annually (Njogu, .2018). This study was therefore intended to explore whether Maasai community is experiencing FGM. The findings on this aspect show that the majority of respondents by 69.1%) affirmed that the custom is practiced in their community. The finding concurs with that of Ronoh et al, (2010) who found that, Maasai society have been practicing women circumcision for a long time.

Reasons for prevalence of such Socio - Cultural Practices

It is important to know the reasons of various social problems which are facing deprived local communities so as to find out proper and sustainable strategies to address them. In this regard the present study was intended to research on sources behind the continuation of such practices like nomadic lifestyle, FGM and early marriage practices which were proved to prevail in Maasai communities. The majority respondents by 76.4% indicated that the customs are being practiced just for the sake of preserving their traditions and culture. This finding is in line with Symbolic interaction theory which assert that, many practices within the society are learned through interactions of individuals within the society and after being learned are practiced in order to show loyalty and submissiveness which results to total acceptance in the mass (Chematui, 2019). Nadifa, (2017) indicates that preserving culture has been the key factor which influences young girls to marry early. FGM is still recognized by some members of the society as an important part of identifying with cultural heritage (Nyabero et al, 2016). According to Madodi et al, (2022) the Maasai pastoral communities are practicing nomadic lifestyle because climate change does not guarantee rainfall, which nourishes grasses.

The Effects of Socio- Cultural Practices on Schooling of Maasai Young Women

According to Zinhi, (2016) entirely over the world, the power relations that shape social and cultural life have been socially affecting women in all areas of their lives. Thus, the present study was intended to assess the effects of social cultural practices on young women's education. (See the findings in table 2.

Table 2: The effects of Socio-cultural practices on Girl's Education

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Effects of Nomadic lifestyle on Maasai Girls' education		
Wastage of learning hours	82	68.3
Inconsistence in school attendance	38	31.7
Effects of Early Marriages on Maasai Girls' Education		
Dropping out from school	85	70.5
Low enrolment	35	29.5
Effects of Female Genital Mutilation on Girls' Education		
Isolation of uncircumcised Young Girl	50	41.3
wastage of learning hours and isolation	70	58.7

Source: Field data, 2024

Effects of nomadic lifestyle on schooling of Maasai girl child

According to Marius (2012) the Maasai migrate far and wide beyond their traditional territorial space to meet the pasture deficit. This study was therefore assessed whether this kind of migration

which is popularly known as "***Nomadic lifestyle***" has any influence on girls' education. Findings as indicated in table 2 depict that majority of respondents to the extent of 82% affirmed that nomadic lifestyle has been affecting education of a Maasai girl child as it is a basis for wastage of learning hours and school dropping out. The finding concurs with that of Kaogaa et al, (2021) who found that, the emerging land tenure systems had rendered seasonal mobility untenable yet this strategy was critical in enabling the Maasai pastoralists to access resources far beyond their territory. The innovative finding by the present study is that the nomadic lifestyle has been significantly affecting education of a deprived Maasai young women. Schooling of young Maasai Women is jeopardized and affected by either remaining at their origin home with their mothers to keep houses for themselves without any support from their men family members who are moving away during pastures low season or if it happen when some pastoralist households are not leaving behind any single family member during this movement.

The Effects of Early Marriages to Schooling of Young Maasai Women

The present study explored whether early marriages have any effect on Maasai girls' education. The majority of respondents by 70.5% (see table 2) mentioned early marriage to contribute a big number of Maasai school girls to drop out from school and hence jeopardizing their schooling chances. This information concurs with that of UNESCO (2015) who found that the major causes of school dropout among primary and secondary school female students in many sub-Saharan Africa are teenage pregnancy and early marriages. Nadifa, (2017) indicates that, early marriage is an obstacle to the girls' school enrolment and consequently affects the number of female graduates from colleges and universities. Early marriage can lead to a reduction in educational attainment and opportunities for girls, particularly in contexts where girls are expected to prioritize household responsibilities over education (Paul, 2020). Premature marriage deceptively denies a girl's right to education as a result their chance to be involved in community development projects become minimal compared to their male counterparts (Bird et al., 2015).

Effects of Female Genital Mutilation on Maasai Girls' Education

The information revealed in table 2 show that, majority of respondents by 58.7% mentioned wastage of learning hours and isolation of uncircumcised woman by the community as a major effect of FGM practices. This revealed information implies that, the uncircumcised young woman's chance to participate in various development programs including to undergo education programs is automatically be endangered. The finding concurs with that of Commonwealth (2014) who found that FGM affects the school attendance and educational attainment of girls through the complications they endured as a result of the practice, including health issues, pain and distress which can lead to prolonged absences, less concentration and consequently poor performance and premature drop out of school. Njogu, (2018) found that FGM has a negative impact on a girl's education as their total concentration for education is affected through having double minded on what they are to encounter or undergo. Female genital cutting is a prerequisite for child marriage, and after the procedure, which is considered by many as the rite of passage into womanhood, it is likely that the girl will be taken out of school to be married off (Orchid Project, 2021). Chematui, (2019) found that circumcision mood comes when learners and non-leaners initiate intensive interacts, influence and motivate each other in the social life to cause anxiety on the anticipated ordeal therefore distracting concentration in academics for scholars.

The role played by awareness creation and capacity building programs in eliminating cultural practices which are barriers for Rural Women's Effective Participation

This study was intended to explore how awareness creation and capacity building programs have brought any impact for recognizing and eliminating of cultural practices which are barriers to girls' education (See the table 3).

Table 3. *Relevance of awareness creation Programs on the Harmful practices*

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Realization of awareness programs for addressing practices impeding Girls's education		
YES	*43*	*36*
NO	*77*	*64*
Mechanisms used to create awareness on the practices harmful to Girl's education		
Through national and international women festivals	64	53.3
Through media programs like radio, TV, etc.	56	46.7
Realization on effects of illiteracy on future social wellbeing of girls and women		
In ability to participate in developmental programs	60	50
Not involved decision making process	60	50

Source: Field data, 2024

Community realization on presence of awareness creation programs established to eliminate socio-cultural practices barriers for young Women's education

In order to assess the role played by awareness creation and capacity building programs in abandoning cultural practices which are hampering young women education, the respondents were asked to explain whether they are aware of the presence of any awareness creation and capacity building programs. The unveiled information in table 3 show that majority respondents by 64% indicated that they are not aware on any programs established for the particular purpose. This finding is in line with that of Ekundayo, (2019) who found that most of programs for eliminating cultural practices barriers to a girl child education are majorly accessed by the elite communities who live in urban areas. The rural local households are inadequately accessing these programs and as a result the programs are making little differences in transforming the communities. Similarly, Magutsa, (2018) found that, while a good number of programs have been in place to ensure women social economic wellbeing, but most of them remain in papers. Nadifa, (2017) suggests that, increase public awareness on the effects of cultural practices like early marriage should be given first priority to rural communities.

Relevance of the Mechanisms used to create awareness

In the course of assessing the role played by awareness creation as mechanisms of promoting the elimination of cultural practices which are barriers to young women's education, this sub section was intended to assess different approaches used for this purpose. Findings in table 3 depicts that, 53.3% respondents said national and/or international women festivals like the world women day were the mechanism used to create their awareness on the presence of cultural practices which are harmful to women. While 46.7% respondents said they were informed of the danger of some socio-cultural practices to young women's education through media programs like magazine/Radio/TV. The findings show that majority of respondents recognized the effects of some socio- cultural practices on their young women's education through national and international women festivals like International Women Day and African Child Day. This implies that, since the occurrence of these festivals and events are normally happens once a year, this option is assumed to be irrelevant. Madodi (2022) suggest that; if poor mechanism is used to inform people on any program pertaining to their social or economic wellbeing, it is resulting to poor responses as well. Such that, when crucial information concerning social factors which are barriers to young women's education is conveyed through print and electronic media which are not mostly available in rural areas, majority of rural communities will obvious inadequately accessed. GoT, (2005) indicates that, the print and electronic media are not readily available in the rural areas of Tanzania and thus folk media is the proper option that can be used.

Effects of illiteracy on future social wellbeing of girls and women

Since educated people have greater capability in formulating new ideas to accelerate transformation of the communities' traditional out look of issues and develop people's insight for judging things in their context (UNICEF, 2022), this study has intended to examine the general effects of illiteracy on girls' future social wellbeing. The information revealed from this aspect indicated that 50% of respondents are aware that illiteracy is affecting girls' participation in various community development programs and the same percentage of respondents are aware that illiteracy is affecting girls' involvement in decision making process. This finding is in line with that of Magutsa, (2018) who found that lack of education is a contributing factor deterring several women from involvement in community development projects. According to Madodi and Eliamini (2021), illiteracy is considered as a barrier for promoting meaningful responses to various socio-economic interventions as illiterate people cannot articulate their demands and put forward their opinions in a systematic way. Duramy & Gal, (2020) suggest that because of their being restricted from schooling, girls are prepared to focus much on performing domestic duties such as caring for younger siblings and preparing meals for the family.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed at assessing the influence of socio-cultural practices toward schooling of Maasai young women of Monduli District -Tanzania. The study consulted liberal feminist theory which assume that there are several socio-cultural practices which are embracing patriarchal structures of which undermine women rights. According to revealed findings, the assumption of the theory has proved to have been working. This is supported by the revealed findings which show that; - nomadic lifestyle, FGM and early marriage practices have been jeopardizing the chance of young Maasai girls to start or continue with schooling and so placing them be at a risk of being illiterate. However, most of state and non-state organizations which were established for advocating women rights were found to not fulfilling their roles as expected as they inadequately accessing local communities. Mechanisms which have been used to create communities' awareness on the danger of some of their socio-cultural practices on girls' education rights were found to be irrelevant. Thus, from these findings, the study establishes structural changes are needed to eliminate these practices. The policy makers should create an enabling environment which will enable the communities to access information regarding to programs established for the particular issue. It is also recommended the future study to focus on assessing the private organizations established for advocating, sensitizing and creating awareness on various social- cultural practices which are barrier to the wellbeing, whether are playing their roles as accordingly. Also, it is suggested the future studies to focus on the investigation regarding to relevance of the mechanisms which have been used to create communities' awareness on the connection of some social cultural practices to the poor participation of girls and women in various aspects of life.

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