



Analysis of Sociocultural Factors for Schools Drop Out Among Girls in Tanzania: A Case Study of Junior Secondary School

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

School dropout among girls is a serious worldwide problem, especially in developing countries like Tanzania, which still faces the problem of girls dropping out despite international, national, and regional initiatives and steps to advance girls' rights. Like achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, as stated in SDG goal number 5. This study explores the sociocultural factors leading to high dropout among girls at junior secondary school in the mara region, Tanzania. A qualitative analysis was conducted to investigate the extent to which the social-cultural factors led to the high number of girls failing to complete their junior secondary studies in the Mara region by using a semi-structured interview and documentary review. With the semi-structured interview, the author interviewed fifteen parents and guardians, ten teachers (including school directors), and twenty dropout girls who participated in the study's discussions. This brought the overall number of research participants to 45. The interviewees, both women, and men were purposefully selected to be relevant to the current study. The study found that early marriage, female genital mutilation, household activities, social attitude against educating girls, and low levels of education among parents lead girls to drop out of school. It is suggested that the stakeholders should emphasize girls' education to avoid gender disparity. The government and NGOs should educate society and ensure that education in the Mara region should be prioritized

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for both boys and girls. To provide girls who are the victims of FGM with a safe place to run to, the government should prioritize creating rescue centers inside the districts with the help of local administration and other child activists.

Keywords: Free education; dropout; sociocultural factors; right to education; Tanzania.

1. INTRODUCTION

Students dropping out of school is a significant concern for any government or society. Despite many policies and strategies to enhance students' smooth transition, some students still withdraw before graduating. U.N. General Assembly, [1] Act 26, a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, states that everyone has the right to education. With this concern, different governments took various initiatives to ensure everyone has the right to education. Similarly, in Tanzania, the government aimed to allocate money in the National budget to provide education to its people [1].

Education is crucial for the economic growth of any community. Internal legislative frameworks uphold the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education for All (EFA), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to support equitable access to high-quality education for both boys and girls [2]. On MDGs 2, the world has come a long way. Globally, the number of children not in school decreased from 100 million to 58 million between 2000 and 2012, while the primary completion rate rose from 81 percent to 92 percent [3]. But 58 million kids are still not enrolled in school. Even when students finish school, they frequently do so without obtaining the fundamental skills needed for employment and adult life. But out of all the objectives, educating kids, especially girls, has the most influence on eradicating poverty. According to [4] (females' future incomes might rise by 10–20% with an additional year of secondary education. Education is essential for enhancing health, gender equality, peace, and stability, which also serves as a significant engine of growth. One of the main external financiers of education in developing countries, the World Bank, has prioritized education to combat poverty [5].

In addition, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning

opportunities for all." Tanzania is a signatory to the goal using Circular; the government has gone above and beyond what the Constitution requires. To provide accessible, high-quality primary education, Tanzania aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls for States to ensure that everyone "completes free, equitable, and high-quality primary and secondary education." Tanzania introduced the free education for junior secondary school education policy in 2014, which aimed to support kids from lower-income families to attend school and receive an education while not adding additional strain on their parent's financial situation. The finding shows that many students fail to attend school due to the cost of school fees [2]. Different governments allocate funds to support students who face difficult circumstances. However, another global initiative called EFA under UNESCO aimed to ensure the learning needs of all children, youth, and adults by 2015. But these initiatives brought slight changes in supporting education.

According to Global Education Monitoring Report Team [6], the countries should invest some percentages from their budget in supporting education. In 2019, countries that invested \$39 billion per year would offer all 2.2 billion children equal access to learning while raising the standard of education worldwide. Right now, only 83 percent of the children who attend school complete elementary school, and just 45 percent of students aged 15 to 17 will finish secondary school. Also, in 2016 the Tanzanian government scrapped secondary school tuition and made secondary education mandatory, at least in theory. Despite this, just 4% of girls from the lowest quintile in rural regions finished secondary education in 2015, compared to 44% of males from the wealthiest quintile in urban areas. Therefore, more affluent households reap the majority of the rewards from completing secondary school.

They are considering the UN eight goals with eighteen targets and forty-eight development and poverty eradication indicators, sometimes known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In

general, MDGs have emphasized the essentiality of education. The second goal focuses on "To achieve universal primary education," while the third is to "promote gender equality and empower women." Further, plans emphasize ensuring that boys and girls complete primary schooling and that gender disparity should be eradicated at all levels of education. It also indicates how the world values education. There has been an emphasis on girls' education since some societies have discriminated against them [2]. The aspiration to promote equity in education provision to ensure no one is left behind is SDG 4 of the U.N. 2030 Agenda [7]. The rationale for focusing on girls dropping out of junior secondary school is that girls' education is one of the suitable investments in international development [8]. However, in low and middle-income countries, the average girl's education is still less than for boys. Sub-Saharan Africa still has fewer education opportunities for girls should have the same access to education [9].

School dropout indeed hinders the government's efforts in achieving various goals. On the other hand, Tanzania's Education and Training Policy recognizes the importance of education for all [10]. It is well articulated that all people should have access to educational opportunities, and the government should ensure that all students complete their respective education and tricycles [1]. School dropout varies widely in regions, castes, cultures, and languages [11]. The number of girls students dropping out of school is alarming and becoming a concern among educators and governments worldwide [12]. In addition, research findings show that many girls do not attend secondary school [13]. In 2017, 4442 girls were forced to drop out of high school due to pregnancy [14].

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) [15] highlighted that approximately 3.5 million primary and junior secondary school-age children were out of school. These are the bases where the reforms are made. Education provides opportunities to interact with people from different walks of life. It improves how the world lives and thinks, and it is a must to teach the importance of education to girls' students [10]. Children should know that a list of degrees tailoring an individual's name does not mean

being educated. A study by Ouma et al. [16] showed that 15.6% of girls drop out compared to boys because of early marriage in the Geita region of Tanzania. It indicates that early marriage is still a problem, leading the girl student to drop out.

Another study by John et al. [17] shows that in Kibosho Tanzania, the initials of the traditional ceremony as the cultural requirement for girls influence the girls to drop out of school because of losing interest in school and admiring getting married. Again, Iddy [18] revealed that in the Iringa region of Tanzania, child marriage had been a primary factor for girls to drop out. That when the girl gets pregnant, parents force her to get married, fearing that the girl will never get married, also the higher bride price cause the parents to force girls to drop out from school and get married, the poorest parents think bride piece will make them rich, so parents see their daughter as an asset.

With these concerns, the current study aimed to identify the sociocultural factors that lead to the dropout of female students from secondary schools in Tanzania. This study demonstrates how sociocultural factors affect participation and access to girls' secondary schools in Tanzania following the establishment of the free education policy in 2014. Girls drop out of school significantly due to sociocultural issues as well. Consequently, this study investigates the sociocultural elements influencing females' decision to leave junior high school in the Mara region, Tanzania.

1.1 Conceptual Framework

The study demonstrates the sociocultural causes of female dropouts in Tanzania's junior secondary schools. The socio-cultural elements (culture, social roles, familial circumstances) impact the girls' participation in education according to the conceptual framework shown. These factors have a variety of adverse effects on girls' education. Including low achievement, poor academic performance, a lack of value placed on girls' education, inequality, and wasting time on studying, which reduces girls' participation in education and increases the likelihood that they will drop out of school.

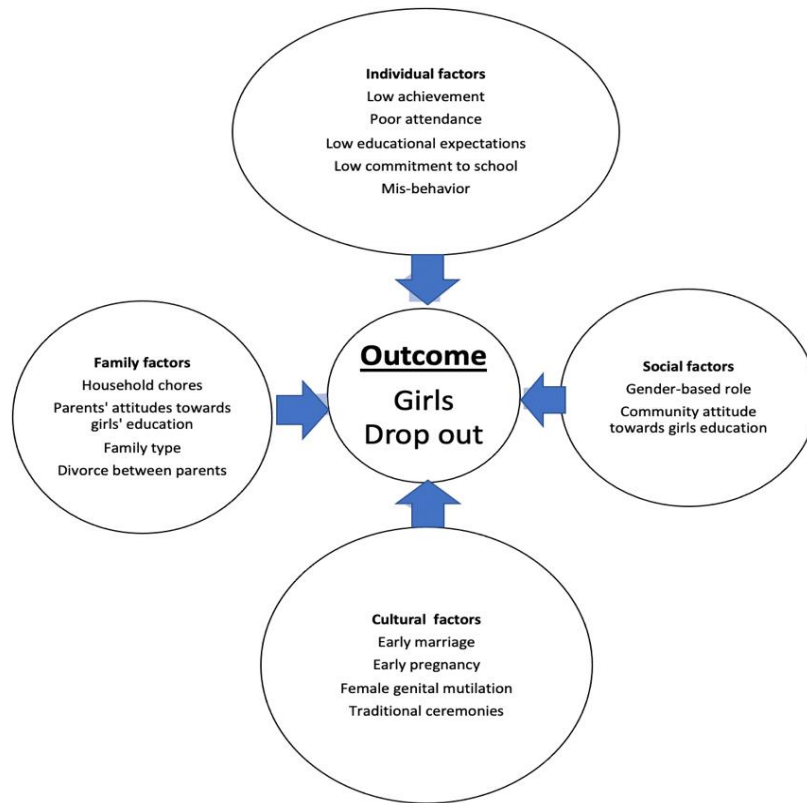


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework sociocultural factors for girl's dropouts' junior secondary school

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of Girls' Student Dropouts'

Many countries depicted the factors associated with girls' dropouts in junior secondary schools and highlighted them as family-related, peer-related, and personal. School-related is consistently associated with students dropping out of school [19]. Dropout rates are increasing among students who have low educational and occupational aspirations. Absenteeism, misbehavior in school, and pregnancy were also related to dropping out [20]. However, there has been progress in reducing the number of girls dropping out of school before the completion time of secondary school; for example, about 137 million children began school, but 34 million dropped out before the completion time [21].

According to McFarland [2], about 523,000 students aged 15 to 24 dropped out of school in October 2016 and October 2017 without receiving a high school diploma. 4.7% of the 11.1 million kids enrolled in grades 10 through 12 in 2016. Based on CPS data, status dropout rates have decreased over the past 40 years, declining

from 14.1 percent in 1973 to 5.8 percent in 2017. During the most recent 10-year data (2007 to 2017), the status dropout rate decreased from 8.7 percent to 5.8 percent.

According to UNICEF [22], 129 million females worldwide do not attend school, including 32 million in primary school, 30 million in lower secondary, and 67 million in upper secondary. Among girls, dropping out of school is twice as common in conflict-affected nations as in non-affected countries. According to World Bank [23], more than 120,000 girls drop out of school annually in Tanzania, 6500 of them due to pregnancy or having children. Since 2000, about 11.8% of individuals in the United States have not finished high school. More than 90% of white non-Latin complete high school in the United States today. African –American dropout rate had been cut by half in the last 30 years, from 28% in 1970 to less than 14% in 2000. The highest dropout rate in the United States occurs among Native Americans. Despite a small proportion of children reaching secondary education, the secondary level dropout rates are very high. The dropout rate for New Delhi stands at 36.04 percent compared to 56.71 percent at the all-India levels between classes I-X in 2007-08,

which is still very high [24] (Chugh, 2011). According to Rumberger [20], in the US, the Census data was conducted in 2015, and there were 2.3 million drop out aged 16-24, representing 5.9 percent of the population.

Again, UNESCO [25] indicates many students dropouts in Africa. For instance, towards achieving her determination to provide EFA by 2015, Kenya has supported a remarkable increment in secondary school enrollment since its independence in 1963. For example, for 18 years, from 1985-2002. Kenya had increased enrollment at secondary school except for a few years. However, the secondary school cycle in Kenya faces some challenges. These challenges include low transition rates between primary and secondary school and high dropout status [26]. Some identified sociocultural factors include the inability to pay school fees, poverty, HIV/ AIDS violence, and drug abuse [27].

The same problem was identified in Nigeria, where students' dropout is higher compared to nearby countries within the region. The national school census (NSC) found significant geographical and gender inequalities between Southern and Northern Nigeria. Partly due to parent sociocultural factors, the female net enrolment Ratio (NER) in states in the South is 70%, while some in the North are 10%. In rural schools, the dropout percentage was as high as 35.39%. The girls' dropouts were more elevated than males in rural schools, 42.10%, against 28.67% [28].

The study of Sabates, (2011) [29] revealed that ill health, malnutrition, and poverty were reasons for school dropouts. South and West Asia regions are said to have similar problems. It was revealed that Pakistan has a similar situation, especially in the primary education system [30] (Gulbuz, 2011). With their study, [31] Weiler et al., (2012) showed about 50% dropout rates for girls and boys, while a survey in the Philippines revealed different reasons for school dropouts. One is the loss of personal interest in studies, and school, the high cost of obtaining education, and looking for employment [32] (Doll, Eslami, & Walters, 2013). Likewise, Sub-Saharan Africa is no exception. Several scholarly reviews have shown worrisome reports wherein 2007 to 2012, the number of girls who left school had increased from 12 to 15 million in Sub-Saharan countries (UNESCO, 2017) [33]. Previous studies have identified the rural population as the most affected by the school dropout problem.

According to OECD [34], In 2021, 16% of women aged 20 to 24 and 19% of women aged 15 or older reported getting married before turning 18. It shows that the change in the problem of student dropouts in Africa is still alarming.

2.2 Girls' Student Dropouts' School: Local Context

In Tanzania, sociocultural factors also seem to be among the most vital contributing factors to girls' dropouts. Based on the studies, it was recommended that those in the helping profession recognize those variables that influence girls' education in the context of marriage. The socio-cultural factors cause the dropout for girls because out of 12,000 females dropping out of school every year in Tanzania, 5,500 drop out because of pregnancy [35]. By 2009, only 39% of girls from Sub-Saharan Africa enrolled in lower secondary school [36] UNICEF & MoET, (2013) and 300,000 and 800,000 girls were out of school in Tanzania by 2010 and 2018, respectively, showing an increase in their number from year to year. It is also projected that by 2030, 950 million girls will have been married as children (below 18 years old), decreasing their autonomy in decision-making within their household [37].

Chimombo,(2009) [38] observed that though school enrolment is almost the same for girls and boys, boys are more likely to continue school than girls. [39] also found that girl students attain less education and drop out earlier than boys in Tanzania. Thus, the dropout rate varies by gender, and girls tend to drop out earlier than boys. Some unique factors contribute to increased dropout rates, particularly for girls. In other words, some elements extensively contribute to the rise in girls' dropouts though those factors also impact the dropout rate for boys.

Arafat et al. [40] findings also support the argument that some sociocultural factors positively impact girls' dropout rates. However, those factors also contribute to boys' dropout rate. Therefore, we can argue that some elements produce poor educational outcomes, increasing girls' dropout rates. Education is a vital right for all people, guaranteed under the United Nations Convention on every child's rights. It is the most commonly ratified international agreement in the world today. Education is not merely a human right but also an indispensable means of realizing other human rights [41].

Tanzania most recently declared in November 2021 that all pupils who dropped out of school in Mainland Tanzania would be offered the chance to return. Females include those who were barred from returning to elementary or secondary school after giving birth because of their pregnancy (Daily News Reporter [42]. Implementing a formal policy or legal document to amend Tanzania's Education Act, which discriminates against pregnant females, had not yet taken place as of December 2021. More than 120,000 girls drop out of school each year in Tanzania. 6,500 of them have children or are pregnant. [42].

Girls drop out of school due to demand-side social and cultural constraints in the Mara area of Tanzania. Most female dropout instances in the Mara area are caused by fundamental aspects of the family structure, including multiple marriages, female-female unions, solo parenting, and large, child-headed families. The connected impacts of school attendance are made evident; in social-cultural activities, including traditional circumcision for girls and boys, traditional rituals, and bride wealth in the Mara region. These are challenging to measure and deal with children at risk, such as orphans and children of single parents [3].

Due to social attitudes, stigmatization, and prejudice, it was discovered that students from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with impairments, and those suffering from long-term diseases were at risk of dropping out of school. There is less demand for education when school-age children participate in local revenue-generating activities like artisanal mining or fishing, especially when those activities provide opportunities for "quick" and more direct income. The Mara Region's migrant groups (artisanal miners, artisan fishers, pastoralists, and small traders) hinder the need for education since children are constantly traveling along with their parents in quest of more lucrative endeavors. Extreme patriarchy and overt machismo in the area reduce the desire for education since the culture promotes child marriage over education. Because of the practice's gender disparity, more girls are forced into wealthy early marriages. Superstition and witchcraft beliefs seem to deter students from attending class, consistently encouraging girls to drop out [3].

3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative analysis was conducted to investigate the extent to which social-cultural

factors led to the high number of girls failing to complete their junior secondary studies in the Mara region by using a semi-structured interview and documentary review. With the semi-structured interview, the author interviewed fifteen parents and guardians, ten teachers (including school directors), and twenty dropout girls who participated in the study's discussions; the overall number of research participants to 45. The interviewees, both women, and men were purposefully selected to be relevant to the current research.

However, the interviews in the context of this research were a discussion with a goal; interviews with participants were semi-structured as they were free to go beyond the boundaries of the questions if they had more to say. Following a predetermined process gave us the option to include or assist the participant in having the experience of a natural dialogue throughout the interviews. The technique used for this study encourages qualitative content analysis that leads to social change as opposed to just producing information through an action research procedure. To better enlighten educators and policymakers on the critical socio-cultural variables impacting girls' dropout rates in rural parts of the Mara region, we undertook a case study anchored in emancipation.

Secondly, with a documentary review, various documents from government offices, international organizations like UNESCO reports, and reports from individual research are used as data collection methods. The appeal of collecting a set of reviews and then considering a wish to make the very act of analysis open to the scrutiny of others to avoid the researcher's ideology dominating their interpretation.

The researcher used samples from government-published reports on gender issues for girl dropouts, UNESCO-published reports, UNICEF-published essays, research papers published in various journals, and written articles published in government and private newspapers [42]. So, the newspapers also provided helpful information like other sources of data collection.

4. RESULTS

This section presented socio-factors for girls dropping out in a selected region in the Mara region in Tanzania. Findings were divided into

themes; these themes were generated from participants' interviews.

4.1 Themes Related to Family Factors for Girls Dropping Out

4.1.1 Forced early marriage

The finding shows early marriage influences girls students' dropout. The study termed early marriage formal marriage or informal union between a child under 18 and an adult or another child [43]. Early marriage in the Mara region is a big reason for girls dropping out. It is done without the girl's consent to be married off. In the mara region, the parents give daughters out to those who pay the bride price to marry her. Exchanging girls with dowry seems to be the source of income in many families. The bride price signifies that parent reasonably raise their girls and that the marriage will stabilize. It creates gender disparity because parents do not give girls the opportunity to complete their studies. Girls are the source of income, so the schools in Musoma have fewer girls than the number of boys students in other regions [44].

"When I joined at junior secondary school my parents said I would help them nothing after graduating so it is better for me to get married and they can benefit bride price and leave my brother to continue with studies because even if I study I will get married, I will no longer stay with them, I will get married and stay with my family away and not with them, that in the futures I will have my own family it is better for them to educate the boys because they will stay with him and he will help them in the future," Student A, Said

Again, during the interview, the Teacher said

"In our society early marriage is common it is the main causes which led girls to drop out, a girl is supposed to get married whether she likes or not she will be forced to be married due to that after they start menstruation period the parents regard them as they are grown so that the girl can be married,"

Also, the parents expressed their views on how forced marriage takes place in the community; one of the Parents said;

"In our community, people don't put much effort into ensuring the girls complete their secondary education like boys. What they expect from girls is to get married and make them celebrate and

be proud in society; parents are waiting for girls to get married so that they can have kitchen utensils, all the gifts that will be provided to the girls, and all that.

Also, the other dropout girl said

there is competition for girls in case of getting married. When one girl gets married, family members and community members ask, "when your wedding is because only you have left your young girls are leaving you behind", do you want to get old in your mother's house?

4.1.2 An attitude of the parents and community towards educating girl students as the cause of girls' dropout

The researcher found that in the Mara region, they prefer educating boys over girls thinking that the girls will help nothing in their family. Parents have negative attitudes toward girls' education and are not ready to emphasize it since paying for their daughter's education is not a reliable investment. In this study of school-aged dropout girls in the Mara region, parents' attitudes towards educating girls have been indicated as an act against girls' education completion. Supported by unacceptable cultural norms that have existed over decades, from the early childhood years in Jita society (majority in the region), girls are prepared for nothing but marriage.

"Society doesn't see the value of educating a girl believing she will have nothing to help at home after graduating. Later, she will get married and stay in a different family, but a boy will remain at home to possess all wealth belonging to his parents. That is why they put a lot of effort into ensuring a boy will study. While the girls should remain home, learn different house activities, and prepare to get married." teacher A said

However, the other student B said

"Society believes girls are weak, and men wrongly perceive that girl are weak and boys are strong. It discourages girls that they will not make it, some parents will deny sending girls to school and prefer boys, thinking that the girls will fail, but the boys will pass; the discouragement that girls are wasting time for nothing leads many girls to drop out from school."

4.1.3 Household works

In most African societies, some believe that household chores are for girls, not boys. Hence,

many girls base more on domestic tasks than studies, as they teach them to be hard-working women when they get married; in this study, most young girls described that they are too busy when getting home from school and are hard-working. Usually, they help out with household chores like fetching water, cleaning the house, helping with farm work, and selling vegetables. *"Every day, I am supposed to help my domestic mother activities, like cooking, cleaning the house, fetching water, and also going to the farm to help mom; I do this every day even after I have no time to concentrate on my studies" because if one is a girl, then she must be responsible for doing clean less and help work at home.*" student C, said:

4.1.4 Parental divorce

The researcher found that divorce has been identified as one of the factors that led girl students to drop out of school. Divorce in the family accelerates the girl students to drop out of school; the girl students would join with their mothers to take care of the family responsibilities of the father in the family. So, girls would be forced to take up family responsibilities and start caring for their siblings. Divorce makes other school girls street children. In contrast, other children lack basic needs and are forced to leave school; a man abandons a wife and marries another woman in the same or distant village with whom he would have children before he goes again for another. Sometimes men leave wives in some villages searching for more economically viable jobs like trade, artisanal mining, and herding cattle. One of the guardians said that this practice results in many single mothers with children with different fathers who do not support them and finally dropping out of school to cooperate with the mother to take care of the family.

"The girls who both parents do not raise are dropping highly compared to those who both parents raise; this is because when the family is not stable, one parent tends to take the girls to be raised by grandparents who don't value the importance of educating girls, and grandparents still have the believes that the education is for boys and not for girls, most grandparents don't take care for girl students to get an education." the headmaster said

4.2 Themes Related to Cultural Factors for Girls Dropping Out

4.2.1 The influence of traditions and rites of passage on limiting girl's education

Rites of passage are ceremonial plans used by societies to mark an individual's transition from one social status to another. a modern rite of Jando and Unyago traditions where boys and girls undergo training about living in society and how to start a family. And most importantly, taking care of a spouse emphasizes the impact of social context variables on teenage development into adulthood. The study investigates the influence of passage rites limiting girls' education and the impact of rites of passage on girls' academic performance.

"Traditional ceremonies contribute to girl dropout from school in Mara region. Due to that, the preparation takes more than one year; during this time, the girls attend school very rarely, and whenever they return home, they leave aside their concentration on school matters; this leads the students to drop out of school thinking that the traditional training is better than school" Teacher said

Before a girl attends the Ngoma ceremony, she receives various training from different women. They are leading the girls on how to stay with a husband and have love affairs. This training is considered to be the main than the formal education. That is the reason many girls drop out of school. Parent said

4.2.2 Genital mutilation of women

Removing the female genital organ entirely or partially for non-medical purposes is known as female genital mutilation. In the Mara region, in some tribes like Kuria, circumcision is both the boys' and girls' interviews with the Teacher from the Serengeti district revealed that

"In Serengeti region, have the culture of circumcising girls every year. They force the girl to bear their culture. Preparation takes a couple of months because even after the female genital mutilation has been done, it takes time for the girl to recover because of the severe pain and loss of blood she experienced during the circumcision. So that she can continue her studies, some of them don't return to school. Teacher e said:

Also, one of the parents explained how this female genital mutilation takes place in the Tarime district; the parent said

"In Tarime the circumcision for girls is still there, the parents pay Tshs 5000/; for a surgeon to circumcise girls without any hospital procedures, after circumcision, the girls are given token like money, goat as the appreciation of being agreed to be circumcised, and Kuria tribe value FGM as the sign that the girl is grown up, she is no longer supposed to be at school, the girl is supposed to marry and form her own family not stay with parents".

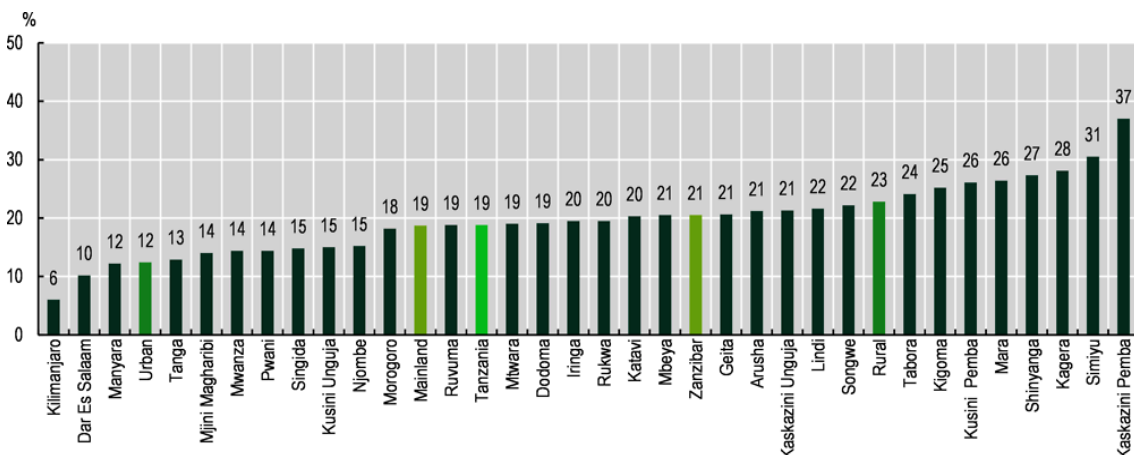
5. DISCUSSION

Early marriage has been the foremost factor for girls to drop out of school. Because when the girls reach puberty, the parents consider that it is the time for the girl to get married instead of continuing to school, believing schooling has no benefit for the family even after graduation, the girl won't help them. This study revealed that in the Mara region, the parents see girls as the source of wealth for the family. When the girl turns 14-18, they force her to leave school and get married so that they will get the bride price in exchange for the girl, and the parents believe that that is the only thing they will gain from their daughter.

The findings concur with Caleb Imbova Mackatiani[45], which revealed that in Kenya, 40

out of 100 girls dropped out of school before completing secondary education due to early marriage. In the findings of Stark [46], early marriage has been influencing and contributing to the dropout of school girls in African countries. For example, Musa et al., (2021)[47] portrayed that 25% of girls surveyed in Mali and 33% in Nigeria identified early marriage as contributing to dropping out of schoolgirls from the school system. The influence of early marriage on female dropouts may vary from culture to culture. For example, parents would like to withdraw their daughters from school at puberty for fear of conception before marriage. Musa et al., (2021) [47] suggests that puberty marks the end of schooling for female students for another responsibility, "marriage." The situation is different in Southern Sudan, where the parents in the herding of Dinka would like to marry off their daughters early to raise family income through the bride price. These cultural and economic considerations limit girls' Education [40]. Also, the study by UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund [48] shows that parents consider marriage a trade-off in Bangladesh. Keeping their daughter in school would make it difficult to find the appropriate husband, so they usually decide for a girl to get married.

Child marriage rates vary significantly across regions and between urban and rural areas. The statistics of Tanzanian women who were married before the age of 18 and were at least 15 years old are shown in the following graph.



Graph 1. The statistics of Tanzanian women who were married before the age of 18

Source; OECD (2021), SIGI Tanzania database

Note: Differences between urban and rural areas are significant at 1%. Differences between regions are significant at 1%

This study has shown that parents' attitude toward girls' education is the main factor leading girls to drop out. The parents put more emphasis on boys' education and not on girls, believing that the boy, when he graduates, will help them back. The girl won't help them because she will get married and move to another family. A study was conducted in Ethiopia [49]. shows that parents believe that girls are meant to be wives to get married earlier before adopting the modern lifestyle. Not only but also in finding by Iddy [13] argued that some parents are reluctant to invest in their daughter's education because parents lose control over their daughters after marriage. It suggests that parents do not expect economic returns from their daughters, who are now under the control of their husbands' families. Again, in Mali, a girl's education is considered a lost investment simply because, after marriage, parents are not expected to benefit from their daughters. So, they think that giving education to female children is like somebody who is watering a neighbor's tree.

According to the headmaster, this study has shown that the girls from single-parent families drop more than girls raised with both parents. Because many parents, after divorce, send girls to stay with their grandmother, who doesn't care about education. After divorce, the girls tend to take care of their siblings instead of focusing on their studies.

Brand et al. [50] argued that white children suffer more from parental divorce's effects on their education than nonwhite children. In fact, after taking into account a wide range of potential confounders, the study finds no evidence that parental divorce harms the academic performance of nonwhite children.

A Norwegian study by Steele et al. [51] argued that the impact of divorce on education is greatest when the child is young. Children who underwent divorce early in life are likely to have inferior educational outcomes. In contrast, a study conducted in the United States discovered that children who suffered a late divorce were grades six and 10 were more likely to have poor marks than those who had an early divorce (between kindergarten and grade five).

In this study, some guardians said some girls are used as maids during group discussions. The girls become housekeepers and do all activities at home. At a young age, the girls move from the village and go to the big cities to do home

activities, and this is different from China in that the elders are the ones to take care of home kids and other activities. Still, in Tanzania, this is the reason that parents do not see the importance of sending girls to school, thinking it is a waste of time; a girl should stay home and do home activities. In general, girls carry heavier loads of domestic duties than boys. Still, rural girls have heavier loads than urban girls (cooking, fetching water, gathering firewood, caring for babies, even weeding crops, and herding sheep and cattle).

According to a study by Wamoyi et al. [52] on secondary school students in Tanzania, girls from single-parent households were less likely to attend secondary school due to their labor-intensive daily domestic duties. Living in a home with a female head of the family led many girls to drop out of school.

The study revealed that the parents put too much emphasis on informal education, which prepares girls to get married rather than formal education. The traditional ceremonies (jando and Unyago) teach a boy to live with his wife and the girls to live with the man after this ceremony. Many girls marry instead of continuing their studies.

Findings agree with the study by UNESCO [25], which showed some girls stayed at school after the initiation ceremony and were assumed to be married. Also, in the survey by Iddy[13], who linked age and dropout for girls, for example, when girls start their period and start growing older, they might withdraw from school to menstruate. In other cases, girls who withdraw from school at this time get married. During the discussion, girls expressed their views "parents make their daughters get married so that they will get money from dowry paid for a girl to get married."

This study revealed that early marriage results from parental cultural norms and social pressure within the community. It can be the inability of parents to take care of the girl's basic needs. From what the study revealed, it seems that parental cultural norms of play ngoma to a girl who reaches puberty prepare a girl for another stage of a girl's life, which is marriage. Informal education should be essential. Still, there should be regulations on the teaching according to a girl's age, like to be taught after completing their studies. It means that most puberty girls are still young to train marriage issues. The school needs a kind of knowledge and skill that helps give

them the awareness that they are grown up but biologically not ready for marriage until they are eighteen.

According to this study, female genital mutilation continues in the mara region, leading girls to drop out. Despite the efforts done by the government to combat genital mutilation in rural areas still, they do circumcise girls; according to WHO [53], FGM can lead to severe bleeding, urination issues, cysts, infections, labor troubles, and a higher chance of neonatal mortality. There are 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia where FGM is done, and more than 200 million girls and women living today have experienced the procedure [54].

According to Njogu [55] research, most instructors believe that FGM increases the number of girls who drop out of school because it makes girls prioritize external issues more than education and affect their attendance and academic performance. According to the study's findings, head teachers concur that FGM is related to problems like girls' dropout rates in schools. The most significant element was FGM, which was said to have had an impact on individuals who were exposed to it. It was discovered during the interview with the head teachers that some girls who underwent FGM never returned to their education. It was revealed that most girls who participated in FGM dropped out of school. Therefore, FGM may be a significant factor in the high rate of girl dropouts in the Wamba Ward in the Samburu sub-county in Kenya.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings show that the family factors like; forced early marriage, an attitude of the Parents and Community Towards Educating Girl Students, Household work, Parental divorce, and second is cultural factors for girls dropping out, such as The Influence of Traditions and Rites of Passage on Limiting Girl's Education and Genital Mutilation of Women are the main factors which lead girls to drop out in mara region Tanzania.

However, addressing the dropout problem for girls in Tanzania requires the capacity to implement effective dropout prevention and recovery program, and the political will make the reform to avoid the dropout rate for girls. It will be challenging to eliminate the disparities in the

dropout rate for girls without removing the differences in families, schools, and communities. Tanzania introduced a free education policy in December 2015 to ensure that junior secondary is free for everyone and increase students' enrollment so that every Tanzanian gets primary education. However, rural areas where sociocultural factors are the leading causes for girls' dropping out are still challenging for girls' studies. Social challenges such as traditional beliefs against educating girls are yet to be successfully addressed by the government and society.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings found that sociocultural factors like female genital mutilation, early marriage, household activities, and communities' attitudes toward girls' education are the main factors that led the girls' students to drop out and gender disparity. The findings found that girls drop out due to the sociocultural practice done in the Mara region. Based on that perspective' the researcher provided the following recommendations.

To provide girls who are the victims of FGM with a safe place to run to, the government should prioritize creating rescue centers inside the districts with the help of local administration and other child activists. The government should provide a seminar and training in Tanzania to educate society to understand the importance of educating girls on the negative effect which affect girls and lead them to drop out.

Community heritage guardians should substitute other rites of passage for FGM to ensure that there are no gaps in the upbringing of females. As a result, the initiation ceremonies of the communities will eventually become more unified, passing on their traditions to the following generation.

The stakeholders should emphasize girls' education to avoid gender disparity. The government and NGOs should educate society and ensure that the Mara region's instruction is equal for both boys and girls, and girls should be given priority over boys. Parents of the girls' students should be urged to help their daughters receive advice and counseling on how to safeguard themselves from being pregnant at a young age and preventing early marriage, both of which caused the girls to drop out of school.

Development practitioners and the Tanzanian government should incorporate various techniques when creating development programs since different areas may have distinctive traits. As a result, several responses to the same problem may be required. Ceka & Murati, (2016) [56] emphasized the need for parents and guardians to receive education to learn how to teach their daughters about reproductive concerns and the value of a good education for girls. The government and society should work more diligently to solve pressing social issues like poverty.

However, the pace of progress would need to accelerate dramatically to meet the SDG goal of eliminating child marriage by 2030 [43]. Although child marriage occurs for boys, the incidence is much higher for girls, indicating that most child marriages are a manifestation of social norms that support discrimination against girls and women.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES PERSPECTIVES

The study has several limitations; according to the survey, a few socio-demographic characteristics may not accurately reflect the leading underlying causes of girls dropping out in the Mara region. The second limitation concerns sample selection, which involves finding participants to answer the research questions. Due to that, some interview questions focused on early marriage and female genital mutilation, and some participants were unwilling to speak about it.

Future studies should focus on the economic and political factors that led girls' students to drop out. The current studies are based on junior secondary school, but other future studies should focus on higher learning institutions and how the socio-cultural factors led students to drop out.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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