

# Influence of Marriage Practices on Educational Attainment among Kipsigis Women in Bomet East Sub-County, Bomet County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** Women's educational attainment is crucial for promoting gender equality, improving health outcomes, and fostering economic development within families and communities. Educated women are more likely to participate in decision-making, access better job opportunities, and invest in the education and well-being of future generations. Despite the benefits of women's educational attainment, cultural norms often influence the extent to which women can access and complete their education. Government of Kenya has initiated various programs and policies aimed at enhancing women's educational attainment and promoting inclusive, equitable access to learning opportunities. Despite the interventions by the government of Kenya to improve women educational attainment, women educational attainment is still low as compared to that of boys. Thus, the study sought to investigate the influence of marriage practices on women educational attainment. The objectives that guided the study are: to investigate the influence of marriage practices on women educational attainment. Historical research design was employed. A total of 125 respondents were selected using purposive and snowballing sample procedures. Qualitative data was gathered from 5 chiefs, 10 educationists, 10 elderly persons and 100 women from the four age sets. Data was analyzed thematically based on the study objective. The findings of the study indicated that early marriage, forced marriage and arranged marriages were common practices among Kipsigis community in Kenya from independence to the 1990s. Early marriage involved young girls being betrothed from birth by their parents and kin. This was done by both families agreeing on a set bride price which was to be paid after circumcision. The betrothed child was the groomed for marriage, this meant that education was sidelined. Forced marriage was a practice where daughters were married off to older men at a young age without consulting them or looking out for their needs, such as education. Arranged marriage was a practice which involved parents (mostly fathers) marrying off their daughters to suitors at an early age, mostly to suitors from wealthy families even if it meant that they were not to be the first (cheptab yugoi) or the only wife. Based on the study findings, it is recommended that aggressive awareness be undertaken among Kipsigis families on the adverse effects of marriage practices such as early marriage, forced marriage and arranged marriage on women educational attainment to enhance educational attainment among girls and women within the community.

**Key words:** cultural norms, marriage practices, women educational attainment.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage refers to partnership between two people who choose to commit to each other. Marriage is all about loving one another, facing challenges together, sticking with one another through thick and thin and building life together. Calantha (2023) defines marriage as exquisite union of two lives with each other thread standing for a common goal, shared love and hope for future. He further explains that marriage is a commitment and journey full of experiences which shape lifetime. According to Kendall (2017), marriage is an institution that unites individuals of various cultural and religious backgrounds via a mutual reliance on one another in order to create a household. Marriage practices in the communities practiced include early marriages which involve girls getting married at young age that is before 18 years of age and forced marriages where girls are forced to get married. The prevalence of early marriage remained a major obstacle, as families often preferred the immediate financial benefits of dowry over investing in long-term education for their daughters, thereby restricting their access to formal schooling (Mganga, 2021). Therefore, awareness should be created to the community on the long-term value of women education over short-term dowry gains.

In Nepal, in South Asia, Sekina and Hodgkin (2017) conducted a study on effect of child marriage on women school dropout in Nepal. The findings of the study showed that early marriage is the most common reason for girls leaving school. It also shows that women are at high risk of dropping out of school after completing grade five and six because they are forced to get married. The findings recommend that marriage should be delayed in order to reduce girls' dropout in Nepal. Despite School-based programmes aimed at preventing child marriage in Nepal, girls are still getting married and dropping out of school. The study used the Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2014 data to collect and dropout among girls aged 15\_17. Bengesai, Amusa and Makonye (2021) carried out a research study on the impact of child marriage on the completion of first cycle of secondary education in Zimbabwe in South Africa. The study adopted the 2015 Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey and extracted 2380 cases of ever-married women aged between 20–29 years. Results indicated that early marriage decreased the chances of completing the first cycle of high school. The findings suggest that the issue of early marriages should be addressed in order to improve women secondary completion. The study was done in Kenya and focused on effects of marriages on women educational attainment.

In another study, Oyelade (2024) investigated the effects of early marriage on academic achievement among girls in Oyo state in Nigeria. The study adopted design known as descriptive survey. Simple random procedure was used and 200 teachers were chosen from Akinyele and Oyo East Local Governments in Oyo state to participate. The t-test statistical method was used. The findings of the first hypothesis showed that male and female teachers' perceptions of girl-child marriage courses are not significantly different from one another, and the second hypothesis results, according to experiences of the teachers, indicated that there is no significantly different effect of girl-child marriage on students' academic achievement. The study recommended that the public and governmental organizations should create awareness on the elements which have been shown to encourage girl-child marriage and the impact that has on girls' educational achievement. Despite the United Nations, government, and some non-governmental organizations failing to offer a solution to the problem of girl-child marriage, girls in Oyo state do not receive the same treatment as other children in terms of education. This study was done in Kenya.

In Yumbe District in Uganda, Jamal (2024) carried out a study on the effects of forced marriage and teenage pregnancy on girls' education. The study adopted qualitative methods to collect data and these include interviews and focus group discussions. The findings of the study indicated that forced marriage and teenage pregnancy limits young females to reach their fullest potential in education because it causes high rate of dropouts among girls which affects retention of girls at all levels of education thus low completion rate at all level of education. The study recommended that community should be sensitized on the importance of educating girls and effects of forced marriages. Despite the efforts made by government of Uganda to eradicate forced marriage and teenage pregnancy in order to improve girls' education, problem still persist in Yumbe District and thus causing low girls' educational attainment. However, there is need for the same research to carried out in Kenya to find out better ways of eradicating forced marriage among girls in order to improve women educational attainment.

A study on drivers of child marriage in Lira district, Northern Uganda was carried out by Neema et al (2021). The study adopted qualitative methods such as interviews, focus group discussions and observations. The findings indicated that child marriage is still common in the study area and also girls are traded for the exchange of livestock. Despite the national policies, legislation and programs to improve rights of girls, child marriage remains a big problem in Lira district. The study findings recommends that there is need for determined efforts to address the socio-cultural drivers of child marriage and parents should support their daughters to be well educated. Hamidu (2023), conducted a study in Kilosa district in Tanzania on the effect of early marriage on girl childhood education among Masai girls in Kilosa district. The study adopted descriptive design and survey design. Interview and focus group discussions were used to collect data. The study findings indicated that early marriages are the main cause of school dropout among girls in Kilosa district. The study recommends that there is need for collaboration among stakeholders in order to address the issue. Despite the government of Tanzania, NGOs and other organization has made an attempt to stop child marriage, the problem still persists. However, the studies done in Uganda and Tanzania have not dealt with effect of marriage practices on girls' educational attainment in all the levels.

In Migori County, Ganira et al (2015) conducted a study on effects of forced marriage on girls' education. The study target population were young mothers and a sample of 30 women who got married

before the age of 18 years were used. The study adopted both primary and secondary data. Questionnaires and structured interview schedules were used to collect data by the researcher. Findings of the study indicated that the belief that girls are a source of wealth makes parents force girls into marriage without their consent and hence affecting girls' educational attainment. The study recommends that the existing laws should be reviewed to strengthen legal and policy frameworks through adherence to the minimum age of marriage, registration of marriage and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and to prevent forced marriage. However, there is a need for the same research to be done in Bomet East Sub-County.

In Buna Sub-County, Wajir County, Hellen (2020) conducted a study on the effect of early marriages on the primary education of girls. Descriptive research design was used to execute the study. Sampling method of 159 sample size that is 114 standard seven and eight pupils, 39 teachers, and 6 headteachers) drawn from six schools. The total respondents for the study were 133 (97 pupils, 30 teachers, and 6 headteachers) which were drawn from the four schools that participated in the study. The findings of the study were presented in the descriptive statistical format using tables, pie charts and graphs. The findings of the study showed that early marriages in Buna Sub-County have affected girls' education negatively and completion rate was found to be low because girls were getting married at the age of 14 and 17 years. The study recommended that awareness should be made to the community on the effects of early marriages on women's educational attainment. However, there is a need for the study to be carried out in Bomet East Sub-County in order to address the issue of marriage practices among Kipsigis women in the sub-county.

## **1.2. Research Question**

- What were the influence of marriage practices on women's educational attainment in Bomet East Sub-county?

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a historical research design. Purposive and snowballing sampling was used to select the respondents. The sample size comprised 125 respondents. Data was collected using focus group discussions and interview schedules. A total of 83 respondents out of 125 sampled participated in the study. This included 5 chiefs, 8 educationists, 10 elderly persons and 60 women. The study therefore attained a 66.4% response rate. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically based on the study objective.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

The third objective sought to determine the influence of marriage practices on women's educational attainment among Kipsigis women in Bomet East sub-county, Bomet county, Kenya. Women's educational attainment was assessed based on early marriage, forced marriage, arranged marriage and dowry systems. This section presents qualitative findings based on the objective and a discussion on each. With regard to the effect of early marriage, respondents in the Sowe Age set observed that early marriage was a common and accepted part of life. Girls as young as 12 were considered ready to become wives. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) played a big role in this, as it was seen as the moment a girl became a woman. After undergoing FGM, a girl was expected to get married and take on adult responsibilities, even though she was still very young. Respondent FGD 1A reported that:

*"In 1960s young girls at the age of 12 years were considered ready for marriage".*

This implies that in the 1960s girls were married off at a very young age limiting their chances of continuing with education. Respondent FGD 3A stated that:

*"In 1960s FGM was used to mark the transition of a girl child to adulthood ready for motherhood and marriage without considering the child's young age".*

FGM was viewed as a rite of passage that prematurely pushed young girls into adulthood and marriage disregarding their education.

Findings on early marriage in the Korongoro Age set illustrated that during the 1970s and early 1980s, early marriage continued to be widely practiced. Girls around the age of 13 would go through FGM and then spend two years in seclusion. This time was meant to prepare them for life as wives. Once they completed this period, they were considered adults and ready for marriage. Education usually ended at this point, as the focus was marriage. Respondent FGD 1B, FGD 2B, FGD 3B stated that:

*"In 1970s and early 1980s young girls at the age of 13 years were considered ready for marriage after circumcision and a seclusion period of two years".*

This implies that in the 1970s and early 1980s circumcision and the seclusion period marked the end of girls' schooling and childhood. They were seen as adults prepared for marriage denying them educational opportunities.

With regard to effect of early marriage, respondents in Kaplelach Age set observe that: Respondent FGD 1C, FGD 2C, FGD 3C:

*"In the late 1980s and 1990s girls at the age of 15 years were considered ready for marriage this was marked by a 6-month seclusion and circumcision period".*

This implies that in the Kaplelach Age set girls around 15 years old were viewed as mature enough for marriage with readiness marked by circumcision followed by a six-month seclusion period. This cultural practice reinforced early marriage interrupted schooling and therefore limiting educational attainment.

This implies that in the late 1980s and 1990s girls as young as 15 years were still subjected to circumcision and a six-month seclusion period. This marked them for marriage reinforcing early marriage practices. In the late 1980s and 1990s, early marriage was still practiced, although the age had increased slightly. Girls were now expected to marry at around 15 years old. They would undergo FGM followed by a six-month seclusion period, during which they were prepared for marriage. After coming out of seclusion, many girls were married soon after and the girls were not allowed to go to school anymore. While some were able to stay in school longer than in previous generations, the pressure to marry early remained strong. On forced marriage, the respondents in Sowe Age set observed that in the 1960s, girls had no voice in matters of marriage. Respondents shared that young girls were not asked if they wanted to get married or who they wanted to marry. Everything was decided for them usually by their fathers or other elders in the family. Whether they were ready or not didn't matter. Once a decision was made, the girl was expected to accept it and prepare for her new life as a wife. Women had no voice to choose education over marriage. Respondent FGD 1A asserted that:

*"In 1960s young girls were not consulted or involved in decision making pertaining the choice husbands".*

This means that in the 1960s young girls had no voice in marriage matters as parents and elders chose husbands for them. Respondent FGD 2A, FGD 3A stated that:

*"girls did not have any voice on whether they were ready for marriage or not".*

This implies that girls lacked decision making power regarding their own lives. Marriage was imposed on them regardless of their readiness reflecting gender inequality.

According to respondent FGD 1B, FGD 2B, FGD 3B:

*"In 1970s and early 1980s young girls at the age of 13 years were forced to marry older men" and "In 1970s and early 1980s young girls at the age of 13 years were forced to marry older men and a times not as the first and only wife".*

Girls as young as 13 were subjected to child marriage to much older men which denied them the opportunity for education. It also shows that some girls were married off into polygamous unions reducing their status and rights within marriage. Those who grew up in the 1970s and early 1980s remembered a similar experience. Girls as young as 13 were married off, often to older men. Sometimes, these men already had other wives, which meant the girls had to enter marriages where they were not even the first. These were not marriages of love or choice they were arranged by families, and the girls had no power to say no or speak up for themselves.

Findings from the Sowe age set show that girls had no voice in marriage decisions. Their fathers and elders chose husbands and women were denied the chance to choose education over marriage. In Korongoro age set forced marriages persisted with girls as young as 13 married off to older men in polygamous unions. These marriages were arranged without consent denying them education and reducing their status and rights within marriage.

With regard to effect of early marriage, respondents in Kaplelach Age set observe that in the late 1980s and 1990s, forced marriage was still very common. Girls around 15 were married without being asked

how they felt about it. Once they were married, they had to leave school immediately. The decision about who they would marry was made by the older men in the family, and girls were simply expected to follow through. Their opinions didn't count, and many were left feeling helpless. Respondent FGD 1C, FGD 2C, FGD 3C reported that:

*"In the late 1980s and 1990s girls at the age of 15 years were considered ready for marriage without any room for objection" and "choice of a husband was solely the responsibility of the elderly men".*

Girls as young as 15 were forced into marriage without having a say in the matter showing that their consent and personal choice were disregarded. The decision of selecting a husband was entirely controlled by elderly men leaving girls and even their mothers with no influence or voice in the matter. Another respondent FGD 1C, FGD 2C reported that: *"Going to school stopped as soon as one was married"*. This means that in the late 1980s and 1990s girls as young as 15 were forced into marriage without having a say in the matter.

Findings from the Kaplelach age set indicate that in the late 1980s and 1990s early and forced marriage was still widespread. Girls as young as 15 were considered ready for marriage and decisions about their husbands were made by elderly men in the family. Girls' voices and consent were disregarded and even mothers had no influence in the process. Once married girls were required to drop out of school immediately.

Across all three age sets, forced marriage was a deeply rooted practice. Girls were often married off at a young age, without being asked for their consent or even being part of the discussion. Older male relatives made the decisions, and once a marriage was arranged, girls had no choice but to comply. Many were forced to leave school, sometimes to marry men much older than them, and in some cases, to become second or third wives. Their voices were silenced, and their futures shaped by others leaving them with little control over their own lives.

According to respondent FGD 1A, FGD 2A, FGD 3A:

*"In the 1960s Young girls were booked for marriage at birth kibwoterer".*

This implies that in the 1960s girls had no control over their future since marriage arrangements were made for them from birth. This denied them freedom of choice and prioritizing marriage over education. Respondent FGD 2A stated that:

*"Young girls were natured with the aim of reading them for marriage to the preidentified husbands".*

Young girls were raised and socialized with the primary goal of preparing them for marriage to men who had already been chosen for them rather than being given opportunities for education.

In the 1960s, arranged marriage was a common tradition. Girls were often promised for marriage at birth in a practice known as *kibwoterer*. Families would agree on future husbands for their daughters long before the girls were old enough to understand what was happening. From early on, these girls were raised and guided with one main goal to become wives to the men chosen for them. Their lives were shaped around this expectation, and little attention was given to their education or personal dreams.

With regard to effect of early marriage, respondents in Korongoro Age set observed that those who came of age in the 1970s and early 1980s described similar experiences. The practice of *kibwoterer* was still very much alive. It was normal for girls to be booked for marriage while they were still babies. As they grew up, everything family guidance, cultural training, and community expectations was aimed at preparing them for this future role. School was not considered important for girls who had already been promised to someone. Respondent FGD 1B, FGD 2B, FGD 3B:

*"In 1970s and early 1980s kibwoterer a practice of booking young for a hand in marriage from as young as at birth was a c practice".*

This could mean that booking young girls for marriage from as early as birth was a cultural practice where parents or elders determined their future husbands.

Information from Korongoro age set show that in the 1970s and early 1980s, early marriage was widespread. Girls were often booked for marriage from birth with families or elders determining their future husbands. As they grew all cultural training, family guidance and community expectations focused on preparing them for marriage rather than education.

With regard to effect of early marriage, respondents in Kaplelach Age set observe that in the late 1980s and 1990s, arranged marriage through *kibwoterer* continued, though with some small changes. Girls were still promised for marriage and prepared for it after undergoing circumcision. Many were taken out of school shortly after, as their role as future wives was considered more important than their education. Even the few girls who managed to attend school were often forced to leave by the age of 13 so they could get married. Respondent FGD 1C, FGD 2C, FGD 3C observed that:

*"In the late 1980s and 1990s girls were booked for marriage kibwoterer and natured for marriage after circumcision without need for schooling them" and The few girls who managed to go to school even after being booked for marriage dropped out of school at the age of 13 for marriage."*

This implies that despite some progress in schooling opportunities cultural practices like booking girls for marriage and circumcision still prioritized marriage over education.

Findings from the Kaplelach age set show that arranged marriage persisted though with slight changes. Girls were often booked for marriage early and prepared for it after circumcision. Education was seen as secondary and many girls were withdrawn from school shortly afterward. Even those who managed to attend school were often forced to drop out by around age 13 to marry. This highlights how cultural practices continued to prioritize marriage over education.

Across all three generations, the tradition of arranged marriage through *kibwoterer* remained strong. Girls were often promised for marriage from birth and brought up with that goal in mind. Their voices were rarely heard, and their chances for education were limited or completely denied. The expectation that girls should marry young, and to someone chosen by their family, was deeply rooted in the culture and passed down over the years with little change.

Findings on dowry system in Sowe Age set observed that in the 1960s, the dowry system was a key part of early marriage. Respondents shared that when girls as young as 12 were married off, their families received a dowry that was typically set at 14 cows and 12 sheep. Girls were often viewed not just as daughters but as a way for families to gain wealth. The marriage of a girl meant an increase in livestock, which was highly valued. Families made decisions based on this expectation, and the girls themselves had no say in the matter. Respondent FGD 1A, FGD 2A, FGD3A reported that:

*"In 1960s young girls at the age of 12 years a transaction involving payment of dowry set at 14 cows and 12 sheep" and girls were seen as means to wealth".*

Young girls as early as 12 years old were married off through dowry transactions often set at 14 cows and 12 sheep reflecting the perception of girls as sources of wealth.

Findings from the Sowe age set reveal that dowry system influenced early marriage. Girls as young as 12 were married off with families receiving dowries commonly set at 14 cows and 12 sheep. This exchange turned girls into a source of wealth as livestock was highly valued in the community. Decisions about marriage were made by families based on the economic benefits of dowry.

With regard to dowry system, respondents in Korongoro Age set observed that During the 1970s and early 1980s, dowry continued to play a major role in marriage decisions. Like in the earlier generation, daughters were seen as a source of wealth, and dowry payments remained at 14 cows and 12 sheep. Families would often choose a husband for their daughter based on who could pay the highest dowry. The more animals a suitor offered, the more likely he was to be accepted. Girls and women had no voice in these transactions. Their preferences, thoughts, or feelings about marriage were not considered important. Respondent FGD 1B and FGD 3B stated that:

*"In 1970s and early 1980s dowry payment was a common practice, which meant daughters were a source of wealth" and Dowry was set at 14 cows and 12 sheep".*

Dowry payment was a common practice which meant that daughters were regarded as a source of wealth with the dowry set at 14 cows and 12 sheep. This was confirmed by respondent FGD 2C who said that:

*"Dowry was used to select a husband among fellow suitors, with preference going to the one paying the most and women and girls had no say in the amount of dowry to be paid".*

Dowry was used to determine the choice of a husband among suitors with preference given to the one who paid the most. Women and girls had no say in the amount to be paid.

Findings from the Korongoro age set show that, dowry remained central to marriage arrangements. Girls were still regarded as sources of wealth with dowry payments fixed at 14 cows and 12 sheep. Families prioritized suitors based on who could pay the highest dowry often accepting the wealthiest offer. Women and girls had no say in either the choice of husband or the dowry negotiations.

According to respondent FGD 1C and FGD 3C: *"Dowry was a common practice paid to the girl's family upon marriage"*. This could be taken to mean dowry was a common practice that involved payment to the girl's family upon marriage. Another respondent FGD 2C confirmed that:

*"Dowry was used in the selection of a husband among suitors, with preference going to the one paying the most"*.

This implies that marriage decisions were driven by wealth rather than personal choice, as the suitor who paid the highest dowry was favored.

Dowry was used to determine the choice of a husband among suitors with preference given to the one who paid the highest amount. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the practice of dowry remained common. Families still received payment when their daughters were married, and this payment continued to influence the choice of husband. As with earlier generations, the suitor offering the highest dowry was usually preferred. Girls were rarely involved in these decisions, as marriage was treated more as a family arrangement than a personal choice.

Across all three age sets, dowry was closely tied to early marriage and played a powerful role in shaping the lives of young girls. Families saw daughters as valuable assets because of the livestock they could bring through marriage. The suitor offering the most dowry was often chosen, regardless of the girl's wishes. Over the decades, the dowry system remained a strong influence, reinforcing early marriage and limiting girls' freedom and choices in their own futures.

Early and forced marriage reinforced by FGM, seclusion, arranged unions and dowry payment was practiced in the Sowe, Korongoro and Kaplelach age sets. Girls as young as 12–15 were considered ready for marriage as education was not their primary goal. Marriage decisions were controlled by fathers and elders leaving girls without consent and sometimes in polygamous unions. Dowry payments of 14 cows and 12 sheep treated daughters as sources of wealth. These practices denied girls schooling interfering with their educational attainment.

The results obtained from the interviewees on marriage practices were consistent with those of the focus group discussions. According to EDL1, EDL3 and EDL8:

*There was early marriages where women were booked immediately after birth for hand in marriage (kibwoterer). They could go to school until class 3 or 4 then drop out to undergo FGM for 2 years to be prepared for marriage. There was also forced marriages in that in the past, fathers could decide on who to marry their daughters. Whatever it was decided by old men and fathers basing on the marriage partner was final decision. In Kipsigis community during the period of 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, women were forced to undergo FGM in January in order to prevent them from going back to school. After the seclusion period the suitors could take them as their wives.*

This means there were early and forced marriages where girls were booked for marriage (kibwoterer) immediately after birth. Most dropped out of school after class 3 or 4 to undergo FGM for two years as preparation for marriage. Fathers and elders decided on marriage partners. Among the Kipsigis community in the 1960s to 1990s FGM was conducted in January to prevent girls from returning to school after which suitors would take them as wives.

EDL2 and EDL4 reported that;

*There was arranged marriages where by the old men could seat in a circle at a certain tree in Kipsigis community to discuss while taking wine and book young girls to their sons. This made many young girls drop out in class 3 or 4. Dowry systems was there where women education was not valued in Kipsigis community as cows. Parents valued cows more than women and anyone without a cow was not considered a member of a community. Payment of dowry in 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. A bride price of 14 cows and 12 sheep was commonly agreed upon, any suitor who had the ability to go past the set bride price was likely to be accepted. Cows and sheep were therefore a sign of wealth and under no circumstance was it used to as fees for girls' education.*

There were arranged marriages in the Kipsigis community, where old men would sit under a tree, drink wine and agree on booking young girls for their sons. As a result, many girls dropped out of school by class 3 or 4. The dowry system reinforced this practice as women's education was not valued compared to cattle. Parents valued cows more than their daughters and anyone without cows was not considered a full member of the community.

According to the chiefs (C1, C2 and C4):

*Early marriage has been affecting a majority of girls in their education. Most are married off in form 2.*

Early marriage has greatly affected the education of many girls with most being married off while still in form two. Based on interviewee C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5:

*Some parents prefer girls getting married in exchange of dowry because girls are viewed as financial (few) and there is no forced marriage the girls are the ones choosing their partners.*

This implies that girls' education is compromised since parents prioritize dowry over schooling viewing daughters as sources of financial gain. Even though marriages may not be forced the pressure to marry early reduces the chances of girls completing their education.

The above findings are supported by the educationists ED1, ED3, ED6 and ED4 who stated that;

*Forced marriages demoralizes women from going back to school and ties them with responsibilities of running families and raising children and therefore women won't go back to school. Women are seen as a source of wealth once they attain the age of marriage. They are married off in exchange with cows which is used to educate the boy child.*

Forced marriages discourage women from returning to school as they are burdened with family responsibilities and childcare. Most women never resume their education. In addition, women are perceived as a source of wealth once they reach marriageable age, as they are married off in exchange for cows which are then used to finance the education of the boy child. Interviewee ED3, ED5 and ED6 asserted that;

*Early marriages impede the ambition to continue with education.*

Results therefore indicates that early marriages, forced marriages, arranged marriages, dowry systems are marriage practices that influences educational attainment in women.

Findings from interview schedules reveal that among the Kipsigis community early, forced and arranged marriages were widespread and they interfered with girls' education. Girls were often booked for marriage at birth dropped out of school by class 3 or 4 and underwent FGM as preparation for marriage. Fathers and elders chose husbands and dowry payments were 14 cows and 12 sheep. Chiefs confirmed many girls were married off by form two while educationists emphasized that early and forced marriages tied women to family responsibilities limiting their educational attainment.

Information from interview schedules and focus group discussions show that from the 1960s to early 1990s marriage practices such as early, forced and arranged unions significantly limited girls' education among the Kipsigis. Girls were often booked for marriage from birth and dropped out of school by class 3 or 4 as they underwent FGM to prepare for marriage. Fathers and elders made marriage decisions with dowry system of 14 cows and 12 sheep being valued over education. Chiefs noted many girls married by form two and educationists observed that forced marriages burdened women with family roles preventing return to school. Sekina and Hodgkin (2017) conducted a study on effect of child marriage on women school dropout in Nepal. The findings of the study showed that early marriage is the most common reason for girls leaving school. It also shows that women are at high risk of dropping out of school after completing grade five and six because they are forced to get married. Hamidu (2023), also observed that early marriages are the main cause of school dropout among girls in Tanzania.

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The study sought to determine the influence of marriage practices on women's educational attainment. Findings indicated that early and forced marriages driven by FGM and dowry traditions were widespread among the Sowe, Korongoro, and Kapelach age sets. Girls as young as 12 to 15 were considered ready for marriage with minimal regard for schooling. Respondents confirmed that early, forced and arranged marriages were common and disrupted girls' education. Many were booked for

marriage at birth and left school as they underwent FGM as part of marriage preparation. It can therefore be concluded that **marriage practices reinforced by FGM and dowry significantly influenced girls' educational attainment in the Kipsigis community. It is therefore recommended that the Government through the Ministry of Education in collaboration with other stakeholders should strive to enforce strict measures against early and forced marriages by engaging local authorities, elders, and religious leaders.**

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