

**CAUSES OF FAMILY CONFLICTS IN THE KIPSIGIIS COMMUNITY  
A CASE STUDY OF KERICHO DISTRICT OF RIFTVALLEY PROVINCE IN  
KENYA**

**BY**

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### **DECLARATION**

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree award in any other institution of learning.

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Signature .....

Date .....

### **APPROVAL**

This research book is submitted to the faculty of social sciences after being supervised and approved by Dr Otanga Rusoke.

Supervisor: Dr Otanga Rusoke

Signature.....

Date.....

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my dad, James Njoroge, mum Wangui Njoroge and my brothers and sisters.



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I would like to express my great sincere appreciation and gratitude to all those who assisted me in one way or another in order to make this thesis what it is.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Violence in the family (referred herein as domestic violence) has been on the increase in many parts of the country and extreme cases reported in the local media. The frequency and the magnitude of this problem have never been established due to the fact that many cases go unreported.

There are some socio-cultural and economic factors enhancing domestic violence. Institutions such as the school, state and the church have gradually stripped the Kipsigiis family of some of its traditional functions and responsibilities such as providing informal education and treatment. On the one hand, the state has undertaken to provide education in kindergartens, schools and other forms of education. Schools and health institutions such as the dispensaries, hospitals and other centers have taken an increasing role in maintaining the health of children and no longer leave these matters entirely to the individual family.

The issue of the inheritance of the family property is currently sensitive among the Kipsigiis and has contributed to disputes amongst family members. This is because, according to Perstiany 1964, properties like land and livestock which were in the hands of men were divided and inherited equally by the sons according to the number of wives in polygamous families unlike nowadays where members stand as individuals and not as a unit.

Conflicts or disagreements in the family simply show on the one hand, that there exist some differences in some fundamental areas of life between the couples including background, upbringing training and temperament. According to Adei 1991;94 every couple despite the illusion of mutuality of interest, start their relationship with sufficient difference which may ruin their marriage, divorce being the result of and extreme form of unresolved conflict.

Ogburn 1964 asserted that the prime mover of social change is technology and that the nonmaterial elements adjust to it after a time.

He saw the modern family as losing its functions because industrial production took place in factories, education in schools, religious training in churches. This process has brought socio-economic interaction in forms of formal education, trading and intermarriages between the Kipsigiis and her neighboring communities the Abagusii, Luo, and Agikuyu. The interactions have had profound effects on the traditional and general lifestyle of the former. This has also exposed some family members to new ideas which are adopted either partly or wholly.

This study was carried out in Kericho district amongst the Kipsigiis community. The study used exploratory technique to facilitate full understanding of the causes, levels, nature of conflict, their interpretations and consequences. Qualitative methodological approaches were utilized. In-depth interviews and focus groups discussions were conducted. A total of 50 respondents were interviewed.

However this study is in support of other studies which have found out that conflict and domestic violence is to a large extent dependent on socio-economic and cultural factors of family members.

## **CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 BACKGROUND.**

The Kipsigiis are numerically the largest group of the Kalenjin speaking community. The Kipsigiis are mostly found in the resently curved Bomet and Kericho district of Riftvally province, though others have for some reasons migrated to the neighbouring district. According to the 1989 population census, the Kipsigiis were estimated at about 900,934(about 38% of the Kalenjin population). The Kipsigiis belong to the same group as and have common customs to those of the Nandi, Keiyo, Marakwet, Tugen, Pokot, and, Sebei.

Kipsigiis is the name given to the people who were refered to as the Lumbwa in the colonial period. However there is no clear meaning to the name Kipsigiis, but the transitive verb 'Sich' or 'Sigiis' or 'Sigisyeet' means given birth to children. Being a patriarchal community, the use of the male prefix 'kip' confirms the belief amongst the kipsigiis that males are considered as the ones who are capable of giving birth to children or raise children to the clan and by extension, the community.

Indeed a male who is unable to bring forth children in a socially recognized marriage is considered as a misfit to the clan and by extension, the community. Indeed, a male who is unable to bring forth children in the socially recognized marriage is considered as a misfit to the clan. The term 'Kome ma' literally meaning the fire has died and which is degrading in nature is used to describe a man cannot give birth to children. The Kipsigiis

The decline of these social values is a major source of conflict and tensions in the family which if unchecked results in deterioration of discipline on increase in the rate of deviant behavior, suicide attempts, separation and dissolution of marriage.

Moreover, the changes in the social roles of family members in the inter-personal relationship between the people of both sexes and in the family power structure have resulted in misunderstandings and conflicts which have resulted in domestic violence and thus disrupted the attainment of family objectives. Domestic violence has been identified as the most common and widespread form of violence throughout the world and victims of this violence get hurt making it tantamount to violence against women. (Dobash et al 1979). A study has shown that men use violence against women to perpetuate and reinforce the gender hierarchy to keep a woman in her place to stifle her right to speak to make decisions and to control her sexuality.

### **1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.**

Going by the study conducted and newspapers report in this field, domestic violence is on the increase and that the majority of the cases are often concealed as they are regarded 'private' and should not be exposed to everyone. Though this is the situation women and children are the main victims of this violence. The effects of this if unchecked, range from severe physical bruises, emotional stress and death. Kenya according to UNIFEM (1992) had the highest rate of wife battering in Africa.



There are some social-cultural and economic factors enhancing domestic violence. This study explores the causes, nature and the levels of conflicts in the Kipsigiis family. Institutional function and responsibilities such as school, state and church have gradually stripped the Kipsigiis family of some of its tradition functions and responsibilities such as providing informal education and treatment.

On the other hand, the state has undertaken to provide education in kindergartens, schools and other forms of education. Schools and health institutions such as the dispensary, hospitals, and other centers have taken an increasing role in maintaining the health of children and no longer leave these matters entirely to the individual family. This results into introduction and infiltration of new social values that causes conflict of disruptions of traditional lifestyles of the people. The issue of the inheritance of the family property has contributed to disputes amongst family members. This is because, according to Peristiany(1964) properties like land livestock, which were in the hands of men and women in the female headed families were divided and inherited equally by the sons according to the number of wives in polygynous families unlike nowadays where members stand as individuals and not as a unit.

However, different types of violence and conflicts originate from within and outside the family and or from vagaries of nature such as diseases and death. The study is specifically looking into the causes nature and levels of conflicts in the Kipsigiis family.

## **1.2 GENERAL OBJECTIVES**

The general objectives of this study was to find out the causes and effects of domestic violence among the Kipsigiis community.

## **1.3 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- To look at the levels of change and conflict in the Kipsigiis family.
- To describe levels of conflict and their causes to the Kipsigiis family.
- To seek modalities that will eradicate conflict situation in the Kipsigiis family.

## **1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY.**

The study will be important in the following ways.

1. The study may provide vital information to policy makers and law makers. Such that before they make laws against domestic violence they should consider the causes.
2. The study finding might be used by parents and other stakeholders in child upbringing such that children are not subjected to conditions of domestic violence.
3. The study may be used by other people who will be interested in carrying out similar studies. This research will be useful as a source of literature.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. Are there levels of change that cause conflicts in the Kipsigis community?
2. What are the levels of conflicts and their causes to the Kipsigis community?
3. Are there modalities that can eradicate conflict in the Kipsigis community?
4. Is conflict dependant on the level of income?
5. Does age in marriage influence conflict?
6. Are there religious factors that bring about conflict among the Kipsigiis community?

## **1.6 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted in Kericho. The research focused on married couples and youth of both sexes to ascertain their values goals aspirations and relationships on the cause. The married couples are more knowledgeable about conflict and other family issues where as the youth are preparing to take up the various tasks in the family. Conflict is bound to occur because marriage brings together not only a man and a woman but also two different families with diverse social values. Thus the unit of analysis in this study is the individual. This is because it is the individual behavior and social values that brings misunderstanding in the family.

## 1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Studies have shown that the family is increasingly diminishing in importance due to the effects of social change. (Turner, 1970, Falsom 1985, and Goode et al 1994). The social phenomena of conflict in the family will be undertaken in the application of the social change theory. According to Kilbride 1990 social change and other social transformation that have occurred around the world due to the processes of industrialization and urbanization have pressurized social system to undergo certain changes in a bid to maintain their equilibrium. To understand the dynamics of conflicts in the family adjustment in other social structure outside the family will be taken into consideration.

Social change is the process by which alterations occur in the structure and functions of a social system (Rogers et al 1971) and it consist of 3 stages namely; inventions, diffusions and consequences. Invention is the process by which the ideas and practices are created whereas diffusions are the process by which those ideas are communicated.

Consequences are reflected in the changes that occur due to adoption and or rejection of the innovations. The above occur from one society to another as a result of "freedom" which has interactions infiltrating the family (Ouko 1990). It is the suddenness of the changes that has weakened the family bonds resulting in tension or conflicts on the human relations and in the functions of a social system. This has affected the stability of a social system.



Ogburn (1964) asserted that the prime mover of social change is technology (material culture) and that the non material (family religion) elements adjust to it after a time (culture lag). He saw the modern family as losing its functions because industrial production took place in factories, education in schools, religious training in churches. This process has brought socio-economic interactions in forms of formal education, trading and intermarriages between the Kipsigis and her neighboring communities the Abagusii Luo and Agikuyu. The interactions have had profound effects on the traditional and general lifestyles of the former. This has also exposed some family members to new ideas which are adopted either partly or wholly. Social change occurs due to innovations (Mbula 1977), and inventions which are usually accepted into culture.

Social change process has generated new institutions which have affected certain functions the family ties and customs in that they have invaded certain functions of the family. Institutions are agents of change such as the state, schools, churches, print and electronic and other forms of technology have brought about social cultural change as people of diverse cultural background came into contact.

Formal education on the other hand has not only led to changes in the role definitions and age at marriage in both sexes but also empowered certain groups to demand equal distribution or sharing of roles. Women for example are able to undertake gainful employment and other tasks outside home therefore developing new independent and roles, thus leaving the children for long periods under the mercy of the untrained and young caretakers (Kayongo male et al 1984). The working mother experiences a lot of

conflict in trying to balance her roles. Apart from her occupations demands she has to attend to her roles of a wife and mother. She faces conflict on role and decision making in the absence of her husband.

The growth of towns has created a spirit of individualism, competitiveness which has worked against the tradition of the family ties. Alternatively those left behind in the rural areas (women) in the rural urban movement in search of employment opportunities or better services redistribute among themselves the roles that were formerly occupied by the migrants. Role conflict occurs as women for example try to take up menial roles to the detriment of the care and love for the children the disabled and the old. Meanwhile the absence of one parent in the family bring problem in the child growth as both parents love is needed and for the role model provision.

Functionalism also recognizes the fact that there exists various interrelated parts or levels which are linked together for the realization of family goals also a relationship between the individual and society, between the various parts or institutions that go to make up a society, the cultural system and social system.

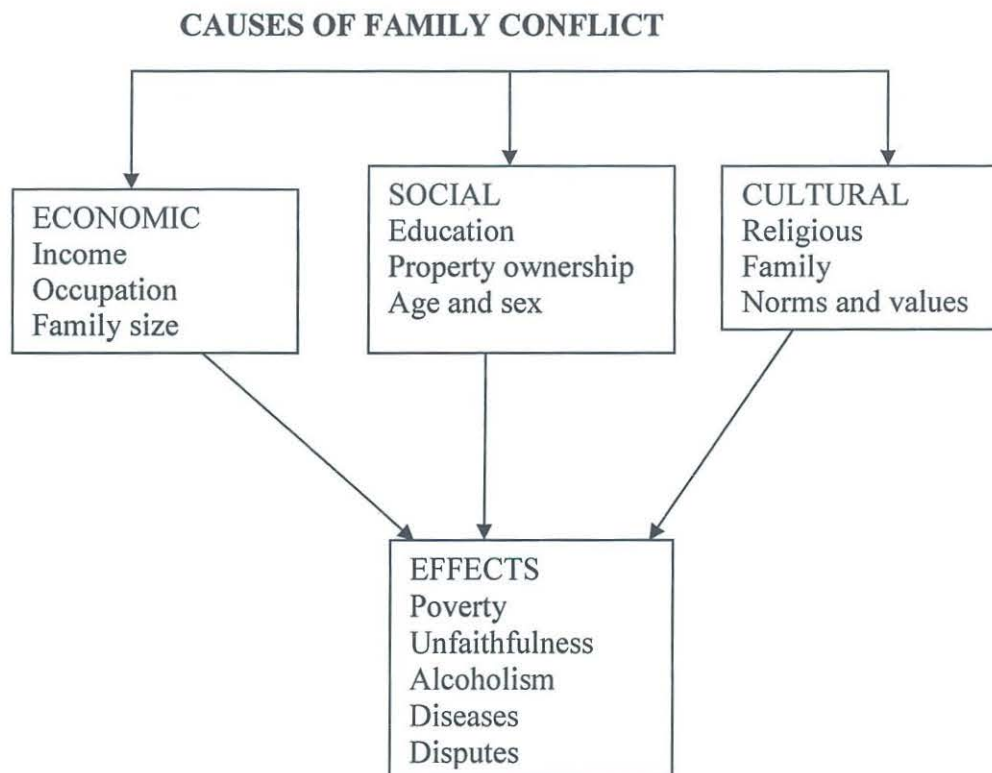
Goode (1994) asserts that as new types of tasks are created young people do not only rely on the family orders for advice and education since the schools and other social institutions will teach them new skills. This has resulted in greater freedom because one main ideology of urbanization asserts the right to individuals to choose thus less control by the parents over the children's courtship and mate selection.

## 1.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Studies show that violence is brought about by the social economic and cultural factors. The family is increasingly diminishing in importance due to the effects of social change. Social change focuses on the individual income; people migrate to urban centers to seek employment and better life.

The rapid impact of social change process has exposed the family to the above process has forced families lose some parts of traditional functions thus bringing conflict. Formal education has also played a role in generation of violence in the family. This in turn has brought about change in culture in the community thus violence coming up.

Due to the cultural beliefs many families in the kipsiigis community live under poverty and this is due to poor income which has turned men to become unfaithful to their wives. This is because men become drunkards and do not help their women to look after their family. It has brought about many downfalls to the families such as diseases, disputes in property ownership and poverty thus violence





## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will review the existing work that has been done by other scholars but related to this study. Many studies have been conducted on causes of family conflict but very few on causes and effects. This study will review the existing work.

Studies have shown that traditional family set-up is in decline and increasing its goals and functions. This is mainly as a result of changes happening outside the institution of family. The family has been struggling to adjust to the demands of the modern society in order to survive (Grote 1994). Some of the problems and difficulties emerging in the society have come as a result of the instability in its basic-bedrock, the family. The decline is a major source of many problems and will bring with it a whole host of other social evils such as delinquency lack of discipline and drug use. The decline used to mean shrinkage is also in the quality of relationships within the family. Children, for instance, no longer respect their parents and old people are no longer cared for. Today the social status of individuals is on the basis of achieved rather than ascribed (born into it) criteria.

The extended family was a feature of most cultures until the industrialization that began to reduce the extended family to the nuclear family (Brown et al 1999). With increased mobility came a new emphasis on independence in family living. Industrialization, westernization, education, and urbanization have moved the



contemporary African family. The western family model with its personalized focus led to a more individualistic society than the community oriented nature of the African family (Brown, and John et al 1995).

The situation above has influenced conflict in the family. These changes have smashed undermined and in some respect destroyed the tradition of many people (Mbiti 1969). These have also happened due to the fact that social change has seen the emergence of new norms and institutions which have infiltrated, disrupted and changed the traditional social values and practices of many African communities. The adult members of many African communities. The adult members of today's family wrestle with challenges that would have been unthinkable in their grandparent's generation.

The above factors have been associated with shifts and disruptions of the strict traditional taboos, values and social rules affectively. Girls who gave birth to children before getting married were looked down upon as social outcast and were preferred to be taken up as wives by old women who had sons.

Adults cannot avoid conflict due to varying variables such as goals, age, status, expectations, interests and aspirations (kayongo-male et al 1984) conflict originates from within and outside the family, from the social within the family, vagaries of nature and interpersonal relationship within the family. Domestic violence is largely directed against wives and children and that there is a high proportion of physical

assault taking place within the family (Adrian 1985). Conflict is an event which if not checked properly stains the resources and operation of the family.

## **2.1 CONFLICT IN RELATION**

Conflict is inevitable as it exists in any human relation and interactions due to various goals pursued and vary in their bases, outcomes and consequences. This is because each individual or groups of people pursue different interests. According to (Coser 1967) all social life is conflict because it is change. He does not however explain the fact that there are social-economic, political and religious aspects that in the first place are causes of conflict and second effect the social life. If persons, for example are frustrated in realizing their personal objectives they will become aggressive seeking to inflict harm upon something or somebody.

Kriesberg is arguing that indeed conflict is behavioral and attitudinal in that it evokes the deepest emotions and strongest passions. Often, struggles lead to defeats. In fact, conflict among groups or individuals due to diverse interests may benefit some members more than others. This means that conflicts end with destruction of at least one of the antagonists when unchecked by societal regulations and by deliberate action of the contenders. People who perceive for example, that they are not receiving outcomes in line with their expectations from the situation in which they are involved are likely candidate for engaging in intense conflict-promoting interactions. (Kriesberg 1973).

Moreover, conflict according to (Nye 1973); involve domination and when interactions involve domination one or more other persons or groups. Domination in the form of social values, norms and beliefs has to prevail in social institutions if functions and other objectives are to be achieved.

Simmel (1955) asserts that conflict usually take place within a common inverse of norms and rules that lead to the establishment or extension of such norms and rules. This means that conflict within a group, may help to establish unity or re-establish unity and cohesion where it has been threatened by hostile and antagonistic feelings among the members. Conflict is therefore seen as a binding element between parties that may have stood in no relation to each other.

Therefore, conflict can originate from within and outside the family. On one hand, extended conflict might aggravate internal divisions and induce more open expressions assert that external conflict lead to the submergence of internal conflict. But in the face of a common enemy, internal difference becomes, less salient. However conflict is not always dysfunctional for the relationship within which it occurs. It eliminates the accumulation of blocked habits.

### **2.1.2 DISRUPTION OF TRADITIONS**

Extended family was a feature of most cultures until the industrial revolution. It was the onset of industrialization that began to reduce the extended family to the nuclear family. With increased mobility came a new emphasis on independence in family

living. Family being a dynamic entity is the most severely affected part of Africa life. The size is shrinking from the extended family to one which the parents and their children constitute the family in the modern times (Mbiti 1969).

Industrialization, westernization, education, urbanization and westernized Christianity have moved the contemporary African family. These have also seen the growth and development of new norms and institutions that have weakened the old social-cultural structures, social economic and cultural backgrounds come together. Thus the weakening of the old normative order that governed people's relations and general behaviors, the meaning and value of institutions has resulted in conflict in the family.

It is through western religion education and the modern technology that the African traditional societies and lifestyles have been drastically affected "The change means that individual are severed, cut off pulled out and separated from corporate morality, customs and traditional solidarity. They have smashed undermined and in some respects destroyed the traditions of many people" (Mbiti 1969; 218)

Education for example facilitates the spread, communication, awareness and adoption of new ideas from members of the social groups and can empower people with authority and subsequently making eloquent and firm decisions. According to Suda (1981), conflict or instability rate in the family is higher in the highest levels of education, that conflict appears to rise with increasingly education.

Education changed the aspirations of many people and has led to delays in marriages as people in unmarried youth and one parenthood as well as women to elevate their social status to make significant financial contributions to their families and to participate effectively in the development of their society.

In addition, Mbiti (1969) notes that greater marital strain comes from marriages where there is a wide educational gap between the husband and wife. Therefore education facilitates social divisions that hamper the realization of the family objectives. At the same time, conflict is inevitable when the expenditure of the family income and other resources are not invested in the projects which benefit all the members. This can be so when the couples receive substantial amounts. Indeed, Kayongo-male et al (1984) argue that people who are allowed to own and use family property and resources can misuse them either in drinking prostituting and marrying wives.

In the Kipsigiis community a man is allowed to marry more than one wife as a measure of increased wealth and leadership. In agrarian environments where human labor was significant, polygamy was preferred just like when the first wife was unable to give birth to children (infertile) Mbula 1977 assert that polygamy in fact served the traditional family well by providing a large number of children and who provide a large work force for domestic tasks among the agricultural communities like the Kipsigiis.



## **2.2 DETERMINANTS OF FAMILY CONFLICT**

Variables such as social-economic and religious facts are considered.

### **2.2.1 THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF SPOUSES AND CONFLICT**

It is assumed that the higher the rate of conflict in the family through the elite are assumed to be having higher knowledge of the sources of family conflict and can provide better model of running family affairs. Education enhances rational thinking and empowers people to making firm and rational decisions on various issues. It is hard to take up a decision from any of a family member as all feel that their decisions are superior. Independent decisions reached bring family members into logger-heads as each decision is strong. This is why some observations Suda (1981) have shown that families with high level of education experience conflicts which result into separation divorce or death.

A woman's educational level is usually associated with the key factors that influence the number of children she will have (Hill et al 1994). These factors include her views and those of her community about the importance of marriage and childbearing and her use of birth control methods.

### **2.2.2 OCCUPATION/INCOME OF SPOUSES AND CONFLICT**

Poor families with large families, subjected to poverty, experience minimum conflict due to the fact that every member is almost satisfied with what is available. The state of affairs brings the family members together and in the same level.

Thus it was observed that conflict is closely associated with the level of income. This means that those who receive high income, especially men who are culturally allowed to own and use properties from the family cash crops such as tea or coffee bonuses spend nights away squandering their boom in drinking clubs, hotels or apartments of prostitutes and girlfriends while others are enticed by conmen or prostitutes.

Moreover the high social-economic status of certain families exposes them to various environments which influence habits, ambitions and ideas. The husband's occupation is found out to influence conflict in the family. According to (Kayongo male et al 1984) the African woman tendering her farm and home in the absence of her husband who works away from home often faces numerous conflicts. Especially on decision making thus bring untold suffering to the family members.

Families where husbands are feared and who are vested with a lot of authority and respect fails to be transparent and accountable in their dealings. Kayongo-male et al (ibid) argue that most working husbands use their money in drinks entertaining prostitutes or marrying other women. The family suffers since resources are misused in extra-marital relations.

### **2.2.3 THE VALUE OF CHILDREN AND CONFLICT**

Traditions of most Africa societies lay a lot of emphasis in the value of children, especially sons and subsequently their number. This is attributed to, in part, the rise in social status, a measure of increased wealth and leadership. This is why according to

Kayongo-male et al (1984:64) polygamy has been widely practiced through in itself create frictions for the women and children.

Having many wives is not only a sign of increased wealth but also showed the value of children. The value of children is further seen in cases of barrenness which was highly seen among the Kipsigiis as a curse where another woman could be married. But in a situation where a woman gave birth to children of one sex especially females, she is allowed by the traditions to marry another woman with a view of bringing forth sons (pristine 1964)

#### **2.2.4 FAMILY SIZE AND CONFLICT**

The larger the families size the higher the rate of conflict. This is due to the fact that the family resources are stretched to the limit. The children's long period of dependence and need for care is a major burden on the parents. Families where women are going out to work outside their homes witness a decline in the average family size because of little time available to attend to and support a large family at the expense of work.

In addition more educated women want fewer children than less educated women. According to a program on population East and West Centre (1996), this is partly due to the fact that the more educated a woman is the less likely she is to think that her only value comes from having children and the less likely she is to believe that having boys confers more preferences for male children are still strong, women tend



to have children till at least one son is born. It should be noted here that women with the little schooling tend to marry earlier and start having children sooner than women with more is when she marries and has her first child, the more years of exposure to pregnancy she has ahead of her, and the more likely she is to have large number of children even before her reproductive years are over. Moreover, better educated women have expectations for their children and therefore plan to have fewer children.

#### **2.2.5 RELIGION AND CONFLICT**

The religious system has its set of belief and practices that bring the people together. This is because religion is an important socializing agent and that the family plays a vital role in determining not only the religious position of its members but also the structure of the religious beliefs and attitudes. It is this that influences people's conduct and prescribing norms values beliefs which recognize the various institutions/stage of problem solving with a view to realizing family solidarity. According to Mbiti 1969 religion is the strongest element in any traditional background and which exerts a lot of influences on the thinking and living of a people. It is evident from the above that religion influence many aspects of family life. It was hoped that conflict is lowest in religious families.

## **CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

This part of the study was concerned with the way the study was conducted. It gave a detailed explanation of the methods of data collection and analysis. It also talked about research design, area and instruments.

### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A survey study design was employed to enable the researcher collect information over a wide area.

### **3.2 SITE SELECTION**

The study was carried out in Kericho district of the Rift Valley Province, Kenya. Its main concern was to describe the level of conflicts and their causes in relation to the Kipsigiis traditional family as well as in the modern families.

Kericho district was chosen because it's the largest district in Rift valley province where the Kipsigiis live. The other districts where the Kipsigiis are found include Nandi, Narok and Transmara. Kericho district has the highest number of domestic violence in the province.

### **3.3 SAMPLE TECHNIQUE**

A survey in several parts of the Kericho district was undertaken to determine the distribution of the population and families in general.

In order to ensure the study is representative unbiased and valid sampling as a research method was taken in this study to identify the population. This study used sampling because it is not time consuming exercise and saves the resources. The researcher took a sample of 50 which was appropriate for the above reasons. The sample included married men and women.

### **3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

Information was gathered from various sources. The following methods were used in data collection. Structured interview, questionnaire and use of observation. Data collection was carried out by the researcher and an assistance who understand the area better basing on their experience in family matters.

#### **3.4.1 STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

Oral examinations of individuals of the researcher's choice who may have information with regards to the research were interviewed.

#### **3.4.2 QUESTIONNAIRES**

This is series of questions for obtaining or special points. They may be closed questions or open depending on the kind of information one would like to obtain.

#### **3.4.3 GROUP DISCUSSION**

This involved establishing small groups of people who are either concerned or knowledgeable in this field

#### **3.4.4 OBSERVATION**

This involved the researcher going to the field to observe and collect data

#### **3.5 DATA PROCESSING**

This involved the editing of data to eliminate mistakes like biased information, spelling mistakes, tabulating the data or using statistics to process data. There was use of word, Microsoft excel and computer dictionary to edit data.

#### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS.**

This study employed descriptive statistics as the major tool of data analysis. This method provided data on averages, percentages and measures of central tendency

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 SOCI-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS.

The sample for this study consisted of 50 respondents who were randomly selected from two selected divisions in Kericho district (Belgut and Bureti) of the 50 respondents; the married were the majority being 86.9% and the single were 13.1%. In this section an attempt is made to present data on the respondents socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

The demographic variables to be discussed below include: age, sex, marital status, family size formal education, occupation and religion. To ascertain whether age had any bearing on conflict in the family, it was considered fitting in this study to examine the distribution of the respondents by age.

##### 4.1.1. Age and Sex

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents in the Age groups and sex.

Age RANGE	Females		Males		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
20 – 24	18	9.5	9	4.7	27	14.2
25 – 29	9	4.7	15	7.9	24	12.6
30 – 34	13	6.8	19	10	32	16.8
35 – 39	12	6.3	17	8.9	29	15.3
40 – 44	19	10	19	10	38	20
45 – 49	7	3.7	11	5.8	18	9.5
50+	11	5.8	11	5.8	22	11.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>46.8</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>53.2</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

The ages of the respondents ranges between 20 - 62 years with an average of approximately 37 years. The majority (20%) were in the 40 – 44 age group followed by those in the 30- 34 age group (16.8%) while those in the 45 – 49 age group were fewer



(9.5%) this indicates that the sample has knowledge on issues, events and other experiences in the family and are thus better placed in understanding the meaning causes, nature and the interpretation of conflict in the family.

The study noted that the Kipsigiis traditions as regards initiation are still upheld particularly for men, thus becoming a necessary prerequisite for anyone wishing to be married or marry (Peristiany, 1964). It was further noted that the age at which boys are initiated and the duration of seclusion has been reduced to about 12 to 15 years and 3 weeks respectively. It was also noted that girls' initiation has declined due to the influence of the western traditions, particularly Christianity.

These findings indicated that some of the graduates of circumcision are married at a younger age contrary to the Kenya marriage act that the age at marriage is above 18 years. The later age is considered as the age of maturity. The study observes that those who marry at a younger age are likely to experience problems in their marriages since they are immature.

#### 4.1.2 Family Size (The average number of living children as reported by the respondents)

**Table 2 shows the distribution of Respondent's Family Size by Divisions**

Sex	Belgut	Bomet	Total
Females	4	2	6
Males	5	6	12
Total	9	8	18

**Source:** primary data

Family size is the average number of children a woman or man has. But for women, family size is measured in terms of total fertility – the average of children women have over her childbearing years.

It was evident that whereas women bears about six children, on average, during their reproductive years, men's child bearing experiences are difficult to be concluded not only because they have children far later in life (their reproductive years are longer) than do women but also tends to have more partners. Thus, men have more children during their lifetime.

It was also noted that there exist two types of marriages amongst the Kipsigiis; polygamous and Monogamous. It was observed that men in polygamous marriages generally have a higher family size per woman than those in monogamous marriages. The average family size among polygamous marriages was found to be eleven children compared with an average of six children for those in monogamous marriages. On averaged; families in Belgut have the highest number of children, 9.

From the table below (Table 3), it is evident that most of the respondents and who are married (39%) had between four and six children while respondents who had given birth to children at their homes before they were married were 4.7%. The youngest respondent with a child was a 20 year old girl.

**Table 3 shows the number of Children and Marital Status**

Number of Children	Marital Status				TOTAL	
	Single		Married			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	16	8.4	-	-	16	8.4
1 – 3	9	4.7	68	35.8	77	40.5
4 – 6	-	-	74	39	74	39
7+	-	-	23	12.1	23	s
					12.1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>86.9</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** primary data

Essentially, it was revealed that most of the families have an averaged of five children. It was also realized that the family size amongst the present population appears to be declining for both men and women. This is due to the fact that educated people are more

knowledgeable and, according to Roudi et al (1996:7), is fare more likely to approve of and use family planning methods than their educated peers.

#### 4.1.3 Distribution or Respondents by Marital Status by Sex

Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents by martial status by sex

Marital Status	Females		Males		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Single	14	7.4	11	5.8	25	13.3
Married	67	35.3	89	46.8	156	82.1
Widow (er)	8	4.2	1	0.5	9	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>46.8</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>53.1</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

Out of the interviewed respondents in the two divisions selected, the majority (82.1%) were married and 13.3% single. 4.2% of the married respondents have no spouse or separated.

#### 4.1.4 Distribution of Respondents by Formal Education

Table 5 shows the distribution of Respondents by formal education

Levels of Ed.	Females		Males		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No. Formal Ed.	4	7.4	9	4.7	25	12.1
Pry. Std 1 -7	39	20.5	44	23.2	83	43.7
Sec. Forms 1 -6	28	14.7	36	18.9	64	33.7
University	8	4.2	12	6.3	20	10.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>46.8</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>53.2</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: primary data

It is evident from the table above (Table 5) that 12.1% of the respondents were illiterate compared to those literate totalling 89%. There are few males with no formal education (4.7%) compared to 14.7 females. There were few females (4.2%) with university education compared to males (6.3%)



The study findings shows that many parents cannot provide secondary education to their children because the majority of them (69%) have no source of income (see table 6). Some parents who wish that their daughters are married use some tactics to force their daughters to be married if they enter secondary schools. The major tactics employed here includes failure to pay school fees, increased load of domestic chores and involving them in petty trading at the local centres. The study findings show that this has led to poor academic performance, examination failures and drop-outs due to unwarranted pregnancies.

Though this was the situation found out, formal education has influenced the aspirations, goals and the values of some people as they come across various opinions, values and goals in the different levels of educational attainment. According to Leger (1985:1), acquiring the capability to read and write is important for easy communication of ideas. This is because a literate population is an easy target for the communication of new ideas.

Therefore, it was observed that education is one of the aspects which have contributed to the disruption of the traditional values and attitudes. This has exposed both the children and the parents to foreign cultures in the process of pursuing it, thus bringing them into conflict (culture conflict). In turn, it was noted that this has influenced, and to a smaller extend, role of performance in the family, which traditionally is based on gender, the objectives and the functions of the family in general.

The study of findings show that formal education has also resulted in rural-urban movement in search of job opportunities and role-conflict on those left behind, thus breaking the family ties and exposing them to new environments with people from foreign customs. These influences cohabitations and extra-marital unions.

Further, formal education has affected the age at marriage and the family size as people take more time pursuing it, thus leaving less time for courtship to individuals to accommodated each other and develop their relationships. An educated population knows

the existence and use of the family planning methods which is a source of conflict. According to Adadevoh (1974:16) better educated people are far more likely than their less educated peers to practice or have a spouse who practices family planning.

However, the findings shows that formal education has not empowered many people particularly women in the rural areas to undertake gainful employment opportunities and to demand for equal distribution or sharing of roles. This is evident from the data on the income of the respondents which shows that very few women (46.8%) have a source of income compared to men (53.2%) (See Table 6)

Though a few girls go far in schools, the study show that school enrolment has increased and aged at marriage has raised creating a longer period during which adolescent girls are sexually mature yet unmarried and pursuing educations. This means that formal education, though very essential, has not yet enabled much the vulnerable groups such as women go gain access to gainful employment opportunities. In fact, the study learned that schooling and other forms of training, which shape attitudes and values are delaying marriage especially where girls find opportunities for education. Formal education which significantly changes people's prospects enables them and especially women to elevate their social status, to make significant contributions to their respective families and eventually to participate in building their communities.

The findings further show that although many Kipsigiis women have not directly benefited from formal education, having education particularly for both sexes is more beneficial to the entire family and lessening a man's burden of being the sole breadwinner. Thus, marriage and or pregnancy at young age is likely to hinder a young woman's schooling and employment opportunities, lowering her socio-economic potentials. This also suggests, according to Frank (1996:15), women's inadequate access to (and control over) essential resources such as correct information, income and time often compromises mother's capacity to take adequate roles and obligations.

Many married couples are in serious troubles because they are trying to run their marriages on the basis both of them are equal and therefore they should be leaders.

#### 4.3.1 Income

Income has been used here to mean an activity that brings money to the respondents.

**Table 6 showing the distribution of income by sex**

Income	Female		Males		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Nil – less	76	40	55	28.9	131	69
1000-3000	3	1.6	9	4.7	12	6.3
3000-5000	4	2.1	6	3.2	10	5.3
5000-8000	2	1.0	7	3.7	9	4.7
8000+	4	46.8	24	12.6	28	14.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>46.8</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>53.2</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>

Source = primary data

The data on the respondent's source of income as shown in the table above (Table 6) (40% females and 28.9% males) were not in any formal employment compared to a total of 31.1% who were least getting some earnings from various sources. Some of these occupations are low paying, petty trading and public services. Many of them particularly females are involved in petty trading in the local centres and markets such as Sondu, Longisa, Kapsoit, Litein, Sotik, Bomet and Kericho town. They buy and sell vegetables, potatoes, maize, milk, ropes and mats.

Most of the females are housewives only working on domestic chores and were therefore not paid a salary. Moreover, most of the parents are peasant farmers despite having more than six acres of land. In fact, it was notable that most of those lands were occupied by shrubs and thick bushes that are of no economic use. Some parents were engaged in small-scale agricultural production with the main crops being maize, beans, tea and vegetables. These were mainly for subsistence and the surplus sold to support their families.

vegetables. These were mainly for subsistence and the surplus sold to support their families.

It was surprising to find out that most of the Kipsigiis men are unwilling to work on their farms or on other people's farms as casual labourers. They give orders to their women and children to do most of the manual work and especially in the farms but are the main recipients of the outcome.

Just like formal education, income has brought instability in the family in as far as the family size, obligations and responsibilities are concerned. These are left to the young and inexperienced caretakers.

#### 4.1.6 Religion

Religion has been used in two aspects; first, it refers to attitudes, practices and beliefs of the people. Secondly, it refers to religious affiliations. As regards religious affiliations, the respondents were categorized into three groups namely; Christians, Traditionalists and Muslims 47.4% said that they were Christians, 43.7% practiced traditional religion, 0.5% Muslim and 8.4% were not specific. Among the Christians (47.4%) were as follows: 40.5% married and 6.8% single.

**Table 7a shows the distribution of Respondents by Religion**

Religion	Married		Single		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Christians	77	40.5	13	6.8	90	47.4
Traditionalist	75	39.5	8	4.2	83	43.7
Muslims	0	0	1	0.5	1	0.5
Others	7	3.7	9	4.7	16	8.4
<b>Total</b>	159	83.7	31	16.3	190	100

**Source:** primary data

A cross tabulation between religious affiliation and marital status as shown in the Table 7a above, show that the majority of the married respondents were Christians (40.5%) whereas 6.8% were single.

#### 4.1.7 Prevalence of Conflict by Religion

Table 7b shows the Prevalence of Conflict by Religion

religion	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Christians	76	40	14	7.4	90	47.4
Traditionalist	35	18.4	48	25.3	83	43.7
Muslims	1	0.5	-	-	1	0.5
Others	10	8.4	-	-	16	8.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>67.3</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>

Source= primary data

A cross tabulation between religious affiliation and conflict (as shown in Table 7b above) indicate the majority of the respondents (67.3%) who accepted that they had experienced conflict in their families were Christians. This may be explained by the fact that Christians tend to be more flexible in behaviour than the traditionalists. It is that flexibility in behaviour that create loopholes or misunderstandings in the family.

25.3% of those who said they had not experienced conflict in their families were those categorized as practicing traditions. Many traditionalists believe that divorce must be made traumatic and a difficult in order to protect families from the social disorganizations in society (Gutknecht et al, 1985) Christians are guided by their doctrines. Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. (Ephesians 5:28, RSV) Wives are admonished to love their husbands and to have 'deep' respect for them (Titus 2:4, Ephesians 5:35, RSV). However, marriages between couples of different religious backgrounds are more likely to end in divorce and people of the same religious background are less likely to divorce (Goode, 1994: 160).

Christian beliefs have brought conflict in as far as family size is concerned especially to the traditionalists. It has brought the issue of one wife for one man and that all the children born regardless of their gender are equal. It should be noted that the couple should amicably discuss several issues such as when to have and take care of children, taking into consideration the health of both the child and mother.

children born regardless of their gender are equal. It should be noted that the couple should amicably discuss several issues such as when to have and take care of children, taking into consideration the health of both the child and mother.

Christian doctrine is against female circumcision which is performed by those practicing old traditions. Boys and girls are initiated between the ages 12 and 18 years old. According to Sorensen *et al* (1990:8), all the boys are circumcised and clitoridectomy is practiced on a majority of girls although the custom is in decline, due to Christian influence. It was noted that some men still want their daughters to undergo clitoridectomy as a necessary prerequisite to marriage arguing that un-circumcised girls cannot be mature physically and mentally.

In fact, some traditional-minded women are putting pressure on their daughters-in-law who are married without undergoing clitoridectomy, like those married in the church, to be circumcised (they cannot take any food prepared by the un-circumcised ladies). The traditional circumcision of boys and the ceremonies accompanying it are still performed during the December seasons but the seclusion period has been shortened to about one (1) month due to the importance attached to modern education. According to Mbiti (1992:192)

*".... Some aspects of African Religion will die out, partly through modern education, and partly because of the people's movement to live in the cities.... And even if certain aspects of it die out, other aspects will survive and many of them will be changed or transformed to meet the needs of the changing times. It cannot all collapse in a short time".*

The mentioned Christian principles do not augur well with men who still practice or belief in old traditions and who insist that women have to give birth to as many children as possible, and to marry women as they wish.

It was noted that those who were categorized as traditionalist do not actually practice many of the traditions except during certain season only. Notably absent are places for

with their beliefs as they had English names. Thus, the social-economic and demographic characteristics are a pointer to not only what is happening in the family but also to the different types of conflict. Using this description as background the next chapters will present how socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents influence conflict in the family. The next chapter however tries to analyze the data.

## 4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

In this part an attempt is made to describe the prevalence of conflict, factors associated with conflict, different levels and nature of conflict in the family.

**Table 8 shows the level of conflict**

	Females		Males		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Accepted	35	25	25	30	60	34.7
Did not know	14	7.3	10	5.3	24	12.6
<b>Total</b>	49	9.8	35	8.3	84	47.3

Source: primary data

The findings of the above table show that 34.7% of the respondents accepted that conflict is more prevalence in many families. This is a confirmation that family feuds are experienced with need to be addressed mainly at the family level. Out of the total respondents who admitted (34.7%) that they have experienced conflict in the family, females were fewer (25%) compared to males (30%). This is because circumcised women are bound by traditions to be more submissive to their husbands and more so to keep family secrets. It can also be said that, it was indeed an up hill task for the females to 'freely' respond to questions to put to them. The few who managed to give in their responses did so with a lot of fear mainly from their husbands and feelings intermediate.

This is also reflected by the fact 7.3% females were non-committal. However, those who were categorized as people who do not know were either single and actually do not know what was happening in their families due to their young ages whereas others were very



This is also reflected by the fact 7.3% females were non-committal. However, those who were categorized as people who do not know were either single and actually do not know what was happening in their families due to their young ages whereas others were very shy to disclose the truth and therefore do not want to admit or deny the fact put across to them. This is an indication that conflict is an aspect of marriage as the process of mutual adjustment and adaptation often produces friction till it becomes a crisis. This is also due to the fact that marriage is a union of contrasting personalities and patterns of living. According to Howse *et al* (1988:8), conflict in the family is therefore about differenced in interests, values and goals.

Conflict ensues in the family not only when the couple fail to develop mutual parenthood and the general support but also when a couple pursues or fails to abandon personal ambitions, goals, and values at the expense of the family priorities, eventually failing to reach a common consensus on the family's goals. If this is left unresolved, a spouse can demand things or services which may not be met immediately. The findings show that most men believe that demands from a woman are endless thus leading to stress which is very difficult to cope with.

#### **4.2.1Marriage**

Traditionally, marriage was of great importance and a focus of existence (Mbula, 1977) and it was an institution for procreation. It is a socially accepted legitimate sexual union between persons of the opposite sex. It is undertaken as an idea of permanency and it often begin with a more or less explicit contact with spells out reciprocal rights between two spouses and between spouses and society. Bride-wealth payment was also very important as it was a token of gratitude from the family of the boy to the family of the girl; as a thanks giving for having brought up the girl and for allowing her to become a wife in that given family (Mbula, 1977)

As a result of the social-economic and technological changes in the society, marriage as an institution and its importance is changing. Marriage contracts are becoming individual affairs and the concern of two persons rather than the concern of families (Kirk, 1996:21)



In the Kipsigiis customs there is a deep importance attached to circumcision and marriage as institutions. The parent of the man intending to marry and the girl to be married and close relatives witnesses the circumcision and marriage ceremonies. This gives the ceremonies due respected and some blessings. According to Mbiti (1992:108), marriage in the traditional view is an affair of more than two people and that through marriage many relationships are established.

The traditions importance of marriage is seen in the emphasis on women to be married with an intention to giving birth to children who are looked as wealth and vital for survival of the community. Men are therefore encouraged to marry as many women as they can afford to pay for. According to Edgar (1958:6), a man with one wife is considered poor as that indicated that he has no wealth in terms of cattle.

In cultures like the Kipsigiis where polygamy is practiced, marriage is taken to mean a union of one man too many women unlike the definition of marriage amongst those practising monogamy which is a union between one man and one woman. According to Sorensen et al (1990:7)

*"...Previously, polygamy (among the Kipsigiis) had worked to sustain and justify the rule of house property. The new prevalence of monogamous marriages meant that there was no need any longer to specify the rights of a wife and children against those of other wives. All property was thought of as belonging to the husband, Land and other property were now inherited equally among a man's sons, and women could be denied access to land"*

According to Edgar (1958:5), runaway marriages (*chorseet*) were not prevalent traditionally than nowadays. This was a situations where a man could 'capture' and raw away with a girl who has graduated from initiations and hide her for approximately three or four days and put a ring on her finger before she was taken back to her parents.

It was noted that in the traditional marriages, which was performed under the traditional law and whose process was long, *tundaap\_katunisyeet*, traditional beer, *maiweek*, was used for blessings by the 'priest' called the *motiryoot* to bless the whole ceremony and

both the bridegroom and the bride. It was sprinkled on the faces of those marrying, with a little on the ground to appease the ancestors. A special grass, *seguutyet*, which was jealously safeguarded, was used for tying the knot during the marriage ceremony known as *rateet* by an old man called *boiyootaap\_komnda*

The *rateet* ceremony which was like a 'booking' and not a compulsory procedure was done in the absence of the parents of the girl but in the presence of the parents and or relatives of the man. Persons wishing to marry go straight to the *katunisyeet* ceremony. The later ceremony was done after initiation in the presence of the parents relatives from both sides. Due to the fact that virginity was highly respected, a marriage ceremony called *keenap\_kpcheyweet* is performed when the girl was found to be virgin. The last stage of the traditional marriage and which was thought to be more binding is known as *keetyech seguut koot keepa ainet*. The act was known as *kiitun kochooryo*. This was a situation whereby both toes of the partners are tied together with the *seguutyet* grass. Under this marriage, none of the partners was to leave the other, whatsoever, and anyone disobeying the agreement dies. However the ceremony was performed in the presence of the parents and almost all the relatives from both parties.

Given the kind of attention and respect accorded to marriage in the traditional marriage by the parents and the community in general, it was rare for conflict to occur in the later stages of marriages, although it was not ruled out unlike in the modern marriages where negotiations and marriage ceremonies are shorter or sometimes totally absent (Mbungua, 1991:15) In the Kipsigiis structure, there was an elder, the village headman (*boiyootaap kokweet*) who was well versed in the traditional law. Disputes or conflicts between family members were settled by his (headman's) arbitration. The village (*kokweet*) was the basic unit of administration unlike currently where courts arbitrate cases. Separations were only granted when prove of a claim, especially witchcraft, was found to be true. However, due to socio-economic changes outside the institution of the traditional family, other types of marriages (new) have emerged and have overtaken the traditional type: civil and Christian marriages. In both situations, it is not a must for both parents to witness their marriages.



In the civil and Christian marriages, marriages can proceed with or without the consent of the parents and can be performed and conducted by an authorized person in an authorized place. Before the traditional marriage ceremony could commence as was the situations amongst the Kipsigiis community, a respected elder, or in some situations the father, was sent to meet and talk with the parents of the girl as a go-between conveying the intentions to marry their daughter. Negotiations which take place before the actual ceremony in the traditional marriage may at times take a long as a year to complete (Kayongo-Mate et al.)

In the present marriage, it was noted that some parents strongly insist that their children know nothing in terms of choosing and marrying good partners, threatening them with curses or physical evictions of especially girls, which can result in physical confrontations with their sons, if they defy their order. There are some instances when certain parents can either not allow their sons to cultivate or erect physical structures on their farms or inherit any property, among other sanctions. Although circumcision, especially of girls has been under heavy criticism in the modern times, it was used by the Kipsigiis traditionally as a way of preparing them for marriage.

It was still a very important perquisite to marriage. This is because it is considered that in seclusion initiates are taught to be responsible parents and to endure all the challenges ahead of them in their families. The traditional initiations rites which prepared candidates for adulthood and marriage have been affected by foreign social values.

Though marriages as an institutions in general according to Wieland (7) is in 'trouble' it is still according to the Kipsigiis community, an institution for the procreation of children thus it provide a base for society to continue. The desire to have offspring is still very strong among the Kipsigiis of both sexes. That is why there is need for every woman and man to marry. According to Mbiti (1969), marriage among most of the traditional communities is a "a duty, a requirement form the corporate society and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participated". However from the discussions, marriage may be defied as:

*".... a union between two people of the opposite sex, which is institutionalized by the payment of bride-wealth, or by religious or by civil ceremonies:*

*(Kayongo-Male et al, 1984:12)*

#### **4.3Types of Conflict**

The following were found out as the main types of conflict in Kipsigiis family

##### **4.3.1 Role Conflict**

The socio-economic and technological transformations which have forced the society and subsequently the family to undergo some changes in a bid to survive, have also led to changes in attitude, values and expectations. But the study observed that the Kipsigiis traditional values are still authoritarian. The traditions, for example, give more powers and authority to men who are the sole decision-makers, bread-winners and family protectors. Men could own property like houses and cattle. That is all in the past because land could not be owned by an individual man or woman but by the community. Moreover, a woman fulfills the roles of a wife, mother, homemaker and care-taker of the children.

The study further observed that because of the existence of strict traditional norms, women have no direct right to ownership of property. But widows inherited their late husbands' property on behalf of the children.

Traditionally, to ensure that everyone performs his or her expected familial roles with minimum supervision, the roles were vividly defined on the basis of gender and age. Men performed the roles of the father, husband and the head of the family. In some areas, the study noted that socio-technical transformations have led to the deterioration of traditional values and practices and replaced with a lot of permissiveness. These changes have also altered people's expectations.

Though some men are not willing to share certain roles with their women (men are reluctant to take some roles associated with women such as cooking and bathing children



because they believe that is being woman-like), some of them share certain roles in the family such as milking, weeding and washing clothes (preferably their own). In few families where men are employed, women are left behind to attend to roles left behind by the working partners such as those of decision-making and being the head of the family.

According to Kayongo-male et al (1984:68 and John et al, 1995:21), the working mother experiences a lot of conflict in trying to balance her roles in the apart from her occupation's demands, she has to attend to her roles of a wife, mother and decision-making in the absence of her husband. This role overload often causes the woman a lot of conflict. Role conflict is defined as the taking up of more than one incompatible roles.

*"....Considering the many other responsibilities of a wife towards her family in relation to maize productions, tending the cattle, domestic work, and child care, it is often impossible for her to fulfil all her labour tasks satisfactorily (Sorensen et al 1990:9)*

Moreover, it was noted that working mothers experience additional sufferings and conflict from their husbands whether they themselves are working or not. It was also noted that some men are pressuring their women to quit their careers in order to take care of the children at home, cattle and to do some cultivations in the farms under the pretext that domestic work and other home related tasks are not well attended to.

Further, some married men whose women are employed are not comfortable with, and do not trust home caretakers unless they are the second wives, which is also another problem. This does not give men freedom to bring in other women as their wives as this is met with some resentment from their wives. Some of the working men would find it difficult to perform certain roles they believe should be attended to by their wives. This could lead to role conflict. It is true that some of the caretakers can bring untold problems in the family which leads to conflicts.

*"A large number of children and babies fall and break their limbs or are burned to death because caretakers are too young to effectively take care of them" (Kenya Medical Women's Association, 1984:14)*

However, conflict that come as a result of roles and other soci-economic pressure leads to children and women sufferings. It can be concluded that a sober mind and understanding is very necessary in the modern world if meaningful development and family objectives are to be achieved. This will make men and women share certain or all the chores in the family.

#### 4.3.2 Decision – Making and Violence

The decision- making authority on the part of the Kipsigiis woman is very limited. In the traditional patrilineal Kipsigiis society where men own and control the main means of production and other resources, and, where great respect is paid to the paternal relations, women can not make decision especially on financial issues without the consent of their husbands. Women and children do most of the domestic chores, from farming to fetching water and firewood, cooking and harvesting crops to taking them to the markets for sale. But it is the men who decide on how to use the money from the sale of produce, often ignoring the views of their wives.

*“...Women expects a return for their labour (in any kind of production). They will usually not accept a situation where the husband neglects his responsibilities towards his family and spends all the income from (mainly the produce) on his personal needs, at works on beer and alcohol or on a second wife. In such a situations, a woman refuses to work in the husband's field’ (Sorensen et al 1990:11)*

It is worth noting also that violence in the family is largely directed at wives and children. The study noted with concern that women are mercilessly beaten or abused by men if they, and their children, fail to perform certain expected familial tasks.

Despite the fact that formal education has changed certain aspirations of some people, it has not brought much changes in role definitions and social status as women are still fulfilling traditional ‘expressive’ roles whereas men perform ‘instrumental’ roles. Though this is the case, Goode (1994:76), is of the opinion that men are expected to show some



tenderness towards women and children and on occasion to smooth over family squabbles.

#### **4.3.3 Parent – Child Conflict**

The affectionate love, care and respect which most of the parents bestow upon their children are great. Although this is the situations, both parents look after the children. Boys are still herding livestock or staying with their fathers whereas girls are seen most of the time with their mothers. In fact, the education which the girls received from their mothers is more detailed and specialized than that which the boys received from their fathers.

As noted earlier, the findings indicated the parents' efforts and behaviours greatly determine the nature of relationships in the family. On one hand, therefore, it was observed that conflict ensue when the parents fail to develop mutual parenthood patterns and the general support needed to build a responsible and respected institution, family.

Developing mutual parental patterns means that the parents arrive at mutual understanding, respect and trust one another, shelve their personal aspirations. On the other hand, some parents interviewed complained that their children disobey them. The study noted that this is due to the breakdown of traditional values and practices which have been influenced by foreign (Western) cultures and other external factors. Thus, the foreign traditions have affected the Kipsigiis family. It can also be said that a lot of conflict is being experienced in the family between the parents and their children. This is due to the fact that every group is pursuing different social values which do not tally with their diverse expectations.

The adolescents, because of the issues associated with adolescences such as choice of the marriage partners and freedoms of movements and associations bring about most conflict indeed, parents want to be seen in control of their children, at least in terms of giving advice on various aspects of life, including their behaviour, regardless of their social status in the society. The words of some parents who believe in the tradition are no longer

taken as the law by their children who think that they have a right to decide on their destiny. It is interesting to note that there are some times when some of the traditional minded parents exert a lot of pressure on their children, especially on those working

Moreover, some parents are too rigid in giving freedoms of associations, movement and even speech, to their children, especially to their daughters. The only moment when girls are allowed to move outside their homesteads are when they are sent to specific places with specific missions, but under strict time frames. Because of the economic value on girls, in terms of the bride-wealth paid when they are married, some fathers can mercilessly beat their daughters if they ever get pregnant before they are married, or can release their tension on their wives. The same happens to children who disobey their parents.

However, parents should set exemplary behaviours, talk and deeds because children tend to imitated them in almost every aspect (they are the role models to the children). Children need parents who have warm, communicative relationships with each other (Bruce et al, 1994:108)

#### **4.3.4 The Authority and Power of the Father**

According to Peristiany (1964:5), the authority and power of the father, who is still the head of the family and whose word was hitherto law, has been reduced to only the shadow of what it must have been in years past, when the entire household was depended upon him and when, none of his sons could marry without his aid. This means that the authority and respect which parents enjoyed under the traditional morality and custom is no longer observed. It was noted that currently children go for gainful employment opportunities at the tea estates in and around Kericho town, Sotik, Litein and Nandi Hill's in the neighbouring Nandi District, Sugar cane plantations in and around Muhorioni and Chemilil area while others served in the white collar engagements in various places without permissions from their parents.

However, in the informal meetings, the parents said that they are struggling to teach their children the expectation of the society and their obligations as family members. But still children violated or ignore their rules, a move that could make some parents give threats or administer punishments. According to Goode (1994:86), this is the source of much of the conflict between parents and children in any group.

#### **4.4 CAUSES OF CONFLICT, RESOLUTIONS AND MANAGEMENT IN THE FAMILY**

In these sections, attempts will be made to provide the study through the use of descriptive statistics. As such this study attempts to describe the socio-economic and cultural condition as causes of conflict in the family.

##### **4.4.1 The Interpersonal Relationships in the Family**

The study findings shows that what is being outwardly witnessed in many families does not necessarily tally with what is actually happening in the family. Many people are propelled to marriage without really understanding all they are committing themselves to for the rest of their lives (Wright 1985:1). A closer look at the events and/ or people's habits within a family and would show that all is not well. The interpersonal relationships in the family largely depend on the behavior and roles of the parents and for conflict, which is an end result of unresolved habits to prevail, it implies that there exist a loophole in the family set-up which require it to be sealed off immediately.

It also means that the main pillars of a happy marriage in the family, which should be jealously guarded namely, mutual love, care, sharing and trust have been undermined. In fact, marriage involves deep caring for one another, putting aside self-interest in favors of the spouse's interest (Howse et al 1988:11).

This means that the couple should share everything and or anything practicable at all times, in happiness and sorrow to cultivate each others trust so that they can faithfully confide in each other (Kiura 1987:74). But in situations where those pillars of a happy marriage which develop gradually as the years pass, are ignored due to lack of trust and respect, the basic foundations of the family relationships breaks down paving way to

hostility and other unintended (often severe) consequences. According to Green (1986), marital breakdowns usually begin with feelings of isolations, mutual invalidations, negatively and betrayal and the withdrawing of support. These results in fear, panic, feelings of loneliness, stress and anger appears.

The above issues can be realized in the family if there are barriers to communication in the family between spouses themselves and between parents and children. Bruce et al (1994) add that there are four (4) barriers to communication in the family, namely, fear, not listening, hurt, and too busy, which should be addressed promptly for the better achievement of the family goals.

Furthermore, the findings found out that what actually keep marital unions going strong in the families is the unconditional provision of basic emotional and physical needs to its members.

*“Marriage involves recognitions of emotional needs; a commitment to meeting needs through caring actions; an effective communications system a capacity to adjust to changing needs; and to nurtured each other and the relationships during the various stages of the marital life styled”*

Howse, et al (1998:12)

Human psychologist Abraham Maslow evolved a hierarchy of human needs maintaining that the ‘higher’ needs (emotional, intellectual and spiritual) cannot be fulfilled until the more basic ones are effectively met.

It is very important for spouses to safeguard against disclosing anything about the other to people outside the nuclear family (Kiura 1987). Alongside the above factors, it was evident from the discussion groups held that the main cause of conflict in most families is the expectations of fulfillment or the actual provision of the family (and mostly personal) needs and priorities that each of the couples could be waiting for the other to meet. This is so because marital relationships are held together by what each spouse actually does for the other a commitment to each other (affections, conversation, financial support and honesty) and a commitment to the family (Willard, 1994:152). And if the needs and

expectations are unmet, an individual may be subjected to frustration, neglect and rejection paving way for conflict to prevail. These in turn, would make a person unknowingly or knowingly seek comfort or released tensions arising from the above in certain ways.

It was also noted from the study findings that some men are trying to 'solve' their marital problems, though not real solutions, by cohabiting with some women drinking smoking excessively, coming home very late marrying more women, withdrawal and misuse of financial and other support, misusing family property, running away from homes and or physically fighting their wives and children. Smoking, drinking, harlotry, drugs and gambling are sins that always hurt the family's financial security and that husbands are responsible for the financial well-being of their families (Odunze, 1993:41)

In addition, couples also fight over the use of money in an effort to controlling family finances. Squabbles may occur when a partner engaged in drinks entertaining friends and or any other irresponsible or extravagant behaviour in disregard of the family priorities or investing on wrong unprioritized goods/assets (Spruill, 1973, Burkett, 1984). Often, men of the view that their women are misusing their money on hairdressing and that most of their purchase are frivolous. Couples may also fight over the perceived extravagant lifestyles of one partner, for example giving money to in-laws or assisting friends meet their expenses without informing the other partner. This situations has been aggravated much by the existence of 'my' or 'your' money (separated accounts) because each partner is trying to monitor how and where the partner is spending his/her money and other income.

The above is evident by the fact that today, there is so much abuse going on and that wife abuse is by far the more prevalent form (Jeffrey, 1999). Some few literate women may not be willing to preserve the abuse for long and may opt for separation while some of them may decide to continue with that live for the sake of children.

The smallest economic and social unit in the Kipsigiis society is the family. Its traditional family consists of father, mother and children, who often live within a larger family



groupings primarily consisting of married brothers, their wives and children. Members of one family depend on a common holding as a source of income and food and usually eat from a "common pot" (Sorensen, 1990:7) In fact, the concept of the family, according to Mbiti (1992:175), covers a wide ranged of members, including children parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, various relations on both the fathers and mother's side, and the departed.

#### **4.4.2 Poverty and Sexual Infidelity**

The study findings indicated that poverty leads to conflict in the family. According to a medial report by Waraman (1996:3), poverty is the major contributor to mental illness, stress, disability and family disintegration. This is attributed to scarce job opportunities, poor housing and community support structures that are under pressure, among other factors

The findings further shows that about 69% of the respondents have no sources of income at all (Table 6). Out of this were females (40%) and males (29%). The difference is big because of the cultural norms that give men priority on many things such as the formal education. It was noted that women are marginalized by those traditions from gaining access to and or participating in many things. It was also noted that women do not have much freedom and 'their' time to-do what they want anywhere. They have to seek permissions (or give general notifications) from and to their husbands – even to go and sell some vegetables in the nearest centers.

Moreover, according to an Update, the journal of Continuing Education for General Practitioners (1996:4), teenagers and some adults from poor backgrounds are among the most prone to poverty, sexual and economic exploitations and other risky behaviors. It was noted from the findings that young girls (and even people's wives) were being lured by grown-up men into sexual activities, taking advantaged of their social-economic situations.



Although some respondents were unwilling to reveal their social experiences, they admitted that some, especially men with material things such as big houses, livestock, land, food and money, capitalizes on poverty-stricken population (and particularly young girls of between 20 and 29 years old) to achieve their personal ambitions. Moreover, better-off individuals, especially men of between 28 and 40 years old, capitalized on the illiterates, drunkard youth and women whose spouses are physically far away from work or on safaris to engage in extra-marital affairs. This may result in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS.

In the first place, it was noted that extra-marital affairs have led to conflict between couples. Indeed, a spouse (especially women) rumored or found to be engaging in extra-marital affairs, is considered to be a social embarrassment to the entire family and clan and if proved guilty of the offence, consequences including physical beatings using anything on sight, biting and separation would be hastily administered without proper investigations. A heifer is to be paid as a fine to the husband of the adulteress by her family. According to Fish et al, (1995:12), husbands in the Kipsigiis customs can accuse their wives of anything including witchcraft and adultery. Men can be accused of incest, wife abuse and adultery between members of different age-sets, among other abuses, to a council of respected women known as *injogeetaap chepyosook*. The culprit has to suffer the fine of paying a bull, which for some reasons is purely black.

Secondly, it was learnt that pre-marital pregnancy and childbirth has resulted in conflicts amongst parents with men accusing their wives of not teaching their daughters the basic lessons of behavior. This has seen either women or girls being severely beaten (at times including all the girls in the household) and suspension or withdrawals of the concerned girls from educational institution. This has also brought conflicts between some men and their in-laws. It was very disappointing to note that some men are using their children as escape-goats to release their tension which mounts as a result of conflict with their wives. According to a report by the Kenya Medical Women's Associations (1984:14), children are hurt when there are family feuds/conflicts/misunderstandings amongst the parents in the family.

*"A father, intending to take up a quarrel with his wife, directs his aggression at a child whom he brutally beats, using any form of instrument available"*

It was further observed that some men resort to releasing their tensions by taking traditional liquor, *chang'aa* with an intention of forgetting conflicts, only to arrive back at their homes more aggressive and threatening to commit suicide or beats up everybody on sight. In that stated, some men brutalize their wives and/or children which lead to abortion amongst pregnant women under the pretext of drunkenness's. Currently, unlike in the traditional setting, such men can be reported, tried and fined. The findings show that many women (at times with young babies) and children are spending nights in the cold or with the immediate neighbors to escape the wrath of furious husbands and fathers who are menacingly wielding huge and irregular clubs.

In fact, those who opt to seek refuge with the neighbors ensue that they are not seen by their husbands when are moving out in the morning. If they are noted, first, the neighbors will have to explain what they could be doing with people's women and children without permission, and second, the women will be mercilessly beaten because of having made known everything and by 'cheating' the children to follow them. It is unfortunate that wife beating culture is quite prevalent in the community. In addition, about 65% of the women interviewed said that they were subjected to untold sufferings and other forms of violence in silenced but surprisingly, they can not report to the chief, police or courts of law because, the study noted, they do not even have time and or are unaware about their basic fundamental rights such as freedoms of movement and associations.

It is true that many murders and a high proportion of physical assaults takes place within the family (Aldrian, 1995) Pockets of conflict and domestic violence reported by the Kenya media is an indication of an increase in conflict and domestic violence. Under the pretext of disciplining errant and molding the character of children in the family, many parents have inflicted multiple wounds by an assortment of torture weapons, spread all over their bodies such as buttocks, biting and tearing chunks of flesh of their back and torturing them with red hot *panga* or locking them up without food for long hours (The

East Africa Standard January 18:1999:16). Screaming headlines such as '*Woman slashed by husband* (The Daily Nation, Jan 21, 1999:1); *Man held over wife burning, Woman dies in domestic assault; A father of seven hit and killed his wife after a domestic quarrel* (in Kericho district, Sigowet Village, Belgut division); 5 Year-old son hacked to death by father (The Daily Nation, January 2 and 8 1999:19 and 2) and *A mother of 6 hurt by husband at Kamuriut Village in Bureti division* (Daily Nation January 29, 1999:5) is a horrific indication that the incidences of domestic conflicts or violence and child abuse as a result of conflict and other misunderstanding in the family is on the increase.

It is worth mentioning that conflicts or domestic violence is perpetuated by parents against themselves, like the above named examples, brothers fighting and even killing each other over land rows and against the children, like fathers defiling their own daughters or a mother killing her children dousing them with paraffin and later committing suicide.

#### 4.4.3 The influence of In-Laws

As noted earlier, in the early years of marriage, the couples are struggling for independence and separateness mainly from the parents. It was observed that some parents' in-laws are against this idea but most of the old people interviewed said that they want to be seen closer to their in-laws and their children, to support, encouraged, mould and guide them into familial issues. In spite of the above, it was noted from the study findings that some in-laws, especially mothers, exert a lot of pressure on their daughters' in-law.

*'Mothers in-law can cause trouble because of what they say. She is likely to be very critical of how another woman is performing a role she has successfully filled for years. Fathers in-law cause trouble because of what they don't say.'*

Jeffrey et al 1999:60

This does not mean that parents are always critical to the deeds and interests of their in-laws. When approached humbly with respect and with good intentions, in-laws can give



security and intellectual (and moral) guidance to newly married couples (ibid:62). This study noted that most parents are receptive and can approve girls brought in by their sons as theirs (sons) wives. The decisions of the parents often influenced the attitude of their children and the clan towards new members of the family. In such situation, the study learnt, parents and their children often stay performing various tasks together.

Further, the study noted that such a relationships exists in many families in the rural areas and can be nurtured by exchanged and sharing of items and or goods such as sugar, salt, *panga*, plough, clothes, *sufurias* and paraffin, among others. Parents in-law known that they have a responsibility of introducing new members into the new family life and give advice and socialization on various issues. Many mothers in-law, for instance, are good source for child-rearing advice (ibid) whereas others are trouble-shooters. Some mothers in-law jokers are deeply rooted in tragedy than in comedy (Sproul, 1970; 63)

Selfishness and hatred often in the part of the women may provoke some parents and daughters may withdraw physically and morally from the newly married couples any support they might have, the study learnt. In addition, interviewed parents said that they want their daughters to abandon what they 'brought' behavior –wise) from their respective homes and accept to join the new families with different attitudes and values for the sake of harmony. The parents also argue that they do not want to see or hear that their sons have stopped assisting them as this amounts to what they call being 'pocketed' or mentally confused by a women suing what is called *kwombisiik*. These are unclean things which are given to the husbands by their wives such as the dung of snails and lizards or putting menstruations blood in the milk of their husbands (Edgar, 1958:7)

In addition, it was noted that some women are quick to question relationships between their husbands and their parents sisters, brothers, relatives and friends and demand that such relationship or companies should unconditionally cease. To this, women issue threats to their husbands in order to realize their demands. It was observes that some fathers in-law are different from the mothers in-law because they do not wish to be close to their son's problems unless called in to settle pressing issues. This is because, it was

revealed in this study, some fathers' in-law strongly maintains that the running of the family should be left solely to their sons' in-law.

Moreover, some men do not like the idea of staying together with their sisters or brothers in-law under the pretext of assisting their married sisters in various tasks. Some men interviewed in this study maintained that the sending of the sisters or brothers in-law by their parents is indeed sinister as they are socio-economic liabilities to their families in terms of food, clothing, education and accommodation.

#### **4.4.4 Bride-wealth and conflict**

The study findings show that, and also according to Orchardson (1964:81), bride-wealth payment (mainly cattle, goats and or sheep) is still highly valued in the Kipsigiis tradition as this is not only a sign of special gratitude to the parents of the girl but also a symbol of new relationship amongst the in-laws.

The bride wealth, which is a token of appreciation, binds marriages and families. The items that are to be handed over to the parents of the girl, should include the livestock, and mainly cattle (of the enemy) captured in raid by the groom, known as *tuugaap\_lugeet* or *boreiywoot*; cattle from the father of the groom, known as *tuugaap mabwaai* and cattle from the sisters of the groom who have been married, known as *tuugaap mwaai*.

The youth informed the study that what is expected of them in terms of getting cattle from the raids is only impossible nowadays due to the pursuit of education and other modern socio-economic expectations, but is also not allowed by the local administration as this can lead to inter-tribal clashes. It was also observed that certain greedy parents in-law who prefers cash than cattle, exploit their sons in-laws by charging a higher figure in form of bride-wealth (there is no fixed amount to be paid). This result in lack of confidence between the two parties and may therefore undermine their relationship (Kayongo-Male et al, 1984:57). It was clear that bride wealth is an essential asset which should be paid as soon as it is possible by the parents of the man intending to marry.



According to an article by Edgar (1958:6), the then Kericho District Officer, on Kipsigiis customary laws, a man who had sons was a must to use his property in paying bride-wealth of his sons. But it was interesting to note that some parents are dodging or can pay a portion of the agreed amount of bride-wealth but are quick to demand the same for their daughters.

It was also noted that some parents have left this obligation to their sons arguing that they have nothing remaining to give out as bride-wealth because what was originally available has been spent in educating their sons. However, some of the parents interviewed in the discussion groups held the view that it is upon them to pay or not or can only pay a fraction of the expected bride-wealth and leave the remaining to be completed by their sons.

The youth were of the view that it is the responsibility and obligation of the parents to educate and pay bride-wealth for their brides because the participation of parents is not only considered as a blessing to themselves and their families but also as a sign of acceptance by the parent. Additionally, the youth suggested that parents from both sides should register their support morally and more so, materially in order to enable them lay the foundations of their families with at least as a good base. This indicates the kind of love and protection they enjoy from their fathers.

The study findings show that the above idea has sparked off conflict between parents on the one hand (and even amongst themselves) and their sons on the other which has resulted in physical confrontations, sharing of the family property and selling them which could lead to arrest mainly of the sons by the local administration, and migration of some men to other places.

It was also noted that upon failure to comply with payment of the bride wealth, some parents-in-law could storm into the homestead demanding to be paid the remaining part of the bride wealth or they take their daughters back by force until the payment is completed. (In the past, bride-wealth was never completed as it was over a long period of time).



It was noted that this has resulted in temporary separation, leaving some men to take care of their children singly, or marry other women, physical confrontations either between the parents and their daughters and or their sons-in-laws, thus weakening their relationships. Some of the parents of the daughters who took part in the decision groups said that the bride-wealth actually enables their sons, in turn, to pay for their spouses, meeting the costs of keeping and educating their school-going children. Others said that potential bride-wealth is a sign of wealth.

The study findings further indicate that many women do not know exactly where the bride wealth from their daughters goes and any attempt to inquire about the use of bride-wealth is met with serious physical beatings by some men which can lead to physical and or psychological harm. This is because it is customary for a man who receives bride-wealth to treat it as his own property. It was noted that this is because some men opt to sell the livestock under several scapegoats such as lack of grazing compounds, only to use the money from the sale in drinking, marrying wives or going with prostitutes. This has also to separations as women fled away from their uncompromising men.

#### **4.4.5 Illegitimate children and conflict**

It was noted that fertility and virginity is still highly valued by many men. Therefore, pre-marital births are discouraged and girls who give birth to children before they are married are viewed as outcasts.

*"...Women who gave birth to illegitimate children were either forced to get married especially older men with wives as a type of punishment, or were physically beaten."*  
(Kayongo-Male et al 1984:14)

It is evident that 4.7% of the total respondents are girls who have given birth to between one and three children before they are married. The youngest respondent with a child was 20 years old. It was noted that the costs of child bearing are no longer borne by the extended families through child fostering but it has been left to the individual. It was also observed that girls who give birth to children before they are married face a lot of social stigma against child bearing before they enter into socially accepted preparations (mainly through initiation) for adult responsibilities.

The study findings show that in situations where girls have given birth to children before they are married, conflict can occur as some of them fail to trust husbands when dealing with the illegitimate children compared with the legitimate children. It is shown that this situation happens due to the general assumption by women that men are not happy to be fathers of the illegitimate children. Although some of the men interviewed accepted to marry women with illegitimate children and receive them whole-heartedly as their legitimate children (according to the Kipsigiis customs, child (ren) belong to the husband of the wife and not the natural father), it was surprising to note that some women can provoke their men by constantly keeping a close eye on them in terms of care, discipline and tasks allocation.

Some of the women who were interviewed thought that their men are having hidden motives when they are handling especially the male illegitimate children whom they believe are a great threat to their lives and property in future. It was noted that two (2) women shout at the top of their voices whenever the husbands discipline their children, thinking that they (husbands) intended to kill the illegitimate children. It was further noted that one of the women was ruthlessly beaten and the other was separated from the legitimate children with the instructions that she take away the illegitimate child to its biological father.

In situations where women give birth to child (ren) from adulterous affairs, as explained earlier, she is chased away by her husbands to her parents and heifer is paid to the husband by her family as a fine before they can be allowed to continue living together. However, it was learnt that there are many women who are married having illegitimate children and a few who give birth to children out of wedlock and are living comfortably with their husbands who do not care much about the moral status of their parents before marriage, arguing that all the children are a blessing from God.



#### 4.4.6 The value of children and conflict

The study findings show that the value of children among the Kipsigiis, regardless of their religious affiliations, is seen in the size of the family. Most of the families have an average of seven children. It was observed that ore value is still attached to large families particularly with many sons, because they perpetuate the clan, for security and support to parents in the old age and for social prestige, compared to girls who are only good for bride-wealth. Social factors at the community and household levels and particularly the value attached to perpetuation of the lineage, which has served as an organization cultural principle in many areas, have exerted pressure on couples to have large families (Hill, et al 1994). Children are also important amongst the Kipsigiis as a means of gaining access to resources, particularly land as well as means of supporting parents in their old age as mentioned above.

It was further noted that the family properties such as the livestock was passed on from generation to the other group the sons. According to Fish et al (1995:116), a woman who is barren or has passed the age of child bearing without giving birth to a son in the Kipsigiis traditions, as allowed to 'marry' a young girl to be called her wife. The term expressing such a union involving an old woman called *Kaapsirwonin* is known as *kiitunji toloch* which literally means to be married to a *toloita*. This custom is preferred because it is considered a misfortune for a woman to be childless. It is also a misfortune for the man to have no son as it is considered that the name of the family and the extension of the clan lineage would cease *kome maat*.

In addition, the value of the children was noted as a strong point for marrying more than one wife, except for Christians. As noted earlier, the study shows that men in polygamous marriages have a higher family size per wife than those in monogamous marriages. Thus, the average family size amongst the polygamous marriages is found to be eleven children compared with an average of six children in the monogamous marriages.

At the same time, it was observed that in the previous years there was more harmony in the polygamous and monogamous marriages that nowadays because the authority and

power of the head of the homestead, the father, is very strong. His word was indeed the law and which is adhered to with maximum respect it deserved. Co-wives, called *syoonik* (*syeet*, singular), though living with their children in separate houses, work together as one and took one another with a lot of esteem. The processes of marrying second and more wives are the same as those followed during the first marriage. The first wife is more respected because of her seniority. It was learnt that while some of the respondents said that marrying more than one wife is an expensive exercise due to high demands of life, others suggested that they would not like to have co-wives or additional wives as conflict ensues over mainly the sharing and the inheritance of the family resources.

However, according to Sorensen et al (1990:7), monogamy is the prevailing marriage pattern and polygamy, a situation where one man has many wives at the same time and which used to be a common practice, is in decline. Alternatively, the value of the children was also seen in situations where, when a man dies any brother can assume the role of taking care of the children and the widow and may, if both so desire any brother can assume the role of taking care of the children and the widow and may, if both so desire, raise children to the deceased husband as per the Kipsigiis traditions. Indeed, the guardian, according to Orchardson (1961:77), is called *kipkondit* whereas the relationship is *indyee*, to continue. Although the traditions are still strong, it was observed that most of the young girls and women interviewed strongly opposed the custom of being taken as wives of old women, regardless of the wishes of some of their parents, arguing that it is not only a disgrace nowadays but also due to the fact that there are many men to marry them.

Moreover, some women and particularly those whose husbands have died can not agree to be under their brothers in-law arguing that they should be left alone to decide who to take care of their families or not and that they are not the property of them. Women are married to the clan. Conflicts are bound to occur as the clan members will exert pressure on them to adhere to the traditions. Instead, some women interviewed said that they prefer staying as single parents.

#### 4.4.7 Women reaching home late

This study was informed that married women do not have much freedom, at least of movements and association. Often, many women are closely monitored by their mothers' in-law, brothers and sisters' in-law, relatives and friends in the neighbourhood. In such situations where they get permission by their husbands to go to specific points they must arrive before darkness lest they be suspected of having sinister motives. This study was further informed that a woman who arrive home late (after 7 pm) regardless of where she had gone and unless accompanied by one of the in-law, is seen as a social embarrassment not only to her immediately family (children and husband) and her own parents but also to her in-law, relatives and friends.

*"Whose wife and daughter is that one who arrives home in darkness hours?"* one husband reported in one of the discussion groups held. This view was widely supported by many men participants and later by women.

However, some women admitted that some of them are arriving home late from the drinking dens (which are more in the area) collecting firewood, markets and greeting relatives. Though this may be situation, some men may be hard to be convinced on the basis of the above reasons. This result in serious and merciless beatings using anything on their sight, furniture, kicks, bites, including walk sticks (*mkwaju*) made hard wood and commonly kept in bedroom.

Some men informed this study that women who report at their homes in darkness would have failed in their (husbands) and feeling children in good times. Those men would like to be immediately served promptly with best food upon their arrival (often do not want to know the source(s) of the ingredients even during famine seasons) and yet some of them wander around talking doing nothing beneficial to their families.

This study found out that wife beating is still a socially accepted norm amongst many men and failure to act in that way amounts to what they call term as controlled by a 'woman.'



*'You are not recognized as a real man if you do not beat your wife, at least a slap on the face is enough. Is it that you fear her? Middle aged man informed the study in a focus group discussion.'*

It was interesting to note that many women informed this study that they are living happily with their spouses those beatings for the sake of children. Many of them suffer in silence, and their majority are humiliated every step of their lives that a lot of physical assault taking place within the family go unreported. It was also noted by some women that the behavior and certain nights away or getting pregnant are heaped on them.

#### **4.4.8 Unfaithfulness**

This study found out that extra marital affair a hurting cause of conflict amongst spouses. As mentioned above, extra marital affairs occur due to poverty involving people with material things such as money, big houses, land, livestock and food and those who do not have much of the above. Other people may capitalize on the ignorance of the illiterate members of society, drunkards and on those whose spouses are physically far away for work or on safari. This study was further informed that extra marital relationship involve men who goes to sell mainly maize and livestock with young girls, peoples wives and or single ladies who are engaged in petty trading in markets mentioned above.

A spouse rumored to be having sexual affair outside is seen as a social embarrassment to the entire family and clan and found dire consequences will be administered. Such affairs may result in unplanned pregnancies, school-drop outs (for girls), beatings, separations and marrying of the other women. It was observed that nothing much can be done to men even when they are found red-handed in such an act.

*'Its painful to imagine finding your wife in such an act because I will kill her (wife) instantly if that happens,'* one man fumed in one of the discussion groups held.

Further, a woman engaging in behavior/activities/styles that may compromise her faith and commitment to her family is considered to be having loose morals. In the same way, a woman going close or standing on roadsides engaging men in discussions is also considered loose regardless of what they are talking about. Women are expected to keep



their physical distance, talk good things humbly and guard against outburst, which may put her in trouble with men or husband.

*'A woman who stand on the road with men leaves a lot to be desired as far as her morality is concerned,'* one elderly woman told this study. It was further noted that such women have failed or ignored to recognize their statues with respect and commitment.

#### **4.4.9 Alcoholism**

Local brew such as *changaa* and *busaa* are common in the district and are mainly brewed for sale to subsidize family income. The study observed that many movements of drunkard men and women to and from brew dens. Most of those people consuming the brews don't participate in the day-to-day activities in the family except to wander around household in search of the brews. The misuse of alcohol leads to physical, mental and moral deterioration. A person is less critical of his or her behavior due to lack of self-control leading to moral misconduct (Muthoni, 1987:25). A drunkard person may fail to perform his or her expected familial roles and may cry shout, sing, abuse, address or violate social ethics under the influence of alcohol. This study was informed that this has resulted quarrels, physical and mental injuries, separation, sexual unfaithfulness, sale of family property and or arrest by law enforcement officers.

#### **4.4.10 the state and conflict**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, bride wealth should compose of three groups of livestock, from the married sister, from parents and from the 'enemy' (usually stolen from the neighboring communities). The state through the local administration forbids theft of livestock amongst neighboring communities. According to the laws of Kenya cap 63, Penal Code 278 (1988), the offender is liable to imprisonment with hard labor for a term not less than seven years and not more than fourteen years together with hard labor for a term not less than seven years and not more than fourteen years together with corporal punishment. Theft of cattle is an offence on the eyes of the state and one can be jailed for as long as seven (7) years imprisonment but socially accepted according to the Kipsigiis traditions. This will make it hard for men to pay their bride wealth thus bringing them with their in-laws into loggerheads. The state is not and not

sensitized the community on the same issue leaving people to continue with their traditional ways.

#### **4.4.11 Dispute over family property**

In families where the head of the household is weak (has no command) or died dispute over family properties such as land, livestock, houses and other properties ensure especially among sons. The study was informed that this is mainly common in polygamous marriages when family property is shared unevenly amongst wives. This may result in physical fights, sale of land, and or member moving out of the ancestral land.

The above situation (domestic violence) may happen in the absence of communication in the family, first amongst the parents themselves and between them and children and later in-laws. Lack of communication which breeds cold and loneliness is a major problem in marriage. The situation should be for the husband, wife and children communicating or talking one another about their problems, pleasures, grief's and ideas (Bruce, 1999). This is not be happening in many families as most of the members don't have time for talks geared to wards bringing harmony due to socio-economic and political pressure. However, many couples are keeping their communication on a superficial level because they lack basic skills in the art of dialogue (Nancy, 2002). If adopted, communication may encourage sincerity and trust. This will assist in the identification of a cause of disagreement and settle it before it gets out of hand in the initial stage. Very few can sit down and discuss issue together with their wives. One-way of resolving conflict is to the aggrieved partner express his/her anger without interruption. Patience is crucial in conflict resolution and management.

Conflict resolution involves giving the other person a chance to be heard and choosing an appropriate moment for discussions and not under the influence of anger. Some spouses choose to share their ideas with partners only but there are others who go to other people preferably their friends and or parents. The *kokweet*, a social unit in the traditional political system of the Kipsigiis, draws help and support in time of crisis such as

domestic violence. This is where members of the elders from the family with the villagers come together with a view to resolving family disputes under the leadership of the village headman. Warring groups are made to give something for 'maize' and the offender is made to pay a fine, often of a goat. However the establishment of the colonial and post independent political and administrative structure (of chiefs and their assistants), divisions of sub-locations have greatly displaced the *kokweet* as a decision-making group settling local conflicts, among other activities (Sorensen, 1990).

Due to the lower social status of women accorded in the patrilineal communities like the Kipsigiis, women are faced with a lot of fear to approach and have discussions with their husbands on many fields as they may be misinterpreted leaving decision-making entirely for the later. Unless called upon to contribute, women can't go close to the decision or eating table because they are counted and treated as children. This study was informed that most men are served food in separate utensils leaving no room for a chat. Such ineffective patterns of life will lead to couples to misinterpret motives, leaving needs unfulfilled, problems unresolved and allow hostility to increase but as the relationship grows the chances for these problems lessens due to ingrained habit patterns and deep-seated resentment. Some women would not reveal to their husbands even when they have been raped.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

A brief summary of the study indicate that the causes and effects of conflict in the family are many and varied and therefore, cannot be explained solely by one factor but interrelated factors.

It is evident from the study findings that such factors that contribute to conflict in the family emanate from the individual, the family and the society in general. The issues are mainly social-economic, political and cultural. As shown in the findings above, these factors influence and contribute to domestic violence. The family factors include curses and other problems associated with the entire clan and society in general. It is observed that everyone belongs to one clan or another; curses which are witnessed as a result of crimes committed by some of their members really affect every member within that particular clan, however innocent they may be.

It is therefore observed that clan members are not comfortable and do not wish to be associated with errant clan members. This factor has brought conflict amongst the family and clan members. Consequently, young couples in as far as family matters are concerned, will experience conflict as they are sand-witched between personal, family and social expectations.

The study suggests that the family and the community play an important role in the management and control of conflict behaviors and in lowering conflict cases. Indeed, conflict can be lower in situations where couples are left on their own to decide and manage their own affairs. It can be concluded that understanding conflict in the family is indeed a hard task because it is a complicated issue which can be further researched on taking into consideration the socio-economic, individual and cultural issues as mentioned earlier. This is due to the fact that cultural transformations are caused by the dynamic nature of culture and society.



The findings indicate that conflict and violence has a detrimental effect on the operations and the realization of the family objectives. The findings also show that children's psychology, education and their general physical growth is affected by domestic violence and the nature of the relationships between the parents. Among the parents, mothers are psychologically and physically affected by conflicts in the family. This is possibly due to their cultural and socio-economic status in the society which make them not only to shoulder to their husbands or as low-ranking members of the extended families. Indeed, education gives women the confidence and the basis to believe that marriage at a young age is not their only option in life. The single mothers who dropped out of school at an early age reported that they experience a lot of psychological stress due to bearing the burden of child-care on their own.

Though some women could not reveal their inner beliefs on certain issues, the study can conclude that most men came out strongly for a moderate number of children and more over, sons, for social prestige, security and to extend their "fire" or the torch of the clan. The findings also conclude that female children are taken by the community as socio-economic liabilities when they give birth to children before they are legally married though preferred for bride wealth.

Majority of the respondents were not of the view that their education could influence or cause conflict in between them. The reasons advanced by those who opposed it mainly centered on socio-economic issues. Most men were of the opinion that giving formal education to girls, especially post primary education, is a suicidal act eventually. This is mainly because formal education opens up several avenues for women where they can earn a living. This is reinforced by the fact that the study shows that the number of females in the post primary school level total to 18.9% compared to 25.3% males in the same level.

Most men are threatened by the fact that some women have source(s) of income. This is possibly due to the fact that empowering women is believed to be a pointer to revolution and conflicts in the house, including separation and or divorce as they are capable of

supporting themselves. This might have been partly, the reason behind few women (6.8%) having an income compared to significant resources. This has a lot of implication to the family; that the children will be left in hands of the relatives, caretakers and or house-girls who may not be mature enough, and that most of the women will use much of their time pursuing their goals and expectations outside their homes. This may subject an individual to circumstances which can lead to sexual infidelity.

Though some of the above factors have been shown to be true in some studies (Kayongo male et al 1984), some of them are mere speculations and beliefs. All in all, the family as shown earlier has a pivotal role in the growth and development of the children and society. It is the bedrock of society.

## **5.1 CONCLUSIONS**

The fact that about 87.4% of the respondents by sex have experienced conflict in their families as shown in the findings, show that conflict which leads to domestic violence in most families is a common phenomenon in all the stages of marriage; in the early, middle and the later years and thus is a bad practice which should not be allowed to thrive in a society which cherishes law and order. Violence or domestic violence, in any form, should be condemned and rejected by the society because the behavior is not only outdated but also aggressive in the sense that the victims are subjected to severe suffering, which a times ends up in death. In the Session Paper no 1 of 2000 and adopted in parliament recently, it was proposed, among other items, that more research into the determinants of increased family instability and violence is needed. This shows that the state has recognized the escalating rate of violence in families. Moreover, if domestic violence is allowed to continue, many marriages will break up as children suffering from psychological traumas will increase; among other consequences,

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

As mentioned earlier, external factors (outside the institution of the family) are the main source of conflict in the family. The study recommend that in a bid to minimize the prevalence of conflicts and its consequences in the family, the society should play a

central role in developing strategies for conflict management and resolution. Thus, in an attempt to manage conflicts and based on the findings of the study, the following specific recommendations are made.

Seminars should be organized where parents should be taught on changing needs and roles of the families which have forced it to try and adapt and or adopt. Most families have few limited resources and are forced to utilize whatever available to provide its members with the expectations of the changing world such as education, shelter and food. Livestock which was a major part in bride-wealth has been used to cater for the above. Portions of family land have also been sold out of the same reasons.

Forums should be created for parents to discuss the issue of bride-wealth amongst themselves and sons in that its main form (livestock) has diminished as lands are being reduced partly due to the above stated reasons and partly due to population growth. Many families have therefore been forced to keep a small number of livestock mainly for domestic use and not necessarily for bride-wealth payment. There is need to arrive at feasible ways of arriving at the amount and / or figures and how the same should be paid. These should be spelt out clearly at the negotiations stage with a view reducing tension emerging as a result of delayance or non-payment of bride-wealth.

Married couple should appreciate the roles of in-laws and be willing to develop good rapport by discussing and or sharing experiences/items, respect and work with them for the sake of developments and harmony in the family. They should do this because in-laws are interested in giving security and moral guidance to couples who also have time, interests and respect for them. Parent's in-law is also good source for child rearing and development, amongst other roles they are expected to perform to receptive in-laws. Indeed, physical behavior of married couples towards their in-law determines the nature of the relationship amongst them in the family.

Married couple through seminars or social groups should be taught on the importance of graduating from youthful stage and abandoning tempting behaviors and circumstances

which may lead them into being sexually unfaithful to their spouse, not being selfish, jealous and malicious in their dealings. Such characteristics may lead to cold wars which in turn may result into physical confrontations and hatred in the family. Young members of the family can imitate what the elder members are doing whether the character is bad or good. In the absence of the parents of the young in-laws, the married couple should unconditionally accept and treat them as part of their lives.

Social groups should be formed in the villages comprising of age mates where discussions, counseling and life experiences can be done. The issue of discriminating against some in-laws and relatives should be emphasized in such forums.

In-laws who are willing to work together for common goals. Waging war against them will not assist or solve anything in the family but will aggravate situations.

A way of preparing the youth to take up challenges and responsibilities in the family and society should be found out like was done through circumcision. During seclusion periods, for females and males, harmony in families was emphasized. Initiates were given advises and or informally taught on various issues of life by elders including their expected roles in the family and society, conflict resolution and management, among other issues. Families where women were circumcised were more stable than led by uncircumcised women.

There is need to sensitize the public through chiefs and other meetings on human values against the common old-fashioned culture of spouse abuse both physically and psychologically. Children are affected by spouse abuse.

General education programs about the need to have and to improve the existing relationships with a view to realizing harmony should be developed and passed over to the beneficiaries. This education which will usher in more respect and understanding of the peoples' roles and expectations in as much as it will also provide general information and knowledge about human relationships.



The Kenya government should allow Non Governmental Organizations to establish and operate professional counseling in many rural areas or broaden the scope of the family planning association of Kenya to offer counseling and other related services on various family matters.

The church can also help to settle disputes and offer counseling services in an effort to making its members develop more skills of production and survival.

## GLOSSARY

*Boiyootaap kokweet*- This is the village headman who is well conversed in the traditional law.

*Chorse*- This is a runaway marriage. This situation where a man could capture? And ran away with a girl who had graduated from initiation and hide her for approximately 3 to 4 days and put her a ring on her finger before she is brought back to her parents.

*Injogeetaap chepyosook*- This is a council of respected elderly women. This is where men could be accused of incest, wife abuse and adultery between members of different age-sets among other abuses.

*Keenap kipcheiyweet*- This is a ceremony performed when the girl is found to be a virgin.

*Tuugaap mabwani*- these are cattle from the father of the groom.

*Tuugaap mwaai*- these are cattle from the sisters of the groom who have been married.

*Seguutyeeet*- this is a special grass used for tying the marriage knot during the marriage ceremony known as *rateet* by an old man called *boiyootaap komnda*.

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## APPENDICES

### Questionnaire

Dear respondent, my name is.....and I am a student of social work and social administration in Kampala International University and currently carrying out a research on the causes of family conflict amongst the Kipsigiis community. I am interested in women because they are the ones who are mainly affected by conflict in families. The information I collect from you could be used by the government and other agencies to understand conflicts in families. I would like to talk to you for about 45 minutes. I will treat the information you give to me in the strictest confidence.

Q.1. (a) Respondent's Name .....

(b)Age (a) 18 and below { } (b) 20 to 25 { } (c) 25 and above.

(c)Sex (a) male { } (b) female { }

(d)Marital Status .....

(e)Occupation .....

(f)Level of education .....

(g)Income .....

Q.2. (a) How many children do you have?

Boys..... Girls..... None.....

(b)What is the importance of this figure?

(c)Have you had conflicts over their gender? Yes/No.

If yes, why .....

(1) Their number? Yes/No .....

(d) How many are married? .....

(e) Who received the bride wealth? .....

Q.3. (a) Do you believe in polygourmy? Yes/No

(1) If yes, why? .....

(ii) If no, why? .....

(b) How many wives do you have/ (for males)

(i) One      (ii) More than one

If more than one in (b) (i) above answer the following:

(c) Why did you marry more than 1 wife?.....

(b) Have you had problems with them? Yes/No

(e) If yes, what was the reason? Explain.....

Q.4. (a) Have you noticed any change in certain aspects of lively? Yes/No

(b) What is the change about?.....

(c)How was it, say some 20 or 30 years ago?.....

(d) Has it influenced conflict in the family? Yes/No

(e) If yes, how/.....

(f) Any other change?.....

(g) How has it affected the family?

Q.5. (a) Do you think there is conflict in the family today than in the past? Yes/No

(b) Have you experienced conflict in your family? Yes/No.

(c) If yes, when was it.....

(d)What was it about?.....

(e) What was the cause?.....

Q.6. (a) Do you think your education has brought about conflict in your family? Yes/No.

(b) If yes, how?.....

Q.7. (a) what is your religion.....

(1). Muslim (2) Christianity (3) Traditionalist.

(b) Has your religion brought conflict? Yes/No

(c) If yes, how?

(d) What was the attitude of the society towards a family that experienced conflicts?



