

**CULTURAL PRACTICES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN  
KENYA CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION A CASE  
STUDY OF KAKUZI ZONE MURANGA  
SOUTH DISTRICT**

**BY**

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**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF OPEN  
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## DECLARATION

I, Kabura Grace Wanjiru do declare that this research report is my own work and that it has not been presented to any other university for a similar award.

Signed.....

Student

Date.....

## **DEDICATION**

From the core of my being, I dedicate this work to my beloved Mum Eva and brother  
Jameck

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

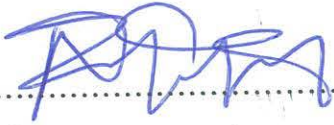
In the first place, I highly acknowledge the almighty God, for all he has done in my life up to this level of academic epitome.

I am sincerely grateful to all those who sacrificed their valuable time out of their kindness to assist me in all ways possible during the study. I extend my special thanks to all my lecturers and mostly my Supervisor Mr. Tindi seje who willingly devoted a lot of time to give me the best guidance and concentration, which has enabled me to complete this work successfully.

May God richly bless in you.

## APPROVAL

I certify that Kabura Grace Wanjiru carried out this research under my supervision.



MR. TINDI SEJE



DATE

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms have been defined in the context of this research;

**Academic performance:** How students more especially girls fair on in school that is in grades and in continuing school.

**Harmful Cultural practices:** The norms practiced in African society that could be dangerous on children or the victim.

**Initiation ceremonies:** Ceremonies performed in African societies to prove that one has now grown up and is regarded as an adult.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to establish the effects of cultural practices on academic performance of students in Kenya certificate of secondary education (KCSE) In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District. Specific Objectives of the study were: To establish the various cultural practices In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District, Determine the impact of cultural practices on the learning process In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District and Determine how harmful cultural practices can be eliminated In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District. The methods used for data collection were questionnaires to the students, and teachers and interviews for community members. The findings revealed by 77% of the respondents that early marriages was the most common cultural practice, followed by initiation ceremonies which were mentioned by 69%, birth ceremonies were also mentioned by 66% and burial ceremonies were mentioned by 54%. The study revealed by 70% of the respondents that cultural practices have an impact on the learning process, 15% said no and 15% were not sure. The impact of cultural practices on the learning process was time wastage(60%), followed by psychological torture(57%), exposure to society issues(43%), children feel grown up (38%) and those who said it had no impact were 20%. According 89% respondents sensitization of the community should be done as a way to eliminate harmful cultural practices. The study recommended that, the community should be sensitized and educated on the effects of cultural practices on children and the community at large.

The government should make sure that it devises means of identifying those who engage in harmful traditional practices and hence punish them. School counselors should be available in schools and also identify children who have been victims of harmful traditional practices and hence help them to avoid dropping out.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

Education plays a major role in the development of Kenya. Thus it is in the interest of the Government to give learning opportunity to every Kenyan. It has also designed programs to improve on the quality of Education. More so it has targeted the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups who previously had not learning opportunities. In its efforts, the government has expanded provision of early childhood education through early childhood programs and has provided free and compulsory primary school education to all children who have attained school going age.(GOK 2000)

In addition, the Government has reduced the cost of education in secondary schools. It pays Ksh.10,625 for every child enrolled in secondary school and has drastically reduced the cost of secondary education by setting a maximum of Ksh18,627 per year in boarding schools. Students in Day schools pay more for lunch only. It is in the role of the government to pay all teachers in public schools through Teachers Service Commission (TSC). The Government too provides loans to students who gain direct entry to public universities through Higher Education Loans Board (HELB). (GOK 2000)Despite all this efforts there are factors that contribute to poor academic performance.

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

When the missionaries introduced formal education in Kenya, it was a strategy meant to spread Christianity to the indigenous people. They dominated provision of education throughout the

colonial era and the same was designed to serve colonial and the same was designed to serve colonial and minority interests.

Kenyans got education first enough to communicate with their masters while other races got superior education. This means there was racial segregation and gross imbalance in education opportunities. There were schools for white only, schools for Asians as well as those for Africans.

After Kenya gained independence in 1963, there was critical shortage of skilled manpower to run and manage the economy. This was because of poverty, ignorance, disease and famine. The first President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and the government at large declared war on ignorance, poverty and disease. Consequently, a commission was appointed to survey the existing resources in Kenya and advise the government on the formation of the requisite National policies referred to as the Ominde Commission 1964. At that time, it lacked vital statistical information.

Ndegwa commission was appointed to look into how education goals could be integrated to accelerate the rate of national development.

Gachathi commission of 1976 was formed to enhance education goals on an attempt to restructure education system to meet the demands of the country. Later the education approach was changed to a self-reliance one known as 8-4-4 system. The system involved both academic and technical subjects. The technical subjects were woodwork, Home science, Building and construction among others. The child was geared to self-reliance in that if he failed in academic subjects, he could have technical skills to lead to self-employment. In 8-4-4 system, a child would take eight (8) years in primary school, four (4) in secondary and 4 years in University. The Mackery Commission

(Presidential working party) aimed at enabling the youth to play a more effective role in the life of nation by imparting the necessary skills to them. All the above commissions were considered together with universal declaration of human rights (1948), which stated that every child has a right to education.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Although education is a vital aspect in our daily life, it remains a problem in Kakuzi zone, Makuyu division, Murang'a South District. The academic performance of the students has continued to decline despite the government's efforts to uplift the standards of the same in secondary schools. Despite the lowering of school fees and provision of qualified teachers, most schools have continued to register poor performance in Kenya certificate of Secondary education (KCSE). This has led to many of the learners falling victims to early marriages, drug and substance abuse, prostitution, child abuse, crime, child labour among others. On the other hand, the community is materialistic and values wealth or material gains at the expense of education. Consequently not many go to school so long as they can earn a living. The result is that a considerable part of the population remains illiterate or semi-illiterate leading to many of the skilled workers on the District like Doctors, teachers, nurses, agricultural officers to come from other parts of the country.

There are several factors mentioned above that contribute to poor academic performance but more so, this research study strives to investigate the effects of cultural practices on academic performance of students.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the various cultural practices and the challenges they pose on the academic performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education in Kakuzi zone

Makuyu division, Murang'a South District and suggest the strategies that should be put forward to counter the poor academic performance of students.

#### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to establish the effects of cultural practices on academic performance of students in Kenya certificate of secondary education (KCSE) In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District.

#### **1.5 .Specific Objectives**

This study was intended to:

1. Establish the various cultural practices In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District.
2. Determine the impact of cultural practices on the learning process In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District.
3. Determine how harmful cultural practices can be eliminated In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District.

#### **1.6 . Research Questions**

- 1 What are the various cultural practices In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District ?
2. Of what impact are cultural practices on academic performance of students in Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District?
3. How can harmful cultural practices be eliminated In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District?

#### **1.7 . Significance of the Study**

The data collected in this research would help teachers in handling students from various communities that are victims of cultural practices and advise them accordingly.

It would equip teachers with knowledge of different cultural practices so that they can help learners in coping with cultural practices and the challenges posed by the same to the academic performance of the individual child.

The data would also be vital to the policy makers in education and school administrators/managers in designing and implementing school curriculum.

The research study would also be important to the local community because it would change their attitude towards cultural practices and be encouraged to change cultural practices that negatively affect academic performance of their children.

The data would also come in handy for other institutions like churches, Non Governmental organizations that crusade against cultural practices that are injurious to health and academic progress of the Kenyan child in general.

### **1.8 Scope of the Study**

The study was carried out in Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District. Muranga (also spelled as Murang'a) is one of the districts of Kenya's Central Province. Its capital town is also now named Muranga but was previously called Fort Hall (in colonial times before 1963). It is inhabited mainly by and is considered the home of the Kikuyu, the largest tribe in Kenya. The district has a population of 348,304 (1999 census the study investigated the various cultural practices and the challenges they pose to academic performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education. It was limited by the objectives of the study outlined in 1.5 above. It was carried out between April 2008 to December 2008.



## 1.9 . Theoretical framework

The study was based on Culture theory (Philip Smith 2008). Culture is the branch of anthropology, semiotics, and other related social science disciplines (e.g., sociology) that seeks to define the heuristic concept of culture in operational and/or scientific terms. In the 19th century, "culture" was used by some to refer to a wide array of human activities, and by others as a synonym for "civilization". In the 20th century, anthropologists began theorizing about culture as an object of scientific analysis. Some used it to distinguish human adaptive strategies from the largely instinctive adaptive strategies of animals, including the adaptive strategies of other primates and non-human hominids, whereas others used it to refer to symbolic representations and expressions of human experience, with no direct adaptive value. Both groups understood culture as being definitive of human nature.

According to many theories that have gained wide acceptance among anthropologists, culture exhibits the way that humans interpret their biology and their environment. According to this point of view, culture becomes such an integral part of human existence that it is the human environment, and most cultural change can be attributed to human adaptation to historical events. Moreover, given that culture is seen as the primary adaptive mechanism of humans and takes place much faster than human biological evolution, most cultural change can be viewed as culture adapting to itself.

Although most anthropologists try to define culture in such a way that it separates human beings from other animals, many human traits are similar to those of other animals, particularly the traits of

other primates. For example, chimpanzees have big brains, but human brains are bigger. Similarly, bonobos exhibit complex sexual behaviour, but human beings exhibit much more complex sexual behaviours. As such, anthropologists often debate whether human behaviour is different from animal behaviour in degree rather than in kind; they must also find ways to distinguish cultural behaviour from sociological behaviour and psychological behavior.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 1.0 Introduction

Culture (from the latin cultura stemming from colere, meaning; to cultivate; generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activities significance and importance. Culture can be understood as systems of symbols and meanings that even their creators' contest, that lack fixed boundaries, that are constantly in flux and that interact and compete with one another. Culture can be defined as all the ways of life including arts, beliefs and institutions of a population those are passed down from generation to generation. It can thus be called the way of life for an entire society.

Clifford T. Morgan (1961) defines culture as the customs and traditions of a people and the attitudes and beliefs that they have about important aspects of their life. He also defines it as the sum total of behaviors patterns, attitudes and values, shared and transmitted by the members of a given society. According to Tylor 1874, 1874, 'culture is that complex whole which includes Knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

The united Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO, 2002) describes culture as the set of distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

Other scholars define culture as follows.

Damen,L. (1987) defines culture as learned and shared human patterns or models for living; day to day living patterns. These patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Culture is mankind's primary mechanism." To Hofstede,G. (1984) Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another."

According to Kluckhohn,C.,& Kelly,W.H. (1945)"By culture we mean all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational and non-rational. Which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men"

Kroeber,A.L., & Kluckhohn,C (1952) "Culture consists of patterns, explicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts: the essential core of culture consists pf traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action."

Lederach,J.P. (1995), "Culture is the sared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving,interpreting,expressing,and responding to the social realities around them"

Linton,R. (1945) "A culture is a con figuration of learned behaviors and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society"

However, there are different patterns of culture therefore different societies may develop altogether different solutions to the same major and recurrent problems of life; yet each society feels that their way of behaving is natural and the best. For instance a society may assign the economic affairs of the culture to women instead of to men as would be the case to others (Margaret mead 1935)

Culture differences may be as a result of natural conditions under which people live like-the food available to them, abundance or scarcity of resources, climate, proximity to other peoples-and in practices already established in a society that shape the personalities and habits patterns of its members i.e. the determinants of a culture may be both outside and inside the culture.

Although cultures have definite patterns, the patterns are instantly changing due to climatic conditions, exhaustion of resources, technological changes or ideology like Christianity and communalism.

A person in society is accorded status according to age, sex, and occupation among others. Then there is a pattern of behavior that one is expected to exhibit in a particular status.

This applies to the behavior that goes along with that position (Linton 1945)

## **2.1 Cultural Practices**

### **Rites of Passage**

#### **Birth and Naming**

1<sup>st</sup> stage in a person's life. The arrival of a child in a family is a time of great rejoicing and merry making. During pregnancy the pregnant mother is accorded a lot of respect and is given special treatment.

During birth, rituals are performed to welcome and introduce the child to immediate and extended members of the family and the community at large. The sex of the child is announced in various ways. E.g. in the Agikuyu community give five ululations for a boy and four for a girl. The placenta is disposed off ceremoniously. In some communities the placenta is thrown into a running river or stream. In others it is kept for rituals to be held later while others bury it near the homestead or in uncultivated field. In some it is hang in the house to symbolize continuity of life. More rituals are performed for the mother and the baby for thanksgiving, protections and purification. Purification which involved ritualistic washing is meant to prepare the mother for the birth of the next child. After some time both the mother and the child are shaved. New hair for the baby means newness. The new hair for the mother denotes she has cast out pregnancy.

The name of the baby may be given after birth in certain communities while in others the name is known before birth. Some give names some days after birth e.g Kamba who names children three days after birth. The Luo name the baby when it is crying. In this case, names of ancestors are mentioned one at a time and when the baby slips crying when a certain name is mentioned then she acquires that name.

Most names have meaning and therefore chosen with a lot of care. Eg Gikuyu name Ngigi or Wangige means born during locust invasion while Nasiche for Luhya for the same. Others have religious meaning like Were which means God in Luhya. Others could be named after departed relatives.

## Death Rites

This is the final stage a person goes through in life and is a sorrowful even because the death person is physically and permanently removed from the living members of the family. Rituals associated to death are taken seriously by the family and the community members. They also vary from community to community. It is believed that death is not the end of life. The dead continue to live in spirit form.

There is no natural death in the African understanding. Some of the well known causes of death are sorcery, witchcraft or evil magic, curses, evil spirits, breaking a binding oath or taboo. At times death is looked at as Gods will.

The importance of funeral rites is determined by the status, Sex and the age of the person being buried. Those for young and unmarried will be simple and attended by few. Those for leaders, rich, and heroes will be elaborate and attended by many people.

- In some, the corpse is washed with and hubs.
- The dead are buried with their belonging such as foodstuffs, animals, bows and arrows.
- The body is placed carefully facing the appropriate direction according to the custom of the people.
- Some dress the corpse while others bury them naked.
- There is mourning period before and after burial. Some restrain from eating, sexual intercourse or even washing.
- During mourning there is singing of mourning songs.
- Some communities have feasting and drinking of beer. Close relatives shave their hair after burial.

- Sacrifices are made and libations offered to the spirits in order to appease, invoke thanks or request them to do something for the living.
- There is also wife inheritance in certain communities

## **Marriage**

According to R Kerrie (1989) Marriage is a rite of passage through which everyone must undergo. After initiation the community expects the initiates to enter marriage almost immediately and those who shun marriage are considered as social misfits. The society accepts marriage as natural and good.

The chief purpose is procreation. A childless marriage is seen as incomplete.

Polygamy is accepted as a symbol of wealth, a status symbol for the man, many children and wives provide cheap labour and sexuality commitment for a man when other wife is nursing a baby or sick.

Payment of bride wealth is a necessary requirement as compensation to the girl's family for loss of her held at home. It acts as appreciation and also seals the marriage.

Marriage promotes social status of those who enter it. Only those that are named can be allowed to hold certain responsibilities in society e.g. clan elder & learning secrets of the society.

A husband is the head of the family and the wife plays a subordinate roll in the family.



Marriage in African community is a complete affair and involves economic social and religious aspect of life.

Marriage is a duty and requirement for everyone in the community to undergo. Those who do not marry are considered a curse to the community rejects and lawbreakers, abnormal and lesser humans. Failure to marry means the person has rejected the society and so society rejects him. (Shiprrah N. Gichaga 2005)

The importance of marriage is to get children, name dead relatives hence they are remembered. Marriage was incomplete without children as children are seen as security in old age and heirs to family property. Married people were given higher status and seen as complete 'men' and women.

### **Living Promise**

According to R Kerrie (1989) Marriage according to Muslim laws is polygamous and one can marry up to four wives as long as the husband is able love them equally. Polygamy is also allowed in African customary marriage although the ceremonies involved vary from community to community. Polygamous marriage leads to too many children whereby the parents are not able to educate them properly. Large families lead to drop out in school. Parents are also unable to provide basic needs such as medication, clothing food and even proper shelter. Such children are emotionally stressed ad thus are not able to perform properly in school.

Polygamous families can lead to orphaned children especially when parents contract AIDS. So many children are left under the care of grandparents or other relatives and thus their needs are not taken care of adequately. Such children abandon school early to work as house helps leading to child labour. Death or separation of parents leads to kinship families where the eldest siblings

take charge of the family. The elder sibling may not do well in school for most of their time is to think and take care of the young. Some communities allow wife inheritance. In this case death could have been caused by HIV/AIDS. The inheritor or the inherited becomes a victim of AIDS too. This leads to death whereby children are orphaned. Such children are likely to drop out of school or perform poorly academically. There is also early marriage, which leads to adolescent leaving school to get married.

### **Traditional Economic Activities**

Some communities are involved in raiding others to get cattle and property. Such communities regard cattle rustling as a heroic activity. Therefore when boys reach teenage, they are likely to leave school to participate in such activities such create insecurity and fear in the affected communities and more so where some people are murdered.

Young men in the above communities are likely to leave school to look after animals, which they value more. The academic performance of such boy is likely to be poor for education is not given the necessary attention. Some communities also value education for boys than girls. Boys are highly regarded where the girls are considered that their place is in the kitchen and to take care of their families. Hence the education of the girl child is at stake.

Old Age Value is also a contributing factor. When parents get too old, young children are forced to abandon school so as to take care of the elderly.

## Initiation

S.N. Gichaga (1997) stresses that in most communities in Kenya, the main initiation rite for boys and girls is circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls. The Luo have six of the lower teeth removed. Physical preparation involves the initiates being fed properly on special diet so that they become healthy and strong. The psychological preparation involves being informed on what to expect and what is expected of them. They are challenged and encouraged to face the ordeal with courage.

This rite of passage was conducted on the youth 14-20 years to mark transitions from childhood to adulthood. Many communities in Kenya still practice the rite of circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls.

The rites qualify the individual to become a full member of the community. The ceremony gives the initiates opportunities to learn their races secrets of the society, religious beliefs as well as sex education. In some communities, the initiates are given new status. Those who fail to undergo the rite are considered as outcasts (S.N. Gichaga 1997).

Clitoridectomy involves the removal of part of the entire clitoris, It is also known as Female Genital mutilation (FGM). Male circumcision involves cutting away the foreskin of the penis. There are four types of Female Genital Mutilation. One is clitoridectomy, which involved the removal of part or all of the clitoris. Then the second involves the cutting of the clitoris and all or part of the labia minora which is known as Excision.

The third and most severe is infibulation whose procedure involves cutting of the clitoris, labia minora and at least two thirds of labia majora. The two sides of the vulva are then sewn together to close up the opening of the vagina leaving a small opening for urinating and menstruation.

The fourth type involves all the other mutilations of the female genitalia. This can include piercing, stretching, cauterization by burning the clitoris and the surrounding tissues, incisions to the vagina wall, scraping or cutting the vagina and the surrounding tissue and introduction of corrosive substances to the vagina. (Save the child. Canada, 2007)

## **2.2 Effects of Cultural Practices on Academic Performance**

According to the children's Act, every child has a right to education. The government of Kenya has made tremendous efforts in implementing the goals of education for all. Many reforms have been put in place including free and compulsory education at primary school level, affordable secondary education and loans to those who gain direct entry to public universities; a parallel programme for those who can afford has also been put in place.

However the government efforts are being frustrated by many obstacles including cultural practices.

According to S.N. Gachoya (97) preparation for initiation takes several months like in case of the Bukusu.

Masaai take several years in the forest as 'morans' leaving no time for education. In other communities boys and girls having had sex education (S.N. Gichaga 1997) become full members of the community and therefore they engage in premarital sex leading to pregnancy, early marriage, sexually transmitted diseases all of which adversely affect education. Girls are

becoming pregnant before age 20 and half of them outside wedlock (melvet) which is still school going age.

Initiation is also harmful. Circumcision for boys is a painful ordeal and some bleed to death or develop complication because of crude instruments that are used on them. Some bleed to death or the wound takes too long to heal. Thus victims fail to attend school. FGM is extremely dangerous and can cause irreversible, lifelong health risks and complications for girls and women. The procedure causes terrible pain, shock and medical condition that can cause death. Massive bleeding occurs and many girls die from extreme blood loss. Infection diseases such as tetanus, Hepatitis B often occur. Urinary tract infections (UTI) are also very common.

There is also lack of sensation, painful sexual intercourse because of formation of scar tissue which narrows vaginal opening.

Infections can cause recurring urinary tract infections, obstructed menstrual flow, which can also cause infertility; sexual intercourse becomes extremely painful and sometimes impossible and at times may require reopening of the stitched vagina to allow sexual relations with the husband. Victims of FGM may not do well academically when they are faced with all the above problems (save the children –Canada and the websites)

In case of death, members of the immediate family and the rest of the community is involved in mourning. In some cases those who are students will be mourning every morning before and after burial which takes long hours and at times all night. This means that they will not be involved in evening preps and will also be too tired for classes the following day. Immediate relatives will be absent from school for several weeks and therefore may not catch up with the rest of the students.

Freedom during mourning gives room for young boys and girls to get involved in sexual activities which may lead to girls being pregnant and thus drop out of school. Close relatives must attend or undergo certain rituals to absenteeism from school. Death can also be as a result of AIDS where both parents may be affected leading to orphaned children.

Following birth, students miss classes as they attend the naming ceremony for they have to rejoice and make merry with other members. Girls are a source of labour and therefore have duties such as cooking, fetching water and washing utensils. In naming also several women and girls are to be present and for all the merry making needs their services. As the celebrations continue school is still on and therefore girls fail to cope with school work leading to poor academic performance.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents methodology of the study that is the techniques and procedures, study area, research design, sample size and methods of data analysis and presentation. The focus of the research was based on people's views, opinion and beliefs held about cultural practices and how they affect the student's performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education.

#### **3.1: Area and Population of Study**

The study was carried out in Kakuzi zone, Makuyu division in Maragua South District. The area has been chosen because the researcher hails and works in Ruchu Secondary School in neighboring zone and is thus aware of the cultural diversity in the area of study. Thus there was need to carry out an investigation on various cultural practices and how they contribute to poor academic performance and then come up with possible measures to combat the phenomenon.

#### **3.2 :Sample Selection**

The sample size consisted mainly of teachers, students, DEO and the general public. The teachers and students were selected randomly while the DEO and community members were selected purposively. This made the entire sample size to be 70.

### **3.3 Data Collection Techniques**

Qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, analysis and presentation were employed.

### **3.4 Questionnaire Forms**

Questionnaires were used to collect views and data that were represented quantitatively. A total of about fifty (35) students, (30) teachers filled and returned questionnaires. Ten (10) members of the community were also part of this study and they were interviewed using an interview guide.

### **3.5 .Observation Method**

The researcher used this method in order to experience what actually happens in the various cultural practices. The researcher had to attend various ceremonies such as circumcision, marriage funeral (including mourning before and after burial) so as to critically see their participation and how much it involved the learners and how such practices may affected academic performance.

### **3.6 .Secondary Data**

Documentary sources were also obtained from Mount Kenya library, Kampala international main library, Nairobi university main library Kenyatta University main library, Kenya National Library, Thika branch, internet, Journals, magazines and other periodicals. These gave the general background on various cultural practices and how the practices contribute to poor academic performance in secondary schools despite the government's efforts to improve on academic performance.

### **3.7 .Data Analysis**



The researcher used questionnaire forms issued to teachers and students and interviews with members of the general public. Analysis of qualitative research was based on the content of the survey while the qualitative data was analyzed using the descriptive technique with the aid of tables using frequency and percentage.

### **3.8 Limitations Of The Study**

- ❖ The major limitation in this research study was inadequate funds and limited time in which to conduct the research.
- ❖ Some respondents expected payment for their time spent when being interviewed or filling the questionnaire failure to which they willingly refused to deliver the information relevant to the study. The study was also time consuming since it required considerable movement from one institution to another and to various offices to obtain the relevant data for the research.
- ❖ Some schools are in remote areas and therefore it was difficult to gain access to them. In addition, feeder roads are poor and seasonal and therefore the problem is more compounded during the rainy season.
- ❖ The other limitation was poor weather conditions. During the hot season the temperatures are extremely high making it uncomfortable to walk to various institutions while it is equally difficult to walk in the rains.
- ❖ Language barrier was yet another handicap to the study especially where some respondents are unable to read and understand the questionnaire appropriately so as to provide the required information.

- ❖ Some respondents thought that the study was meant to spy on them and therefore treated the whole exercise with suspicion. They therefore were not co-operative, fail to give any data or gave fake information or even become hostile to the interviewer.
- ❖ The area being warm and bushy is known to harbor dangerous and poisonous snakes of which might attack the researcher on the way and especially if one is to walk along the narrow paths.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter is a presentation, interpretation and discussion of the field results. The results are presented in tables and in form of frequency counts and percentages. It focuses on the effects of cultural practices on academic performance of students in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Muranga' South district, Kenya.

#### 4.1 Background information

##### 4.1. Profile of the respondents

Seventy (70) questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and students and 65 were filled and returned. This represents 93% of the total number of questionnaires filled. 10 community members were interviewed and 6 were female and 4 were male, one of the community members had no education, three had primary level, two had secondary level, two had certificates, one had a diploma and one had a degree.

##### 4.1.1 Gender of the respondents

Table 4.1 Gender of the respondents

GENDER	FREQUENCY	%AGE
MALE	40	68.5
FEMALE	25	38.5
TOTAL	65	100

Source: Primary data 2008

The table above shows that 68.5% of the respondents who participated in the study were male and 38.5% were female.

#### 4.1.2. Educational level of the respondents

**Table 4.2 Educational level of the respondents.**

<b>Educational level</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>%AGE</b>
<b>Form one</b>	10	15.4
<b>Form two</b>	10	15.4
<b>Form three</b>	5	8
<b>Form four</b>	10	15.4
<b>Certificate</b>	15	23.0
<b>Diploma</b>	10	15.4
<b>Degree</b>	5	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Primary data 2008**

According to table 4.2 15% of the respondents were in form one, 23% were in form two, 5% were in form three and 15% were in form four. 23% had certificates, 15% had diplomas and 7% had degrees.

#### 4.1.3. Age of the respondents

**Table 4.3 Age of the respondents**

Age	FREQUENCY	%AGE
13 -16	20	30
17-20	24	38
21-24	8	12
25-29	5	7
30-39	5	7
40 and above	3	5
Total	65	100

**Source: Primary data 2008**

According to table 4.3 30% the respondents were between the age of 13-16, 38% were between 17-20, 12% were between 21-24, 7% were between 25-29 and 30-39 and 5% were 40 and above.

#### 4.2. Cultural practices practiced

The first objective of the study was to find out various cultural practices practiced in Kakuzi Zone, Makuyu Division Murang'a South District Kenya. To achieve this, respondents were asked questions related to the objective. Data collected was analyzed under the question: What are the various cultural practices in Kakuzi Zone, Makuyu Division Murang'a South District Kenya ? The results are presented in the subsections below;

##### 4.2.1. Prevalence of cultural practices

Teachers and students were asked to state the level at which cultural practices are practiced in their division and this was the response.

**Table 4.4: Level at which cultural practices are practiced in their division**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	40	62
Moderate	20	30
Low	5	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Primary data 2008**

Table 4.4 shows that 62% of the respondents said that cultural practices were very highly practiced in their division, 30% said that they were moderately practiced while 5% said the prevalence was low. This shows that the rate at which cultural practices are practiced in this division is high.

All the community members who were interviewed agreed that the prevalence of cultural practices was high.

According to the DEO cultural practice are still high in Kenya and therefore fighting them is very difficult because people feel they cannot leave without them and yet it has negative impact on education.

#### **4.2.2. Types of cultural practices**

Teachers and community members were asked to name the common types of cultural practices and this was their response.

**Table 4.5: Types of cultural practices**

Response	Frequency (out of 65)
Early marriages	50
Initiation ceremonies	45
Birth ceremonies	43
Burial ceremonies	35

**Source: Primary data 2008**

According to table 4.5 the most mentioned cultural practice was early marriages that is it was mentioned by 50 of the respondents, followed by initiation ceremonies which were mentioned by 45, birth ceremonies were also mentioned by 43 and burial ceremonies were mentioned by 35.

The study established from the community members that early marriages were the most common cultural practices because the communities were poor and could not afford to pay education and also expected to get dowry for their daughters. They also revealed that in most cases children are married off after circumcision, when they get pregnant out of wed lock or after attaining the age of marriage.

#### **4.2.3. Initiation ceremonies**

The respondents were asked to mention the types of initiation ceremonies in their areas and this was their response.

**Table 4.6: Initiation ceremonies**

Response	Frequency (out of 65)
Circumcision	40
Tooth removing	30
Body tattooing	25
Ear piercing	20

**Source: Primary data 2008**

According to table 4.6 circumcisions was the most mentioned ceremony that is by 40, tooth removing was mentioned by 30, body tattooing was also mentioned by 25 and ear piercing was mentioned by 20. The community members revealed that such ceremonies are considered important in the society because children are believed to have become adults.

#### **4.2.4. Burial ceremonies**

The respondents were asked to name the events that take place during burial ceremonies and this was their response.

**Table 4.7: Burial ceremony events**

Response	Frequency (out of 65)
Ceremonies	25
Shaving off hair	20
Property and wife inheritance	18
Sacrificing to gods and ancestors.	15

**Source: primary data 2008**



Table 4.7 Shows that the most mentioned event was ceremonies (25), followed by shaving off hair 20, property and wife inheritance was mentioned by 18% and the least mentioned was sacrifice to gods and ancestors (15).

#### **4.2.5. Birth ceremonies**

The respondents were asked to name the ceremonies involved in birth ceremonies and this was their response

**Table 4.8: Birth ceremony events**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency (out of 65)</b>
Singing	38
Praying	32
Dancing	28
Presentation of gifts	20

**Source: Primary data 2008**

Table 4.8 shows that singing was the most mentioned event that takes place during birth ceremony events (38) followed by praying (32), dancing(28) and presentation of gifts(20).

#### **4.2.6. Time spent on the ceremonies**

The respondents were asked the time they spent on these ceremonies and this was their response.

**Table 4.9: Time spent on the ceremonies**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
1 day	20	31
1 week	30	46
More than a week	15	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Primary data 2008**

Table 4.9 shows that 30% said they take one day, 46% said they take one week and 23% said they take more than a week.

The community members revealed that most ceremonies take a week because they have to prepare for them.

#### **4.3. Impact of cultural practices on the learning process**

The second objective of the study was to determine the impact of cultural practices on the learning process in Kakuzi Zone, Makuyu Division Murang'a South District Kenya. To achieve this, respondents were asked questions related to the objective. Data collected was analyzed under the question: What is the impact of cultural practices on the learning process in Kakuzi Zone, Makuyu Division Murang'a South District Kenya? The results are presented in the subsections below;

The respondents were asked whether the cultural practices mentioned above had an impact on the learning process and this was their response.

**Table 4.10: Opinion on whether cultural practices have an impact on the learning process.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	45	70
No	10	15
Not sure	10	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: primary data 2008**

According to the table 70% of the respondents agreed that cultural practices have an impact on the learning process, 15% said no and 15% were not sure.

Most of the community members agreed that cultural practices had a negative impact on the learning process.

The respondents were asked how they affected the learning process and this was the response;

**Table 4.11: Opinion how cultural practices affect the learning process**

Response	Frequency (out of 65)
Time wastage	39
Psychological torture	37
Exposure to society issues	28
Children feel grown up	25
No impact	20

**Source: Primary data 2008**

The table shows that the most mentioned effect was time wastage(39), followed by psychological torture(37), exposure to society issues(28), children feel grown up (25) and those who said it had no impact were 20.

According to the community members the time spent on these ceremonies mean that learners will miss lessons which will lead to poor performance and then repetition and finally drop out from school.

On the psychological torture the community members mentioned that ceremonies like circumcision and female genital mutilation were painful and hence had a psychological effect on learners because with the trauma they have gone through they cannot concentrate in school.

The community members also added that when children go through such ceremonies they feel grown up and therefore do not want to go back to school and hence drop out and decide to marry early.

#### **4.4. Elimination of harmful cultural practices.**

The third objective of the study was to determine the how cultural practices can be eliminated in Kakuzi Zone,Makuyu Division Murang'a South District Kenya. To achieve this, respondents were asked questions related to the objective. Data collected was analyzed under the question: How can harmful cultural practices be eliminated in Kakuzi Zone,Makuyu Division Murang'a South District Kenya ? The results are presented in the subsections below;

The respondents were asked to give solutions on how harmful traditional practices can be eliminated and this was the response.

**Table 4.12: Opinion how cultural practices affect the learning process**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency (out of 65)</b>
Sensitize the community on the danger of such practices	58
Make laws against harmful cultural practices to strengthen the available ones.	47
Educate the community so that they become informed	45
Fight poverty as it is one of the causes of harmful practices	45
Put in practice the available laws.	44
Sensitize the community on the importance of education children.	40

**Source: primary data 2008**

The table above shows that the respondents mostly mentioned sensitization of the community as a way to eliminate harmful cultural practices (58), followed by Making laws against harmful cultural practices to strengthen the available ones (47), Educate the community so that they become informed (45), Fighting poverty as it is one of the causes of harmful practices (45) Put in practice the available laws (44) and Sensitize the community on the importance of education children (40).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0. Introduction

The major purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of cultural practices on academic performance of students in Kenya certificate of secondary education (KCSE) In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District. This chapter focuses on the discussions of the findings, conclusions and recommendations. Finally the chapter ends with suggestions for further research.

#### 5.1. Discussions

The first research objective was to establish the various cultural practices In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District. The most mentioned cultural practice was early marriages that are it was mentioned by 77% of the respondents, followed by initiation ceremonies which were mentioned by 69%, birth ceremonies were also mentioned by 66% and burial ceremonies were mentioned by 54%. According to R Kerrie (1989) Marriage is a rite of passage through which everyone must undergo. After initiation the community expects the initiates to enter marriage almost immediately and those who shun marriage are considered as social misfits. The society accepts marriage as natural and good.

The second research objective was to determine the impact of cultural practices on the learning process In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District. The study revealed by 70% of the respondents that cultural practices have an impact on the learning process, 15% said no and 15% were not sure. The impact of cultural practices on the learning process was time wastage(60%), followed by psychological torture(57%), exposure to society issues(43%), children feel grown up (38%) and those who said it had no impact were 20%. Masaai take several years in the forest as 'morans'

leaving no time for education. In other communities boys and girls having had sex education (S.N. Gichaga 1997) become full members of the community and therefore they engage in premarital sex leading to pregnancy, early marriage, sexually transmitted diseases all of which adversely affect education. Girls are becoming pregnant before age 20 and half of them outside wedlock (melvet) which is still school going age

Finally the study sought to determine how harmful cultural practices can be eliminated In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District. According the respondents sensitization of the community should be done as a way to eliminate harmful cultural practices (89%), followed by Making laws against harmful cultural practices to strengthen the available ones(72%), Educate the community so that they become informed (69%),Fighting poverty as it is one of the causes of harmful practices(69%) Put in practice the available laws (67%) and sensitize the community on the importance of education children (61%).

## **5.2. Conclusion.**

The study established that the common types of cultural practices were early marriage, initiation ceremonies, and birth and death ceremonies.

According to the study cultural practices have an impact on the learning process. They waste the learners time and also affect the learner psychologically which leads to poor performance and repetition and eventually drop out.

### **5.3. Recommendations.**

The community should be sensitized and educated on the effects of cultural practices on children and the community at large.

The government should make sure that it devises means of identifying those who engage in harmful traditional practices and hence punish them

School counselors should be available in schools and also identify children who have been victims of harmful traditional practices and hence help them to avoid dropping out.

### **Areas for further research.**

Further research can be conducted to investigate the effects of cultural practices on the learning process.



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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I:

#### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

**Dear respondent,**

I am a student of Kampala International University carrying out an academic research on the topic "effects of cultural practices on academic performance of students in Kenya certificate of secondary education (KCSE) In Kakuzi Zone Murang'a South District." You have been randomly selected to participate in the study and are therefore kindly requested to provide an appropriate answer by either ticking the best option or give explanation where applicable. The answers provided will only be used for academic purposes and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

NB: do not write your name anywhere on this paper.

#### **A) Personal Information**

##### **1. GENDER**

Male ☐ Female ☐

##### **2. AGE**

13-16 ☐ 17-20 ☐ 21-24 ☐ 25-29 ☐  
30-39 ☐ 40 and above ☐

##### **2. ACADEMIC LEVEL**

a) CERTIFICATE ☐ b) DIPLOMA ☐ c) DEGREE ☐

a) Form One ☐ b) Form Two ☐ c) Form Three ☐ d) Form Four ☐

Very high [ ]    high [ ]    low [ ]

.....

.....

.....

.....

Tick the ceremony you practice

- Period of the ceremony

5. Do you practice rites of passage in your society?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes specify

- I) circumcision
- II) Tooth Removal

III) Body Tattooing ☐

IV) Ear piercing ☐

6. Are there burial ceremonies in your society?

If yes what events take place?

i. Cerebrations ☐

ii. Shaving of hair ☐

iii. Property and wife inheritance ☐

iv. Sacrificing to gods and ancestors ☐

7. Do the above cultural practices have any impact on your learning process?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes how

Time wastage ☐

Psychological torture ☐

Exposure to society issues ☐

Promotes socialization ☐

8. How do you rate your students according to performance and cultural practices

☐ Those who esteem cultural practice are good performers

☐ Those who do not esteem cultural practices are poor performers

☐ Those who do not esteem cultural practices are backward in everything

9. How can harmful traditional practices be eliminated from society.

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## **APPENDIX 1I; I**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS.**

1. At what level are cultural practices being practiced in their division?
2. Which cultural practices are common in your area?
- 3 .Are there ceremonies in your society during births?
5. Do you practice rites of passage in your society?
6. Are there burial ceremonies in your society?
7. Do the above cultural practices have any impact on your learning process?
8. How can harmful traditional practices be eliminated from society.