

## **Influence of Beading Girls on KCPE Performance of Early Circumcised Boys in Isiolo Central Sub-County, Isiolo County**

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### **Abstract**

Early circumcision incidences are a common phenomenon in Isiolo Central Sub County and the entire former North Eastern Province of Kenya. This practice has increased cases of school drop-out among the boys, cattle rustling, early marriages, and other social challenges. This paper sought to determine the influence of beading of girls on KCPE performance of circumcised boys in Isiolo Central Sub County, Isiolo County. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design with 195 teachers and 294 circumcised eighth-grade boys as participants. The research used a simple random sampling technique and sampled 30 teachers and 43 circumcised boys in class eight, which represented 15% of each category of respondents. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, and correlation analysis. Results revealed that the beading of girls influenced KCPE performance of circumcised boys. The practice of beading for boys is part of the community practices. Elders should delay beading for boys for pupils who have not yet completed the school cycle or have not attained 18 years of age.

**Key Words:** *Early Circumcised Boys, KCPE performance, beading of Girls*

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### **1.0 Introduction**

Circumcision of boys is a cultural practice kept by many communities in Kenya. Normally, boys aged between 18 and 20 years are circumcised to initiate them to adulthood. After circumcision, young boys are expected to become independent, their age notwithstanding. Contrary to what happens in other communities, young boys aged between 9 and 12 years are usually targeted for circumcision among the Samburu. According to Blank et al. (2012), early circumcision of

boys comprises retrogressive practices which impact the discipline, enrolment, school attendance, and KCPE performance of boys in Samburu.

These retrogressive practices include the tendency to project newly-found autonomy, participating in animal raids, recruitment into the community army, becoming a herdsman, beading girls, and becoming the head of a family or families. Beading entails a Samburu Moran purchasing red beads and giving them to young Samburu girls as a sign of betrothal. The morans (warriors) usually consider themselves superior men who cannot be

intimidated by anyone. This notion has negatively influenced discipline in schools in Oldonyiro Ward, Isiolo County (Amzat & Razum, 2014).

Incidences of early circumcision of boys have been prevalent for a long time in Isiolo Central Sub County and the entire former North Eastern Province of Kenya. This practice has led to boys dropping out of school, increased cases of cattle rustling, early marriages, and other social challenges among newly circumcised boys (Amzat & Razum, 2014). This has in turn influenced negatively the KCPE performance of the circumcised learners since their minds are preoccupied with their newly-found social status within their community. There is scanty literature on the influence of early circumcision of boys on their KCPE performance.

*“Early circumcision of boys comprises retrogressive practices which impact the discipline, enrolment, school attendance, and KCPE performance of boys in Samburu”*

Ideally, whether circumcised or not, boys should be able to complete their academic cycles regardless of external or cultural barriers. Unfortunately, most circumcised Samburu boys in Isiolo Central Sub County, do not complete schooling once they undergo the circumcision rituals. For them, this rite of passage comes with new responsibilities and expectations that directly influence their academic performance. As such, this study

seeks to investigate the influence of beading girls on KCPE performance of circumcised boys in Isiolo Central Sub County, Isiolo County.

This paper is based on Emile Durkheim's functionalist perspective, which was refined by Robert K. Merto, Talcott Parsons, and others, as cited by Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2001). According to this theory, society is a well-organized structure in which the majority of the members share common values and conventions. Institutions, groups, and responsibilities converge to form a single entity. Because they accept the norms and regulations, community members do what is necessary to sustain a stable society. Two propositions are central to functionalism. First, each civilization is a unique operating unit; and second, the social order and cultural forms created in society have functional value concerning the individual's psychological demands. In this study, Emile Durkheim's Functionalist theory serves as a model. Samburu community is made up of diverse cultural traditions that have come together to produce a well-organized, coherent, and functional structure. Within this structure, circumcision has an important role in the cultural hierarchy of members of the Samburu community.

***Beading of Girls and KCPE Performance***

*Nkishooroto e saen* (A Girl with Beads) is a Samburu traditional practice that forbids extramarital sex between Samburu warriors and young unmarried Samburu girls. The Samburu warrior (or moran, as he was known) would give an uncircumcised lady a particular bead (*nkishooroto e saen e Imuran*) to symbolize the start of a sexual relationship (Lpatilan, 2014). When girls are beaded, they might be as young as nine (9) years old.

Negotiations between Moran and the girl's mother, as well as the girl's brother who frequently becomes a Moran too, begins the beading process. The girl's mother erects a cabin named "singra" for the couple, where the Moran can access the girl for sexual contact when the relationship is established (Amzat & Razum, 2014).

During the beading process, Moran brings a large number of beads and other items belonging to the girl's mother to calm her down (Lpatilan, 2014). The clan prohibits pregnancy during the beading process. This is because the beaded girl may is not circumcised and uncircumcised girls are considered children; so giving birth is taboo for them. However, when pregnancy is involved, beaded maidens may be forced to undergo traditional abortions or hand over newborns to other ethnic communities for infanticide or adoption. Some girls become pearls as early as they are three or four years old, but morans wait until they are old enough before having intercourse (Lesorogol, 2008).

**2.0 Materials and Methods**

The study used a cross-sectional descriptive survey design with 195 teachers and 294 circumcised eighth-grade boys as the target population. The researcher used a simple random sampling technique to sample 30 teachers and 43 circumcised boys in class eight, which represented 15% of each category of respondents. Questionnaires were used to collect data, and descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) were used to summarize the data obtained. Correlation analysis was used to assess the connection between the independent and the dependent variables.

**3.0 Results and Discussion**

Sixty-five (65) of the 73 questionnaires were filled and returned for analysis. This represented 89% response rate as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1**

***Response Rate***

Respondents	Sent Questionnaire	Returned Questionnaire	Percentage
Teachers	30	26	86.6%
Pupils	43	39	90.6%
Total	73	65	

A total of 26 out of 30 teachers (86.6%) and 39 out of 43 students (90.6%) answered, resulting in an 89 percent response rate. This response rate corresponds to the requirement that a 50% response rate is sufficient for analysis and reporting; a 60% response rate is

acceptable, and a 70% or higher response rate is excellent (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019).

***Teacher Responses on the Beading of Girls***

The study's primary goal was to look into the impact of girls' beading on KCPE performance of early circumcised boys. Using a Likert scale of 1-5, the respondents were

required to indicate their level of agreement with various statements on the beading of girls. Key: 1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 -

Disagree, 3 - Undecided, 4 – Agree, 5 - Strongly Agree. Results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

***Teacher Responses on the Beading of Girls***

	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Pupils exposed to boy’s beading of girls always perform well in KCPE	-	-	1	4%	4	14%	5	18%	17	64%
Pupils’ KCPE performance is influenced by exposed boys to beading of girls being truant.	3	10%	6	22%	5	20%	6	22%	6	40%
The boy child beading of girls enjoys attending games and sports, hence diverting their focus from academics	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	36%	17	64%

Results in Table 2 show that 64% of the boys were exposed to the practice of beading girls. 40% of the respondents indicated that boys who are exposed to the practice of beading girls cannot focus on their academics as they are more interested in attending games and sports activities rather than schoolwork. The study further showed that 64% of circumcised boys who had practiced beading girls did not perform well in their KCPE. These results concur with a study carried out by Kombo (2016) on the culture of beading of girls, which showed that once the boy is circumcised, he will eventually bead the girl of his choice, and the act of beading shifts their focus from academics to activities related to the circumcised boys’ cultural expectations. While the culture of beading

continues to persist within the Samburu community, KCPE performance of the morans will always remain low since Samburu community does not regard education as much as it does the cultural practices. This situation not only diminishes the chances of morans getting the proper education to enable them to positively contribute to nation-building but also perpetuates the cycle over future generations; thus leading to a scenario where the community has few if any, sufficiently educated individuals.

***Pupils' Responses to the Beading of Girls***

The results of pupils’ responses to the beading of girls are provided in Table 3

**Table 3**

***Pupils' Responses to the Beading of Girls***

	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Pupils exposed to boy’s beading of girls always perform well in KCPE	2	9%	3	12%	5	18%	5	18%	10	40%

Pupils' KCPE performance is influenced by exposed boys to beading of girls being truant.	2	9%	3	13%	6	22%	7	25%	8	31%
The boy child beading of girls enjoys attending games and sports, hence diverting their focus from academics.	9	35%	6	24%	3	12%	2	8%	5	21%

The results in Table 3 shows that 40% of the respondents did not think that pupils exposed to boys' beading of girls always performed well in KCPE, yet the beading practice is widespread. Furthermore, respondents agreed that exposure of boys to beading practice affected their KCPE performance. Further, 56% of the respondents observed that the beading practice led to truancy among school-going early circumcised Samburu boys. The respondents further disagreed that the boy child beading of girls enjoys attending games and sports; hence diverting their focus from academics, as depicted by 35%. This can be attributed to the fact that the uncircumcised boys engage in far fewer activities within the community unlike their circumcised counterparts, and thus they can focus their energy and time on academic work.

These findings corroborate those by Gatwiri and McLaren (2016) who found out that once a young boy was circumcised within the Samburu culture, the practice of beading was guaranteed. This practice led to the loss of concentration in-class work by the circumcised boys; hence, leading to an overall decline in academic performance among the circumcised boys. From these findings, it is clear that many pupils did not have a choice when it came to circumcision and the societal expectations that come with circumcision, which they were not prepared for adequately. Further, circumcised boys owed their loyalty to the community elders, who had strict expectations of the new Morans, and going against the elders' wishes was not an option

for most of the boys even though they were not yet mature. These boys were coerced into taking part in activities that a good number would rather forego and focus on education, while others would enthusiastically take part in these activities, especially those who struggled academically. This disconnect between the pupils who wanted to study and those who would rather take up other community activities meant that for the majority of the pupils, the prospect of ever completing the whole primary school cycle was very low. This fact would eventually have an influence on their future lives in areas of employability, family life, and social standing.

The study revealed that beading of girls was widely practiced by the circumcised boys in Isiolo Central Sub County, Isiolo County. To maintain their culture and societal expectations, the circumcised boys had to identify and bead a girl of their choice at the earliest possible opportunity. The age of the beaded girl varied, but some of the beaded girls were very young, and once they beaded a girl, boys were more interested in immersing themselves in their culture and the diverse cultural practices than they were willing to pursue education. This consequently meant that they had less interest in academic work, and thus their academic performance started to decline, and eventually, they dropped out of school. Further, the practice of beading led to unexpected outcomes such as pregnancies. This would mean that the circumcised boy

now had a family by default, yet they were not mentally prepared to handle their newfound responsibilities and thus could not focus on academic work.

***KCPE Performance of Early Circumcised Boys***

The study sought to investigate KCPE Performance of Early Circumcised Boys.

Using a Likert scale of 1-5, the respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with various statements on KCPE performance of early circumcised Samburu boys. Key: 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - undecided, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree. The findings are provided in Table 4.

**Table 4**

***Teacher’s Responses on KCPE Performance of Early Circumcised Boys***

	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Boys who undergo circumcision early perform poorly in KCPE compared to other students	2	32%	1	2%	3	12%	7	28%	7	26%
Incidences of early circumcision of boys have led to dropping out of boys in school due to increased cases of cattle rustling, early marriages, and other social challenges	3	12%	4	17%	3	12%	7	25%	9	34%
Many boys who undergo early circumcision drop out of school compared to other pupils	1	4%	4	17%	4	14%	7	25%	10	40%
Early circumcision comes with new responsibilities and expectations that may directly influence the boys to be absent from school to attend to such responsibilities.	1	4%	2	8%	2	9%	6	22%	15	57%
The early circumcised boy feels that they are mature making them indisciplined which affect their KCPE performance.	2	9%	2	8%	2	9%	3	12%	16	62%

Table 4 showed that 54% of teachers agreed that boys who undergo early circumcision performed poorly in KCPE as compared to other pupils. 59% of the respondents agreed that early circumcision comes with new responsibilities and expectations that force the boys to be absent from school to attend to other responsibilities. On the other hand, 37% of teachers moderately agreed that incidences

of early circumcision of boys had led to dropping out school of boys due to increased cases of cattle rustling, early marriages, and other social challenges. Further, 40% of teacher respondents pointed out that many boys who underwent early circumcision dropped out of school compared to other pupils depicted. Further, 65% of teacher respondents agreed with the statement that

early circumcised boys felt that they were mature, thus becoming prone to indiscipline cases which affected their KCPE performance.

Table 5 gives results on the mean ratings and standard deviations on pupils' responses to KCPE performance of early circumcised boys.

**Table 5**

***Pupil's Responses on KCPE Performance of Early Circumcised Boys***

	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Boys who undergo circumcision early perform poorly in KCPE compared to other students	3	13%	8	32%	11	42%	3	13%	-	-
Incidences of early circumcision of boys have led to dropping out of boys in school due to increased cases of cattle rustling, early marriages, and other social challenges	9	35%	6	24%	3	12%	2	8%	5	21%
Many boys who undergo early circumcision drop out of school compared to other pupils	2	9%	3	12%	5	18%	5	21%	10	40%
Early circumcision comes with new responsibilities and expectations that may directly influence the boys to be absent from school to attend to such responsibilities.	1	4%	4	17%	4	14%	7	25%	10	40%
The early circumcised boy feels that they are mature making them indisciplined which affect their KCPE performance.	1	4%	2	8%	2	9%	6	22%	15	57%

Information captured in Table 5 shows that 45% of pupil respondents stated that early circumcised boys felt that they were mature making them indisciplined which affected their KCPE performance. 40% indicated that incidences of early circumcision of boys have led to dropping out of school by boys due to increased cases of cattle rustling, early marriages, and other social challenges as indicated. On the other hand, 40% of respondents agreed that boys who underwent circumcision early performed poorly in KCPE compared to other pupils, while 57%

agreed that many boys who underwent early circumcision dropped out of school compared to other pupils as depicted. Further, 40% of pupil respondents agreed with the statement that early circumcision came with new responsibilities and expectations that would directly influence the boys to be absent from school to attend to such responsibilities.

The findings of this study agree with Akengo (2017) in his study that sought to establish factors that influence pupils to drop out of school in Asego Division. The majority of the

respondents felt that indiscipline cases such as truancy, interruptions during class periods, and attending video shows during and after school time often led to poor academic performance. This was because early circumcised boys felt they were mature enough to make arbitrary decisions.

The author also found out that family responsibilities led to an increase in the school dropout rate. He however found out that cattle herding was the chief reason for the increased school dropout rate. This finding agreed with Mwangi (2019) who concluded that absenteeism usually leads to a negative

outcome in examinations. The author also noted that not being attentive in class, failure to do school homework, and often disruption during class carried a 20% influence on performance.

**Correlation Analysis**

Correlation is a statistical measure that identifies the relationship between two or more variables or sets of data. In this study, correlation was used to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Results are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**

***Correlation results on Beading of Girls and KCPE Performance***

		KCPE Performance	Beading of Girls
KCPE Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Beading of Girls	Pearson Correlation	.611**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N		26	26

According to Table 6, there is a 0.611 magnitude positive link between KCPE performance and girl beading. The positive correlation indicates that the independent and dependent variables are linked. The P-value of  $.000 < .05$  indicated that the KCPE performance of circumcised boys in Isiolo Central Sub County, Isiolo County, was strongly linked to beading of girls.

**4.0 Conclusion**

The study concludes that beading of girls has a significant positive correlation with the KCPE performance of the circumcised boys. To maintain their culture and societal expectations, the circumcised boys have to identify and bead a girl of their choice at the

earliest possible opportunity. This would mean that their attention is shifted from academic work to cultural activities that they are expected to take part in. Thus, the study concluded that the beading of girls has an impact on the KCPE performance of the circumcised boys.

**5.0 Recommendations**

Although girl beading is a central cultural practice among the Samburu, this study recommends that elders delay girl beading among school-going Samburu boys until they either finish primary and secondary education or attain 18 years of age.



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