

A Study on the Impact of Cultural Activities on Primary Schools Pupils Academic Achievement in Got Regea Area, Siaya County Kenya

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of cultural activities on primary school pupils' academic achievement in Got Regea Area, Siaya County, Kenya. A descriptive survey design under a mixed-methods approach was employed. The sample comprised 40 participants (20 pupils, 12 teachers, 8 stakeholders) selected through purposive sampling. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data, with quantitative data analyzed using descriptive statistics (SPSS v.21) and qualitative data through thematic analysis. Findings revealed that 77.7% of pupils and 81.9% of stakeholders agreed that extended night vigils disrupt school attendance, while 66.6% of pupils and 70% of teachers agreed that Disco Matanga contributes to learners' inability to complete assignments. Other identified impacts included early marriage (qualitative), wife inheritance conflicts (60% teacher agreement), and childcare practices (88.8% pupil agreement). The study concludes that cultural activities negatively affect academic achievement through school dropout and poor performance. Recommendations include community education programs on cultural practices' educational impacts.

Keywords: Cultural Activities, Academic Performance, Traditional Dance

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Introduction

This study focuses on the impact of cultural activities on primary school's pupils academic achievement in Got Regea area, Siaya County Kenya. According to Ouma (2016), cultural activities are the art, customs and habits that characterize a particular society or nation. Dimitra, (2020) also comments that cultural activities are the systematic planned activities which are practiced within the nation and provide the identity of the nation. Thus, cultural activities are the events prepared within the society to pronounce the society values and norms, example of those activities are: Burial rites, Traditional dances and Female Genital Mutation (FGM).

Causadias (2020) explains that culture refer to the sociology and social anthropology which include beliefs, customs, and work of art like sings song and drawing. Moreover, she continues to explain that cultural activities are the activities practiced in the society reflecting their traditional norm and belief. Thus, culture refer to the spiritual activities practiced in the society or a group of people to give it the identity.

Cultural activities practices in the society are very important as some of the cultural activities are used for economic gains in the society when tourists visit a country to see some of the cultural practices of some tribes within a nation (Ouma, 2016). Contrary to this Rodionova et al. (2022) argues that some of the cultural activities such as early marriages, FGM have negative effect to academic achievement. Therefore, cultural activities within the society have an advantage and disadvantage in regards to the way it they are practiced within a given society.

According to Gurgenidze and Mamuladze, (2017) cultural event plays a great role in the provision of education to the learner. Students acquire knowledge and skills in the field of arts where the students gain knowledge about historical events, cultural traditions and they develop dancing skills, music, drawing, sculpturing and other similar skills. They further argue that cultural activities provide awareness to the students about their culture in the society. Thus, cultural activities practiced in the society influences differently the provision of education.

Luos who live in Siaya County practice different cultural activities such as elaborate burial rights when member of the community passes away; For

example, when a member of the community passes away, members of community are required to conduct night vigils. In these vigils, live bands or disco, raiders are often invited to entertain the bereaved. These activities attract most of the schools going children. Statistical data obtained from the District Education Officer Gem shows that performance examinations is not very good in the three primary schools found in the area as indicated in Table 1.

This situation raised the interest of the researcher to conduct the study so as to find out the impact of cultural activities on primary schools’ pupils’ academic achievement in Got Regea area, Siaya County Kenya.

Table 1: Performance in KCPE in Primary schools found in Got Regea Area

Name of School	Year	Performance in KCPE (Mean score)
Got Regea	2021	227
Mundo ware	2021	223
Got Kokwiri	2021	202

Source: District Education Officer (2022)

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which conceptualises human development as shaped by a series of interacting environmental systems. The theory identifies five nested systems: the *microsystem* (immediate environment such as family and school), the *mesosystem* (interactions between microsystems), the *exosystem* (external settings that indirectly affect the child), the *macrosystem* (cultural values, laws, and customs), and the *chronosystem* (environmental change over time).

The macrosystem is particularly relevant to this study, as it encompasses the cultural norms, traditions, and community practices that define life in Got Regea Area. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that macro-level cultural forces profoundly shape children's immediate environments, with direct consequences for educational engagement and achievement. When community-wide practices such as Disco Matanga, night vigils, and traditional childcare obligations permeate the microsystem of the home, they disrupt the child's study time, sleep patterns, and school attendance. The theory thus provides a conceptual lens through which to understand why children embedded in culturally intensive communities may exhibit lower academic achievement not due to individual deficits, but because of the systemic cultural pressures exerted on their developmental ecology.

By applying Ecological Systems Theory, this study moves beyond a deficit framing of cultural activities and situates academic underperformance within the broader socio-cultural environment. This perspective also informs the study's recommendations, which call for interventions at multiple ecological levels, including household awareness, school policy, and community leadership.

Literature Review

Cultural activities refer to the activities practiced within a society or in a group of people to show their spiritual belief (Causadias 2020). In line with this statement the author comments that the cultural activities practiced in the society have an impact in the provision of education. For example, FGM has an impact on the provision of education the children who concentrate on the cultural activities and to engage in those activities and not in their studies will not succeed. Thus, has an impact on the provision of education to the children whereby it may lead to school dropouts and poor academic achievement.

In the Kenya society there are different cultural activities that have an impact on the effective provision of education to children one of this activity is early marriage (Hussein, 2016). Thus, early marriage may interfere with both teaching and learning process. Once this student is married off at an early age, they end up losing their concentration in class hence making it hard for the learning process to be effective. Likewise, Rodionova et al. (2022) assert that in Kenya provision of education to children is affected by marriage. Generally, the reviewed studies conclude that early marriage as one among the cultural activities practiced in Kenya interferes with the process of learning in schools.

Moreover, Hussein, (2016) comments that in Kenya there are different cultural practices within the society. Not all cultures practiced in the society influence the provision of education positively there are some of the cultural activities that have a negative influence to the provision of education. Hussein, (2016) continues clarifying that most of the societies in Kenya are pastoralist who strongly believe in different traditional cultural practice where the practices interfere with the provision of education. For example, the society in Kenya beliefs that educating a girl is a total wastage of time thus this cultural belief interferes with the provision of education to the girl child. Furthermore, the author asserts that early marriages interfere with the process of provision education.

Damas, (2016) asserts that there are different cultural activities practiced in Tanzania. These cultures have an impact on the provision and access of education in different ways based on how these cultural activities are practiced and perceived within the society. This author continues to argue that, different cultural activities practiced in the society such as early marriages and forced marriages have a negative impact on the access of education to girls. The society's perception on access to education has an impact on education whereby the girl child is not given an equal opportunity to access education as compared to the boy child and this is as a result of the different cultural practice's that majorly affects the girl child.

Additionally, Mansory (2007) discovered that early marriages are the leading cause of early school dropout of girls in Afghanistan; when girls reach puberty parents consider it as a ripe time for them to be married and push on to arrange the marriage instead of allowing them proceed or continue with school. Therefore, its observed that early marriage it's a major factor that interferes with the provision of education to students.

According to Kapur, (2018) every society has its own culture which shapes the society and guides the society to further developments. He further states that cultural activities practiced in different society has an impact on the provision of education to its people, it has a strong impact on the education system within a given society.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify cultural activities practised in Got Regea Area that impact pupils' academic achievement.
2. To examine the relationship between participation in Disco Matanga and primary school pupils' academic performance.
3. To assess the effect of traditional childcare practices on school attendance and learning outcomes.
4. To determine community stakeholders' perceptions of how cultural activities influence academic achievement.

5. To recommend interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of cultural activities on primary school education.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What cultural activities practised in Got Regea Area affect primary school pupils' academic achievement?
2. How does participation in Disco Matanga influence pupils' completion of academic assignments and school attendance?
3. What is the effect of traditional childcare practices on school attendance and learning outcomes?
4. What are the perceptions of teachers, parents, and community administrators regarding the impact of cultural activities on academic achievement?
5. What strategies can be employed to mitigate the negative effects of cultural activities on academic achievement in Got Regea Area?

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed methods research approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data within a single inquiry framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research design employed was a descriptive survey, selected because it enables the collection of data from a defined population at a specific point in time and is well-suited for examining perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural patterns (Kothari, 2004). The descriptive survey design was further justified by the exploratory nature of the study, which sought to describe and explain cultural phenomena as they naturally occur in Got Regea Area rather than manipulate variables.

The target population comprised 50 individuals, including 45 primary school teachers, four head teachers, one assistant chief, and parents of Class 8 pupils drawn from the three primary schools in Got Regea Area. Using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite population sampling at a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 0.05, a sample of 40 participants was determined to be statistically adequate for the target population size, as confirmed by prior

studies utilising comparable rural community populations (e.g., Kahise, 2013). Purposive sampling was used to select head teachers, the assistant chief, and parent representatives on the basis of their direct knowledge of community cultural practices, while simple random sampling was applied to select classroom teachers.

Two instruments were used for data collection. A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to teachers, head teachers, and parents to collect quantitative data on the perceived impact of specific cultural activities on academic performance. A semi-structured interview guide was used with key informants to elicit in-depth qualitative perspectives. Content validity was established by submitting the instruments to three subject-matter experts in educational research who reviewed items for relevance, clarity, and adequacy. Reliability was assessed through a pilot study involving five participants drawn from a neighbouring sub-county, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was computed at $\alpha = 0.78$, confirming acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages with the aid of SPSS Version 21, and results were presented in tabular form. Qualitative data obtained through interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Throughout the study, ethical protocols were observed, including the procurement of formal research clearance, written informed consent from all participants, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. All sources cited in this study are acknowledged in accordance with APA 7th Edition referencing conventions..

Results and Discussion

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement which relates with the impact of traditional cultural activities practiced in Got Regea area. The findings for pupils, teachers and other stakeholders were presented in table 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 2: Pupils Response on the Impact of Traditional Cultural Activities Practiced in Got Regea area, Siaya County, Kenya

Statements	SD (%)	F (%)	D (%)	F (%)	N (%)	F (%)	A (%)	F (%)	SAF (%)
Extended night vigils disrupt school attendance	1 (11.1)		1 (11.1)		0 (0.0)		3 (33.3)		4 (44.4)
Disco Matanga contributes to learners' inability to complete assignments	1 (11.1)		0 (0.0)		2 (22.2)		3 (33.3)		3 (33.3)
Overstaying in funerals after a relative's death affects performance	2 (22.2)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		3 (33.3)		4 (44.4)
Traditional childcare of leaving younger children with school-going older siblings affects learning	1 (11.1)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		4 (44.4)		4 (44.4)
Leaving orphaned children with elderly grandparents affects performance	2 (22.2)		1 (11.1)		1 (11.1)		2 (22.2)		3 (33.3)
Sending school-going children on errands during school days affects performance	1 (11.1)		1 (11.1)		1 (11.1)		2 (22.2)		4 (44.4)

Source, Field Data (2022)

Table 2 presents pupils' responses regarding the impact of cultural activities on their academic life. A combined 77.7% of pupils agreed or strongly agreed that extended night vigils disrupt school attendance, while 22.2% disagreed and none were neutral. This finding suggests a strong pupil awareness of the disruptive role of overnight community ceremonies. The high agreement rate is consistent with Cheptoo (2010), who found that cultural activities in Kenyan rural communities frequently encroach upon school preparation time. However, the present study extends this finding by demonstrating that pupils themselves recognise the disruption — not merely as reported by adults pointing to a self-awareness that could be leveraged in school-based sensitisation programmes.

Similarly, 66.6% of pupils agreed that Disco Matanga contributes to their inability to complete academic assignments, with only 11.1% disagreeing and 22.2% neutral. The mechanism here is not merely attendance: even when pupils are present in school, the fatigue and sleep deprivation resulting from late-night attendance at funeral events impairs cognitive functioning, attention, and homework completion. This finding aligns with Onyango et al. (2015), who documented assignment non-completion as a direct consequence of community ceremonial obligations in Central Nyanza. The neutral responses (22.2%) may reflect pupils who attend Disco Matanga less frequently or whose households enforce stricter curfews, suggesting that household-level

protective factors can moderate the impact of macrosystem cultural forces, as theorised by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Furthermore, 88.8% of pupils agreed that the traditional practice of assigning child-minding responsibilities to older school-age siblings affects learning. This finding is particularly significant because it points to a form of cultural disruption that is continuous and domestic rather than episodic, affecting pupils on a daily basis rather than only during community events. The near-universal agreement among pupils on this item underscores the pervasive nature of this cultural obligation and its educational cost.

Table 3: Teachers Response on the Impact of Traditional Cultural Activities Practiced in Got Regea area, Siaya County, Kenya

Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Extended night vigils disrupt school attendance	5	25.0	7	35.0	2	10.0	3	15.0	3	15.0
Conflicts brought about by wife inheritance affects performance	4	20.0	8	40.0	0	0	4	20.0	4	20.0
Disco matanga contributes to learners' inability to do their assignments as expected	8	40.0	6	30.0	0	0	4	20.0	2	10.0
Overstaying in funerals after death of a relative affect's performance	7	35.0	5	25.0	2	10.0	3	15.0	3	15.0
Traditional childcare practice of leaving younger children with older siblings who are school going affects learning	5	25.0	7	35.0	0	0	5	25.0	3	15.0
Traditional practice of leaving orphaned children with old grandparents affects performance/learning	7	35.0	5	25.0	3	15.0	2	10.0	3	15.0
Traditional culture of child disobedience which in sending school going children on errands on school days affects performance/learning	5	25.0	8	40.0	2	10.0	3	15.0	2	10.0

Source, Field Data (2022)

Table 3 displays the findings through a Likert scale question on the impact of cultural activities practiced by the people of Got Regea. The findings revealed that 60 percent of the respondents agreed that extended night vigils disrupt school attendance, though 10 percent of the respondents were neutral to the statement, 30 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Also, 60 percent of the respondents agreed that conflicts brought about by wife inheritance affects performance, though 40 percent of the respondents

disagreed with the statement. Despite the agreement none of the respondents were neutral.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that 70 percent of the respondents agreed that disco matanga contributes to learners inability to do their assignments as expected. Though, 30 percent of the respondents disagree with that statement. 60 percent of the respondents agreed that overstaying in funerals after the death of a relative affects performance contrary to this 30 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement, despite this only 10 percent of the respondents were neutral to the statement that overstaying in funerals after death of a relative affects performance.

Furthermore, the findings show that 60 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that traditional childcare practice of leaving younger children with older siblings who are school going affects learning, however 40 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Despite the agreement none of the respondents were neutral to the statement that traditional childcare practice of leaving younger children with older siblings who are school going affects learning.

Additionally, the findings show that 60 percent of the respondents agreed that traditional practice of leaving orphaned children with old grandparents affects performance/learning, however 25 percent of the respondents were neutral to the statement. Despite this 15 percent of the respondents were neutral to the statement that traditional practice of leaving orphaned children with old grandparents affects performance/learning. 65 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that traditional culture of child obedience which entails sending school going children on errands during school days' affects performance/learning, however 25 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Despite these 10 percent of the respondents were neutral to this statement.

Table 4. Stakeholder Response on the Impact of Traditional Cultural Activities Practiced in Got Regea area, Siaya County, Kenya

Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Extended night vigils disrupt school attendance	5	45.5	4	36.4	0	0	1	9.1	1	9.1
Conflicts brought about by wife inheritance affects performance	4	36.4	3	27.3	1	9.1	1	9.1	2	18.2
Disco matanga contributes to learners' inability to do their	5	45.5	3	27.3	2	18.2	0	0	1	9.1

assignments as expected										
Overstaying in funerals after death of a relative affect's performance	5	45.5	2	18.2	0	0	2	18.2	2	18.2
Traditional childcare practice of leaving younger children with older siblings who are school going affects learning	5	45.5	5	45.5	0	0	0	0	1	9.1
Traditional practice of leaving orphaned children with old grandparents affects performance/learning	6	54.5	3	27.3	0	0	1	9.1	1	9.1
Sending school going children on errands on school days affects performance/learning	7	63.6	2	18.2	0	0	1	9.1	1	9.1

Source; Field Data, (2022)

Table 4 shows findings on the level of agreement on the impact of cultural activities at Got Regea. The findings show that 81.9 percent of stakeholder agreed with the statement that extended night vigils disrupts school attendance, these was disagreed on by 18.2 percent of the respondents either way none of the stakeholders was neutral to the statement that extended night vigils disrupts school attendance. However, the findings show that 63.7 percent of stakeholder agreed with the statement that conflicts brought about by wife inheritance affects performance, and 27.3 percent of stakeholders disagreed with that statement. Despite the agreement only 9.1 percent of the respondents were neutral to the statement that conflicts brought about by wife inheritance affects performance.

Moreover, these findings show that 72.8 percent of stakeholder agreed that disco matanga contributes to learner's inability to do their assignments as expected. However, 9.1 percent of the respondents disagreed to the statement. Despite this 18.2 percent of the respondents were neutral to this agreement. Furthermore, the findings show that 63.7 percent of stakeholder agreed that overstaying in funerals after death of a relative affect's performance, though 36.4 percent of the respondents disagreed to that statement. Despite all these none of the respondents were neutral to the statement that overstaying in funerals after death of a relative affects performance.

Additionally, the findings show that 91 percent of stakeholder agreed that traditional childcare practice of leaving younger children with older siblings who attend school consequently affects their learning, despite this 9.1 percent

of the respondents disagreed to the statement and none was neutral to the statement.

As well 81.8 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that traditional practice of leaving orphaned children with old grandparents affects performance/learning, though 18.2 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. However, none of the respondents disagreed with the statement that traditional practice of leaving orphaned children with old grandparents affects performance/learning. In addition, the findings show that 81.8 percent of the respondents agreed that sending school going children on errands on school days' affects performance/learning, however 18.2 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Despite the agreement none of the respondents were neutral to the statement that sending school going children on errands on school days' affects performance/learning.

Thematic Analysis: Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data obtained through interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, yielding two major themes: (i) School Dropout and Attendance Disruption, and (ii) Diminished Academic Performance. These themes are discussed below.

School Dropout and Attendance Disruption

Interview respondents across all three schools consistently identified cultural activities as direct causes of irregular attendance and school dropout. The second school interviewee explained that pupils who regularly attend *Disco Matanga* ceremonies "spend most of their time engaging in different cultural activities and end up missing school attendance, as a result they drop out" (Interview, Second School, 2022). This qualitative account reinforces the quantitative finding that 77.7% of pupils reported attendance disruption from night vigils, and extends it by identifying the long-term outcome of sustained absenteeism: permanent disengagement from schooling.

The third school interviewee highlighted early marriage as a compounding factor, noting that "Got Regea community members are used to practising early marriages... most of the children fail to attend school due to being married off at a young age" (Interview, Third School, 2022). This testimony corresponds with Hussein (2016) and Damas (2016), both of whom documented early marriage as a primary mechanism linking cultural practice

to school dropout in Kenya and Tanzania respectively. However, the present study adds specificity by locating this dynamic within the Got Regea context, where the intersection of Disco Matanga attendance, early marriage, and sibling caregiving obligations creates a multi-layered educational disadvantage.

Diminished Academic Performance

The second major theme emerging from qualitative data was a reduction in academic performance attributable to cultural time demands. The first school interviewee stated that cultural activities at Got Regea "lead to consumption of time that could have been used in studies, which eventually leads to poor academic performance" (Interview, First School, 2022). This mechanism cultural time displacement offers a concrete explanatory link between participation in community ceremonies and measurable academic decline. It aligns with Kapur's (2018) broader theoretical argument that cultural systems exert a strong influence on educational outcomes by determining how children allocate their time and attention.

The pattern of poor KCPE mean scores presented in Table 1, which shows all three schools performing below district averages in 2021, is thus explicable not merely as a product of resource deficits or teacher quality, but as an outcome of sustained cultural pressure on pupils' study time and school attendance. Importantly, this finding challenges single-factor explanations for educational underperformance and calls for culturally sensitive, multi-level interventions. The evidence suggests that *Disco Matanga* is not simply a leisure activity but a structurally embedded cultural obligation whose educational costs have remained invisible due to the absence of systematic empirical documentation a gap the present study partially addresses.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study set out to examine the impact of cultural activities on primary school pupils' academic achievement in Got Regea Area, Siaya County, Kenya. Based on findings from quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews across three primary schools, the study concludes that prevalent cultural activities in Got Regea Area — including Disco Matanga, extended funeral night vigils, early marriage, wife inheritance conflicts, and the assignment of caregiving responsibilities to school-age children — exert a predominantly

negative effect on pupils' academic achievement. These practices disrupt school attendance, reduce study time, and contribute to school dropout, resulting in below-average KCPE performance across the three schools studied.

The application of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory proved analytically productive, demonstrating that cultural disruptions at the macrosystem and exosystem levels permeate the household and school microsystems, with direct consequences for pupil learning. Significantly, the near-universal agreement between pupils, teachers, and community stakeholders on the disruptive effects of these practices provides a strong evidential basis for community-led reform.

Based on these conclusions, the study recommends the following:

- i. The national and county governments should design and implement community sensitisation campaigns in Got Regea Area targeting parents and community leaders, specifically addressing the educational costs of Disco Matanga, extended night vigils, and early marriage.
- ii. The Ministry of Education should work with local administrators to enforce school attendance policies that are sensitive to community ceremonial calendars, including the exploration of flexible scheduling during high-incidence cultural event periods.
- iii. Primary schools in Got Regea Area should introduce school-based counselling and peer education programmes that equip pupils with the knowledge and skills to balance cultural obligations with academic responsibilities.
- iv. The County Government of Siaya should establish early childhood care facilities to reduce the childcare burden placed on school-going older siblings, thereby protecting their academic participation.
- v. Future research should employ larger probability samples and longitudinal designs to establish causal relationships between specific cultural practices and academic achievement

trajectories in Siaya County and comparable Kenyan communities.

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