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**The Socio-cultural Factors that Influence Academic
Performance of Public Primary Schools in Murang'a
South Sub County, Kenya**

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The Socio-cultural Factors that Influence Academic Performance of Public Primary Schools in Murang'a South Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract

Literature has indicated that academic performance is affected both positively and negatively by socio-cultural factors. UNESCO (2015) reveals that student achievement is highly influenced by the community and/or parents attitude towards education. Performance in national examinations is embraced as an indicator of quality in education systems that are examination oriented. The purpose of the study is to establish the socio-cultural factors influencing academic performance of public primary schools in Murang'a South Sub County. The study adopted a descriptive survey design utilizing both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The study involved a sample of 21 deputy head teachers, 105 teachers and 210 pupils making a total of 336 participants. Data were collected using a pupils' questionnaire, focus group discussions for the deputy head teachers and teachers, and an observation checklist. Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 employing descriptive statistics that include frequencies and percentages while qualitative data were analyzed inductively (thematically). It was found that majority parents/guardians shown less concern over homework the homework of their pupils. This was de-motivating to both the teacher and pupil personnel. Initiation rite of passage (circumcision and clitoridectomy) bred psychological, moral and social unrest in schools. The impact of involvement in early teenage sex and dating was immense. The outlawed Mungiki sect was found to have a large network in Murang'a South Sub County and penetration into school promoting absenteeism, hence loss of instructional time; instilling fear to the pupils, teaching personnel and school community, thus emotional imbalance; drug and substances abuse; and violence destroying self-esteem and emotional well-being among pupils resulting to low academic achievement. A recommendation is made that for collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Gender, Children and Social Development; and Youth Affairs and Sports to educate all stakeholders in the societal beliefs, values and practices which hinder education outcomes.

Keyword: *socio-cultural factors, academic performance, public primary schools, Murang'a South Sub County, Kenya*

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1.0 Introduction

Formal education is a critical input in all realms of development in a nation. Education is a key component of human quality essential for generating high incomes and sustainable socio-economic development (Cornelius-Ukpepi, Ndifon, & Sunday, 2019). It is characterized as an essential ingredient in poverty eradication. According to UNESCO, (2015), education was formally recognized as a human right since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) declared that access to quality education was the right of every child. It affirmed that quality was at the heart of education. According to Habibullah, and Ashraf (2013) the mastery of curriculum is measured by national examination and the best indicator of high quality education is a high score in the national examination.

Scholars and studies have revealed that there are multifarious factors within the home and school environment which influence pupil's achievement in learning institutions (Kowot, (2017; Akintoye, & Saliu, 2020 & Devlin, 2013). Studies Maria, and Awan, (2019); Cornelius-Ukpepi, *et al.*, (2019) have also demonstrated that student achievement is influenced by socio- cultural factors. Sociocultural factors are shared values, norms and attitudes among a people that form a community. Culture is about a people's way of life, their heritage and language; pride and uniqueness as a people (Li & Ruan, 2015). Traditional ceremonies including weddings and commitment, funerals and memorials, baby naming and adoptions are often attended by all persons (Khan, *et al.*, 2015). Each ceremony is personalized to reflect the needs, beliefs and values of the couple or family. However, if unregulated, the practices interfere with pupils' academic activities.

Socio-cultural factors are the larger scale forces within societies and culture that affects the thoughts, behaviors and feelings of individual members of those societies and cultures (Akintoye, & Saliu, 2020). Examples as aforementioned include language, law, aesthetics (appearance), religion, values, attitudes, social organizations, family, community a person's role or status among others socio-cultural theory, an emerging theory in psychology that looks at the important contributions that society makes to individual development by Vygotsky (1986), stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live. Vygotsky believed that parents, caregivers, peers and the culture at large were responsible for the development of higher order functions.

Within the context of education, culture has a fundamental influence on the extent to which parents will invest in their children's education, including their willingness to inspire them to succeed in school (Odanga, 2018). The role of culture on the value we attach to education and consequently the level of children's success in school which in this context denotes successful learning, performance and progression across grades and levels in an education system is best understood from the point of view of cultural capital, and cultural practices/traditions. Some pupils miss schools and sneaking out of school, to attend the ceremonies (Akintoye & Saliu, 2020). Some of these celebrations are held during the night where all sorts of immoral activities do take place. These ceremonies take place during the weekends and also during the school days where children are also involved (Maria & Awan, 2019). This has led to discipline problems for the children. They report late to school in the morning because they were busy celebrating during the night ceremony.

Cultural practices such as initiation rite of passage (circumcision and clitoridectomy) ceremonies and early marriages are said to affect academic performance (Maria & Awan,

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2019; Devlin, 2013). Khan, *et al.* (2015) demonstrated that academic performance is affected negatively when learners engage themselves in sexual activity and dating. Saya, (2017) argued that engagement in sexual activities impedes school work. Studies reviewed in Akintoye, and Saliu, (2020) suggest that religiosity/spirituality has a positive impact on students' academic achievements. Kowot, (2017); Akintoye, and Saliu, (2020) asserted that organized groups related activities have a negative impact on schooling and academic performance.

In spite of the Government of Kenya's commitment to provision of primary education of high quality and several studies having been undertaken on factors affecting academic performance, it emerged that the public primary schools in Murang'a South Sub County have consistently registered appalling results in the national examination and decline in the standards (Murang'a South Sub County, 2019). Ngure, (2019 warns that when a region lags behind in the number of pupils who pass a national examination, its socio-economic development is likely to be retarded. This necessitated an extensive study on the influence of socio-cultural factors on academic performance of public primary schools in Murang'a South Sub County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

National examinations play a significant role in education systems. In the 8-4-4 system of education, Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (K.C.P.E) examination is taken at the end of the eighth year of primary education (Njeri, 2014). Learners who perform well are perceived to have received high quality education essential for sustainable socio- economic development and poverty eradication as opposed to those who perform poorly (Mbogo, 2017). The performance in the national examination is used as a criterion for certification and as a base for selecting pupils to join secondary schools and post-primary technical institution.

Despite the Government of the Republic of Kenya commitment to provide high quality primary education, outstanding pupils' academic achievement remains a challenge in the public primary schools in Murang'a South Sub County. The available statistics indicate that the sub county has not only consistently performed dismally in the national examination but also experienced observable decline in academic performance. The sub county's mean standard score, for example, in 2005 was 237.24; 242.47 in 2006; 241.75 in 2007; 240.56 in 2008 and 236.21 in 2009 (Murang'a South Sub County Education Office, 2019). This poses a serious threat to the socio-economic development of the region and the country at large. There was therefore a dire need to establish the socio-cultural factors influencing academic performance of the public primary schools in the region.

2.0 Empirical literature

2.1 Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by the theory of Vygotsky (1978). Socio-cultural theory of cognitive development was propounded by Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (1978). The theory states that mental functioning of individual is not simply derived from social interactions; rather, the specific structures and processes revealed by individuals can be traced to their interactions with others. This theory stresses the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition. The author believed strongly that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning" (Scott & Palincsar, 2013). Sociocultural approach to

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cognitive development states that cognitive growth occurs in a socio-cultural context that influences the form that it takes, and many of a child's most noteworthy skills evolve from social interactions with parents, teachers, and other elders.

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural thinking was vividly different from the school of thought of the cognitivists who saw the individual cognitive development as the key to understanding learning and as a prerequisite for the interacting with the world. Wertsch (1991) while discussing Vygotsky's work noted that as learners participate in a broad range of joint activities and internalize the effects of working together. This makes them acquire new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture (Lantolf, 2000). However, Tudge and Scrimsher (2003) was of the view that Vygotsky was not only interested in what was more knowledgeable others brought to the interaction, as well as how the broader culture and historical setting shaped the interaction. Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory explained that mental functioning of individuals is associated with their culture, history and institution. Thus, mental functioning depends on social interaction of individuals with their surroundings, which are influenced by culture such that social participation enriching the psychological development of the individual.

The implication of Vygotsky's theory on teaching and learning is that teachers must endeavor to acquire philosophical understanding of humanity and cultures and knowledge on different learning theories, pedagogical models and teaching methods. In addition, students' ability to learn relies heavily on pre-existing knowledge and understanding and the ways in which humans build on knowledge which accumulate on top of previous knowledge and goes even further by drawing attention to the cultural historical of this.

2.2 Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Academic Performance

Literature has indicated that academic performance is affected both positively and negatively by socio-cultural factors. Akintoye and Saliu (2020) investigated the impact of socio-cultural factors on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in Physics. The data collected were analysed using the Mean, Standard deviation, bar graph and Analysis of variance statistical tools. Findings in this study revealed that of all the socio-cultural factors considered in this study which include sex, student attitude, parental educational background and peer group, parental educational background had the highest impact on students' achievement. Also, the study revealed that there was significant impact between socio-cultural factors and students' achievement in physics. However, the study looked at performance of only physics subject.

Cornelius-Ukpepi, et al. (2019) conducted a study on socio-cultural diversity as determinant of social studies students' academic performance in Calabar. Survey research design was adopted and a sample of 488 students was selected through simple random technique from a population of 5,039. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Independent t-test were employed to test the hypotheses at 5% significance. The result revealed that, social and cultural diversity significantly influences social studies students' academic performance in Calabar Education Zone. Cultures differ from region to region hence the need to study its effect on academic performance in the context of Murang'a Sub County.

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Odanga (2018) determined the influence of socio-cultural factors on performance in examinations in Kenya. The study employed phenomenological design in the qualitative approach. The study population was 4480 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education candidates in public secondary schools of Kisumu City in 2017. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 224 students. The findings revealed that sociocultural factors of collectivist cultural practices, involvement in political activism and participation in witchcraft promoted poor academic performance in national examinations among students in Kisumu City in 2017.

Mbatia, *et al.* (2019) determined the influence of cultural factors on pupils' transition from primary to secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. Using ex-post facto research design, data was collected using self-delivered questionnaire from a target population of 1064 respondents. Data was analyzed using simple regression at .05 alpha level. Findings from the study revealed that cultural factors were significantly influencing transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools. Cultures differ from region to region hence the need to study its effect on academic performance in the context of Murang'a Sub County.

Odhiambo, *et al.* (2016) determined the influence of socio-cultural factors on transition of learners from Primary to Secondary schools in Central sub county, Narok County, Kenya. Descriptive survey design was used involving both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected using questionnaires and an interview schedule. It was established that a number of social cultural factors hindered learner transition to secondary schools.

Using used descriptive survey design, Kowot, (2017) determined the socio-cultural factors affecting Kenya Certificate of Primary Education performance in public primary schools, Turkana County, Kenya. The study used descriptive survey design to collect information from a sample of 7 head teachers, 23 teachers and 1180 pupils drawn from a population of 30 head teachers, 11800 pupils and 105 teachers. Some of the socio-cultural aspects identified by the study include: parental level of education, nomadic lifestyle, domestic violence, household chores, early marriages, poor parental attitudes towards education and non-supportive cultural beliefs. Based on these findings, it is, therefore, evident that socio-cultural lifestyles of the community in Kang'it zone have a bearing on learning outcome.

Saya, (2017) analyzed the socio-cultural practices on girl-child performance in Kenya certificate of primary education examination; the case of Navakholo Sub-County, Kenya. This was a descriptive study that employed a mixed methods designs approach. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 360 standard eight girls recruited through stratified random sampling. Interview guides were used to collect data from 15 Key Informants and 6 Focus groups purposively selected. Qualitative data was analyzed by content analysis. The study established that stereotypic gender role dispositions are the major socio cultural factors that lead to girls' poor performance in KCPE examination.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The rationale for adopting survey design was that it allows collection of data from a sample of participants from a target population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables (Gay, 1996 & Orodho, 2009). The locale of the study was Murang'a South Sub County where the researcher had been a teacher. There are 46 public primary schools in Murang'a South Sub County. The target population in

the study was all the 46 public primary schools in Murang'a South Sub County, their deputy head teachers, teachers, and pupils. The study involved a sample of 21 deputy head teachers, 105 teachers and 210 pupils making a total of 336 participants. Data were collected using a pupils' questionnaire, focus group discussions for the deputy head teachers and teachers, and an observation checklist. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis technique.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Academic Performance

In this sub-section, various socio-cultural factors which had direct impact on academic performance are discussed. These include, parents/guardians attitude towards education, initiation rite of passage, pre-occupation with sexual activities and dating, religiosity and organized gang-related activities.

4.1.1 Attitude towards Education

This study found that most parents/guardians had questionable attitude towards education as evidenced by their attendance to school functions, concern over their children's homework, and absenteeism. Out of the total participants, 74 (35.24%) indicated that parents/guardians attend school meetings always, 123 (58.57%) attend sometimes and 13 (6.19%) never attend. The results indicated that parents' attendance at school meeting was poor (wanting) and thus demoralizing to the members of the instructional team affecting their efficiency and effectiveness. It indeed denoted lack of support to the system which cannot run efficiently without their input. Through the questionnaire it was also found that parental concern over homework was wanting as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Parental Concern over Children's Homework

Incidences	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Total (%)
Concerned always	33.33	33.33	33.33
Concerned sometimes			
Never concerned	43.81	44.76	44.29
	22.90	21.90	22.38

Equal number of parents who showed concern always was reported. Nonetheless, slight variation was noted as far a gender was concerned; 43.81% boys and 44.76% girls reported concern sometimes and lack of concern was 22.9% against 21.9%. These findings indicate a lack of consistent parental concern over children's homework which de-motivates teachers and learners ultimately resulting to poor results. The significant number of those who were never concerned (22.38%) demonstrated lack of collaboration between teachers and parents whereby the latter abdicated their responsibility to ensure their children complete their homework/assignment. Majority of the parents were found to be less concerned as evidenced by those who indicated sometimes (44.29%) and never concerned (22.38%). This was a manifestation of low regard for education by parents in the region which had an adverse effect on academic achievement. It confirmed UNESCO (2015) observation that pupils would work harder and perform well if they realize that their parents are interested in their school

work. Only if parents/guardians show concern over education pupils would embrace it. This finding agrees with Odanga, (2018) revelation that children achievement is influenced by the support they receive at home.

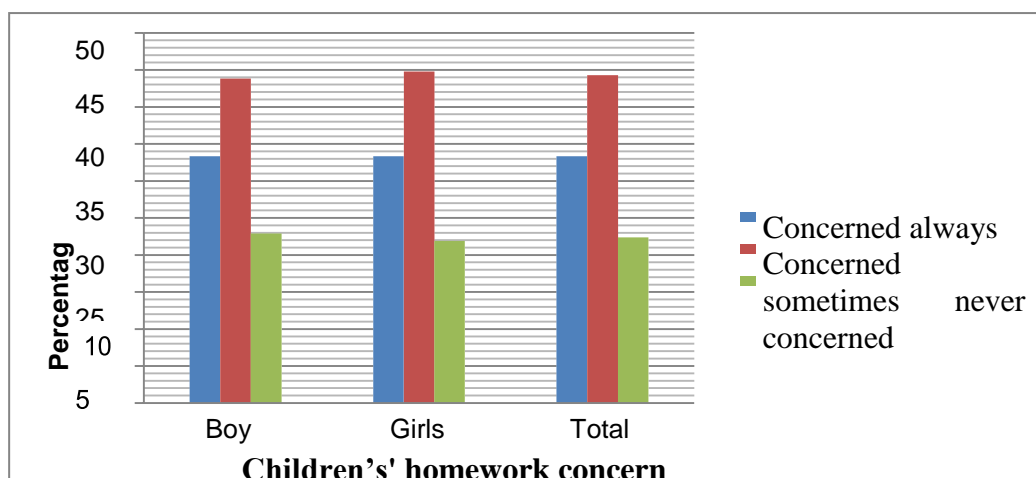


Figure 1: Parental Concern over Children's Homework

The study also established that pupils absented themselves from school due to being given domestic duties especially during the planting period, harvesting seasons and dry spells. This denied the pupils sufficient exposure to curriculum or opportunity to learn which significantly influenced their academic achievement. The practice demonstrated parents/guardian low regard to education process. The study concurred with Kowot, (2017) that some economic activities in some regions in Kenya disrupt normal school routine.

4.1.2 Initiation Rite of Passage

This study found that initiation rite of passage (circumcision and clitoridectomy) was embraced in the region. The study established that the initiates pose problems during the teaching/learning process. Out of the total number of participants, 21 (10%) indicated always, 103 (49.05%) sometimes while 86 (40.95%) did not associate any problem to the rite of passage. The study further established that the attendance at school by the learners who have undergone the initiation rite of passage was unpleasant: 87 (41.43%) indicated regular attendance and 99 (47.14%) irregular attendance while 24 (11.43%) did not respond. This finding was confirmed in a FGD in one of the schools when a participant lamented that most of the boys and girls who have undergone the rite of passage register poor attendance at school and performance in examinations. However, boys from the Akamba community in Kambiti Location, who have undergone the rite, were not associated with any problem. "Boys from the Akamba are circumcised when they are too young and do not neither realize nor pose any problem to the teaching/learning process, participant reported. The study further established through the FGDs, that the rite was a major problem in the sub county as it was found to breed psychological, moral and social unrest. One of the participants reported the problems which they face in the school when handling pupils who have undergone the rite of passage:

Fear while correcting the errant pupils as some initiates got recruited into the terrible outlawed Mungiki sect during seclusion period; stubbornness which results to anger and

subsequently to waste of instructional time trying to address the situation; moral decadence promoted by the teachings of the ceremony whereby the male initiates are advised on how to approach females, for example, by scratching the palm of the person of interest so as to register the desire, and the need for having sex after circumcision so as to experience how nicely the penis penetrates into the females' vagina during an intercourse; conflict between the circumcised and the uncircumcised where the former seeks recognition from the latter and the teachers; pupils who have undergone the rite of passage consider themselves as superior than the others or too mature and in some cases despise the female teachers; poor concentration in class due to identity crisis and emotional imbalance as a result of engagement in sex which itself make them feel shy or embarrassed; drugs and substance abuse whereby incidences of tobacco sniffing is a common practice especially for those linked to the terrible outlawed Mungiki sect; increased cases of harassment, for example, where the circumcised do not want to share with the uncircumcised some of the essential facilities like latrines and also when they feel that they are belittled by the young and the uncircumcised; and formation of gangs and cliques whereby boys and girls who have undergone through the rite of passage have social groupings. This hinders co-operative learning in class.

The psychological, moral and social unrest bred by initiation ceremonies and their contents/teaching were major hindrances to teaching/learning process. The final results were poor academic results. It was indeed clear from the highlighted problems that initiation rite of passage breeds indiscipline in schools as argued by Akintoye, and Saliu, (2020) and does not support learning as Kowot, (2017) pointed out.

4.1.3 Pre-Occupation with Sexual Activities and Dating

It was evident from the study that there were cases of early sexual debut in the public primary schools in the region. The study established that pupils who engage in sex and dating create problems in class: 32 (15.24%) participants reported always and 109 (51.9%) sometimes while 69 (32.86%) did not associate them.

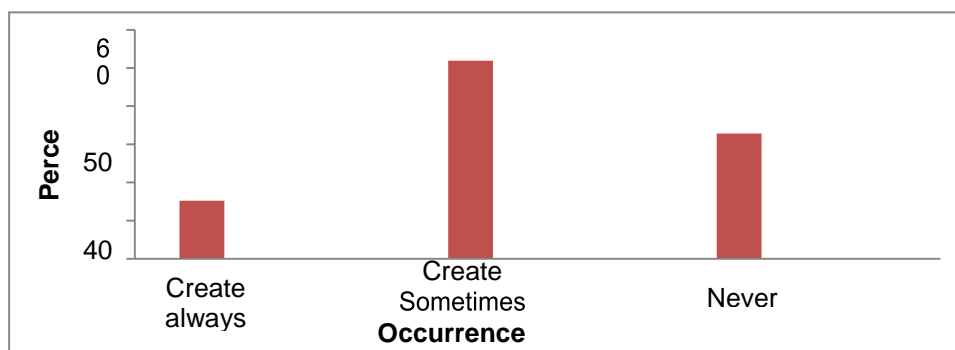


Figure 2: Occurrence of Problems Posed by Pupils who engage in Sex.

These findings were confirmed by the focus group discussions which outlined the related problems in school as reported by one of the participants:

Disrespect to teachers as they are considered as equals as far as sex is concerned; poor concentration in class due to preoccupation with thoughts of their partners and feelings; emotional imbalances as some feel shy of the act, others are excited while others are afraid of losing sex partners; fighting over sexual partners especially girls; influencing others to indulge in sex by narrating the amorous feelings and gains; identity crisis whereby those who engage in sex seek recognition from the society; conflict with oneself especially when one is confronted with two conditions, for example, whether to give in or not and is unable to make an informed choice; apparent indifferences from parents while attempting to address the problem as they are either ignorant or ambivalent; lack of requisite guidance and counseling skills to address the problems; and absenteeism due to embarrassment and when dating especially an elderly partner.

The researcher attributed the above problems to family lifestyle whereby it was found that there was overcrowding at homes exposing children to sex. Due to poverty and ignorance, some parents share same room with their children and observe their conjugal rights subsequently arousing the latter sexual urge. Others due to poverty of morals make their demands in the presence of their offspring tempting them to go out and explore. Pupils' chronological age was also found to have some effect. Results indicated that there were some pupils who were a bit elderly [the (14-15) and (15-16) age groups] who ought to be in secondary level of education. These were mature pupils fighting against adolescence a critical stage in a person's life. The more such learners were, the higher the chances of indulging in sex and influence others.

The study also found that circumcision ceremonies and their teachings, for example, scratching a palm of a female as a mean of registering some interest in her, and the need for the initiate to have sex after the seclusion period to experience how nicely a male penis penetrates into a female's vagina, lure the initiates to engage in teenage sex which was believed to be enticing. The socio-economic status of the parents' was also blamed for pupils / children engagement in sex. The study found that some parents usually go to work at night leaving their children on their own or under the care of house helps who may not be keen on discipline. Others were found to earn their livelihood and reside far away from their homes leaving their offspring under the care of the elderly who may not correct any unbecoming behavior. This practice creates gaps in children's life which could be easily filled with negative behaviors, for instance, engagement in sex, drugs and substances abuse, and violence. In addition, they were found to rob parents' valuable opportunity to cultivate positive behaviours and values in their children. Poor parenting was therefore blamed for the vice.

It was also found that teenage sexual debut negatively affects pupils' academic achievement. Out of the total participants, 158 (75.24%) rated the academic performance of those who engage in sex as poor, 33 (10.48%) well and 11 (5.24%) very well. This was confirmed by

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the focus group discussion whereby participants from one of the schools blamed involvement in sexual activities for poor results, “Boys and girls who engage in sexual activities have poor concentration in class and as a result perform poorly.” These findings concurred with Li and Ruan, (2015) study which outlined disruption to education by loss of time and concentration on education objectives as the detrimental effects of engagement in sexual activity and dating.

The study further established that there were intervention measures put in place to address the vice. These included guidance and counseling, pastoral care, teaching life skills, educating the parents/guardians on how to take care of their children, involvement of the parents in addressing the vice, and punishment. Despite employment of the intervention, persistence of the problem was noted and the schools continued to perform poorly. This led to a conclusion that the measures employed to curb the vice were ineffective and need to be reviewed, strengthened and improved.

4.1.4 Religiosity/Spirituality of the Learners

Pupils’ involvement in religious activities was noted. These included participation in communal prayers, Bible reading, and singing hymns during the assemblies at the start or at the end of the day as reported by participants during the FGDs in all the schools. Pupils who attended catechism were often granted permission to attend too. The finding was also supported by the 110 (78.57%) participants who indicated involvement always, 24 (17.14%) sometimes, and 6 (4.29%) who indicated never as far as the questionnaire was concerned. However, the usual involvement in religious activities and attendance of learners at catechism did not reflect positive impact on behaviour change. This is evidenced in sub-section 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 where problems related to initiation such as disrespect to teachers, fights and harassment; and teenage sexual debut and its related problems are discussed respectively.

The study found that, despite involvement of pupils in religious activities and participation in catechism, most schools performed poorly in national examination. This led the researcher to conclude that mere (usual) involvement of learners in religious activities does not necessarily (always) promote positive behaviour or improved academic performance. The study therefore refuted Odanga, (2018) finding that spiritual beliefs and religious participation are positively related to academic performance.

4.1.5 Organized Gangs

The outlawed Mungiki Sect, an organized gang, was found to have a large network in Murang'a South Sub County and penetration into its schools. This was evidenced by the 142 (67.62%) participants who acknowledged its presence while 68 (32.38%) didn't. The findings were confirmed by the FGDs although most of the participants were reluctant to disclose the presence of the sect as they lived in constant fear of violence.

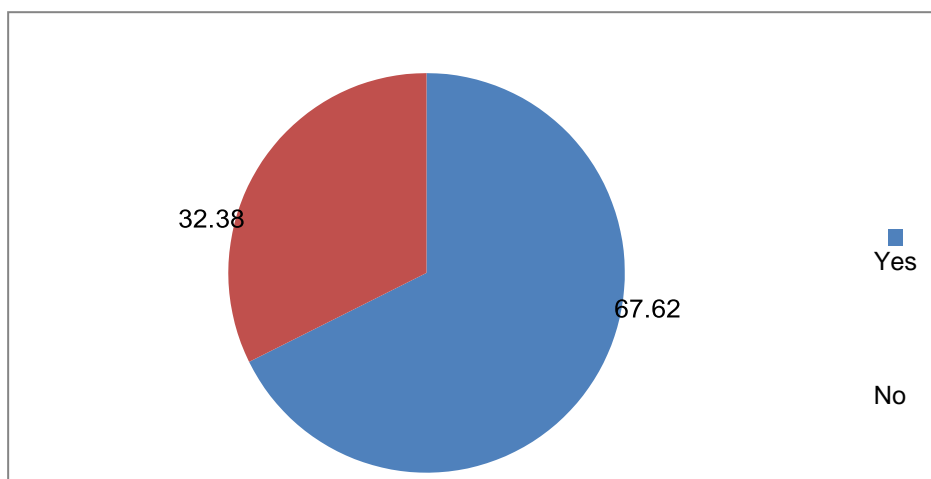


Figure 3: Presence of the Outlawed Mungiki Sect in the Locality.

The study established the means through which pupils' initiated into/associated with the Mungiki sect were recognized. Out of the total participants, 109 (51.90%) indicated by their behaviour, 36 (17.14%) by their clothing, 41 (19.52%) by the language they use, and 72 (34.29%) by the items they carry. The findings were confirmed by FGDs as reported by a participant in one of the sampled schools:

Boys tend to wear more than one set of clothing mostly the short for camouflage purposes. The sect condemns underpantry as it considers it as imperial hence the idea of two shorts. The initiates were reported to wear multi-coloured necklaces ideally red, green and black borrowed from the Kenya National Flag, trying to feign patriotism; The associates / initiates tend to speak in pure Gikuyu' and with deep vocabularies, for instance, thiari meaning a friend, kirigu referring to one who has not undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), nduuri referring to someone who is older and njama meaning a group of young people; The group has got its own lingo/ language which if not well acquainted with, one cannot understand, for instance, handshake is a language in itself used to recognize members; and the items they carry, for instance, tobacco which they sniff and clubs of different sizes depicting rank and status and which may also serve as weapons.

In another school, the researcher was informed in a focus group discussion about how the pupils who are initiated into/associated with the Mungiki sect are recognized as stated by one of the participants:

Support of African traditional trends, for instance, female genital mutilation where the uncircumcised are despised; Rejection of baptismal names whereby they identify themselves with their middle and surnames e.g. Kamau wa Njoroge showing apathy to foreign culture; Rejection of Christian Religious Education(CRE) subject and disregard to Christianity claiming that these are foreign and are there to erode the

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African culture; Associates, i.e. the people they relate with; Carrying out their activities clandestinely, for example, instilling fear; and Use of particular gestures and symbols as easy ways of communication.

Through the questionnaire, the study further established problems which schools experience due to the presence of the outlawed Mungiki sect in the locality. Out of the total number of respondents, 96 (45.71%) indicated increase of indiscipline cases, 136 (64.76%) living in fear of being attacked by the sect members, 53 (25.24%) frequent absenteeism from the sect families, and 67 (31.90%) indicated conflict between school goals and the sect goals. During a focus group discussion, the researcher confirmed that there were numerous problems that schools experience due to the entrenchment of the sect in the region. Participants reported:

Pupils, teachers and school community live in fear of being attacked by the sect members or extortion of money; violence whereby the recruits/associates try to enforce rites and beliefs, for instance, female genital mutilation. They condemn some clothing practices such as women wearing trousers. These scare the female teachers away opting to live in urban centers far-away from their work stations where they believe there is security; drugs and substance abuse, for example, tobacco sniffing; Recruitment of more members into the sect exacerbating the situation; absenteeism as majority of the members have low perception of education; Increase of indiscipline cases as teachers cannot correct the errant pupils for fear of reprisal; and Rebellion, for example, against the non-sympathizers which is quite disturbing as some teachers belong to the sect making it very difficult to stem it out from the school and/or to enforce some of the school policies like speaking in English.

The low perception of education by the sect initiates was found to promote absenteeism in school which implied loss of instructional time. The recruits were less engaged in school or class activities due to their frequent absence without good reason. Parents might not send their children, especially girls to school quite early in the morning due to the fear of retrogressive cultures, for example, FGM. Some teachers reside far-away from their work stations due to fear of being attacked or extorted. This makes them arrive late for school and to always be in a hurry to leave implying lack and/or poor preparation for learning/teaching process.

The use of the native language (Gikuyu) impaired the mastery of English as the second language which is the medium of instruction in upper primary. Barely do the initiate practice the language due to low perception as espoused by the sect. This practice impacted negatively on learners' construction of grammatically correct sentences, reading, comprehension, and writing skills. In addition, the use of the native language by the sect members and its associates promoted intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict. The learners initiated into the sect were reported to suffer conflict whereby they are unable to make informed choices on the language to use. The use of either language implied conflict with authorities, school administration or Mungiki sect ideology. The emotional imbalance caused by the sect was a

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hindrance to the learning/teaching process. The researcher, therefore, concluded that the presence of the outlawed Mungiki sect in the region and its penetration into schools had a negative impact on the teaching and learning process. The findings concurred with Mbatia, et al. (2019) study that presence of gangs play a significant role in the widespread increase of violence in schools. Due to the fear imposed, increased cases of indiscipline were observed. The study findings supported Saya, (2017) study which warned that violence and threats of it, is highly disruptive to the school environment and interferes significantly with the teaching-learning process.

4.1.6 Early Marriages

The study established through the questionnaire the influences of the practice of early marriages on education outcomes and in particular satisfactory completion of the primary level of education and academic achievement in the region. The participants were asked whether there had been cases of drop-out from school for early marriages and resumption to sit for KCPE examination. Out of the total number of the participants, 69 (32.86%) indicated yes while 141 (67.14%) indicated none. This was confirmed by the focus group discussions whereby majority of the participants reported that there had been few. The insignificant 32.86% implied that early marriages affect education outcomes. It sets a very poor precedent for the other pupils in school whereby they are tempted to forgo education for early marriage after registering with the KNEC to sit for the national examination.

When the learners get married at an early age, they are robbed opportunity for cognitive, creativity, values and emotional development for responsible citizenship. The practice is quite discouraging to the members of the instructional team and denotes lack of moral support at home whose end result is poor results. The researcher attributed early marriages to engagement in sex at relatively an early age, erosion of morals, parenting practices, initiation ceremony teachings, ignorance, and abject poverty. Teachers were also blamed for it due to lack of requisite knowledge in guidance and counseling which could help the learners have a sense of direction. It was also attributed to failure of teachers to teach in a proper way, life skills such as critical and creative thinking, decision making, assertiveness, self-control and open-mindedness.

5.0 Conclusions

The socio-cultural factors which emerged include community/parent low regard for education; embracement of the initiation rite of passage; engagement in sexual activity and dating; and the entrenchment of the terrible outlawed Mungiki sect in the region. Parents and the community have low regard for education. A significant difference between the girl-child and boy-child parents who attend school meetings was noted. The parent's/guardian's attendance at school meeting was poor. As low income earners, they consider attendance as wastage of valuable time and a threat to their livelihood.

School meetings were found to be attended by the pupils' aged grandparents and reserved siblings who are either standard eight graduates or school drop-outs as guardian's or parent's representatives.

Parents/guardians concern over homework was wanting. Majority of the parents show less concern. This was de-motivating to both the teacher and pupil personnel. Initiation rite of passage (circumcision and clitoridectomy) bred psychological, moral and social unrest in

schools. There were increased cases of emotional disturbance and indiscipline in schools hindering teaching/learning process.

The impact of involvement in early teenage sex and dating was immense. The vice was blamed for poor concentration in class due to preoccupation with thoughts of sex partners; intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict; identity crisis; emotional imbalance; absenteeism; and disrespect to teachers ultimately resulting to low academic achievement.

Religiosity or spirituality was highly regarded in all the schools in the sub county since learners were involved in religious activities. These included communal prayers, bible reading and singing of hymns during the assemblies. In spite of the usual involvement in religious activities, pupils engage in early teenage sex and dating, fights over sex partners, disrespect teachers and schools continued to record alarming results. It was therefore concluded that usual involvement in religious activities does not necessarily produce positive behaviour change and improve academic performance.

The outlawed Mungiki sect was found to have a large network in Murang'a South Sub County and penetration into school promoting absenteeism, hence loss of instructional time; instilling fear to the pupils, teaching personnel and school community, thus emotional imbalance; drug and substances abuse; and violence destroying self-esteem and emotional well-being among pupils resulting to low academic achievement.

6.0 Recommendations

There is need for collaboration between the Ministry of Education; Gender, Children and Social Development; and Youth Affairs and Sports to educate all stakeholders in the societal beliefs, values and practices which hinder education outcomes.

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