

## **Perceptions of Teachers on the Influence of Social-Cultural Factors on Learner Retention in Primary Schools in Turkana County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Education is a fundamental human right and a critical driver of national development. Despite global efforts and commitments to Universal Primary Education (UPE), challenges persist, especially in the context of Free Primary Education (FPE) policies, with declining enrollment and low retention rates, particularly in Arid and Semi-arid Lands (ASAL) regions. Therefore, this study sought to examine the perception of teachers on the influence of socio-cultural factors on learner retention in primary schools in Turkana County, Kenya. The study was anchored on the pragmatic paradigm and adopted a mixed methods approach and a concurrent triangulation research design. The study was conducted in seven Sub-Counties of Turkana County, and the target population was 461 teachers, comprising 419 in public primary schools and 42 in private primary schools. A proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 291 teachers, while a purposive sampling technique was used to select 14 senior teachers comprising two from each of the seven Sub-Counties. Quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire and analyzed using percentages, means, standard deviations and multiple linear regression, while qualitative data was generated using semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that although the majority of teachers perceived early marriages and teenage pregnancy as societal norms in Turkana County, they posed detrimental effects on education, particularly for girls. The results showed that teenage pregnancy ( $\beta=-.356$ ,  $p\text{-value}<.05$ ) and early marriage ( $\beta=-.126$ ,  $p\text{-value}<.05$ ) had a significant negative impact on learner retention; while parental level of education ( $\beta=.168$ ;  $p\text{-value}<.05$ ) had a significant positive influence on learner retention. The study recommends a holistic approach that involves community collaboration, policy advocacy, and educational support to improve learner retention in primary schools. The results of this study have invaluable implications for access and equity in education. The Ministry of Education can draw from the findings to develop targeted interventions for improving learner retention.

**Key Words:** *Learner retention, Teenage pregnancy, Early marriage, Parental level of education*

## **1.0 Introduction**

Education is a fundamental human right (UNESCO, 2017) and key to achieving Millennium development goals (United Nations, 2015). It lays the foundation for a prosperous future by contributing to improved employment opportunities, socio-economic status, and overall health (Mpyangu et al., 2014). Globally, education is highly valued as a fundamental human right for every child (UNESCO, 2009), playing a crucial role in national development by providing a skilled workforce, thereby increasing production and combating poverty, disease, and ignorance (Republic of Kenya, 2015). In alignment with international declarations, Kenya recognizes education as a fundamental human right for achieving national development goals. Pupil retention is vital for realizing these goals.

Governments allocate substantial portions of their budgets to education, while parents invest heavily in anticipating academic achievements and securing future employment for their children. The global focus on Universal Primary Education (UPE) has intensified in recent years, marked by significant milestones like the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2018). The concept of UPE traces back to the 1961 Conference of African States on Education in Africa, emphasizing priority educational needs to drive economic and social development. Kenya subscribes to these principles, seeing education as pivotal for national development (Republic of Kenya, 2019).

Despite these efforts, challenges persist in achieving UPE's goals. Free Primary Education (FPE) policies aim to reduce inequality. However, research indicates declining enrollment and low retention rates, posing significant barriers, especially for the most vulnerable students. The impact of socio-economic factors on learner retention is evident globally, with studies highlighting the influence of family financial status and parental education levels (Nzina et al., 2019). While the 2016 Gender Review indicates global achievement in gender parity, regional variations persist, underscoring the importance of quality education and lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2016).

In sub-Saharan Africa, access to education has improved, but completion rates remain challenging (UNESCO, 2017). UPE has increased accessibility but imposed unprecedented pressure on the education system, requiring comprehensive retooling to achieve learning goals. However, the sub-Saharan region faces the highest rate of educational exclusion globally, with 21% of primary school-age children denied access (United Nations, 2018).

Equity in education, analyzed from the perspectives of inclusion and fairness, remains a challenge, with socio-economic circumstances often acting as obstacles to educational success (OECD, 2012). This study recognizes the importance of understanding socio-cultural determinants affecting learner retention, particularly in primary school education. While numerous studies have explored factors contributing to dropout rates, a notable gap in research focuses on the social-cultural determinants influencing learner retention in primary school education in arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL). This study seeks to address this gap with a specific focus on Turkana County.

### **1.1 Problem statement for the study**

Education is not merely a human right but a cornerstone for achieving developmental goals, ensuring a brighter future with enhanced employment, socio-economic status, and overall health (Mpyangu et al., 2014). Recognized globally as a fundamental right for every child, education significantly contributes to national development by cultivating a skilled workforce, thus combating poverty, disease, and ignorance (Republic of Kenya, 2015). The push for Universal Primary Education (UPE) on a global scale, evident in milestones like the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reflects a commitment to accessible education (United Nations, 2018).

Despite these efforts, challenges persist in achieving UPE's goals. Free Primary Education (FPE) policies, designed to reduce inequality, face obstacles, leading to declining enrollment and low retention rates, particularly for vulnerable students. Socio-economic factors globally impact learner dropout rates globally, including family financial status and parental education levels (Nzina et al., 2019). While gender parity has made strides globally, regional variations persist, emphasizing the need for quality education and lifelong learning. Though access to education has improved in sub-Saharan Africa, completion rates present a challenge (UNESCO, 2017). Sub-Saharan Africa faces the highest rate of educational exclusion globally, with 21% of primary school-age children lacking access (United Nations, 2018).

Equity in education, analyzed through the lenses of inclusion and fairness, remains a challenge, with socio-economic circumstances often hindering educational success (OECD, 2012). This study underscores the significance of understanding socio-cultural determinants impacting learner retention, particularly in primary school education. While existing studies explore factors contributing to dropout rates, a research gap exists, specifically regarding the social-cultural determinants influencing learner retention in primary school education in arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL), focusing on Turkana County.

### **1.2 Research Purpose and objectives**

The research sought to achieve its general objective of examining the influence of the socio-cultural determinants on learner retention in primary schools in Turkana County and focused on the following specific objectives:

- i. To assess the influence of teenage pregnancy on learner retention in primary schools
- ii. To determine the influence of early marriage on learner retention in primary schools
- iii. To examine the influence of the level of parental education on learner retention in primary schools

### **1.4 Theoretical framework**

The study was anchored on Vincent Tinto's Retention Theory of 1975 that argues goal and institutional commitment, both are intricately linked to academic and social integration. The latter, in turn, is influenced by student input variables, including pre-entry attributes, family environment, and institutional experiences. Tinto argues that heightened academic and social integration strengthens students' commitment to their educational goals and fosters active participation within the institution (Tinto, 1993). Therefore, Tinto's theory suggests that students are more likely to

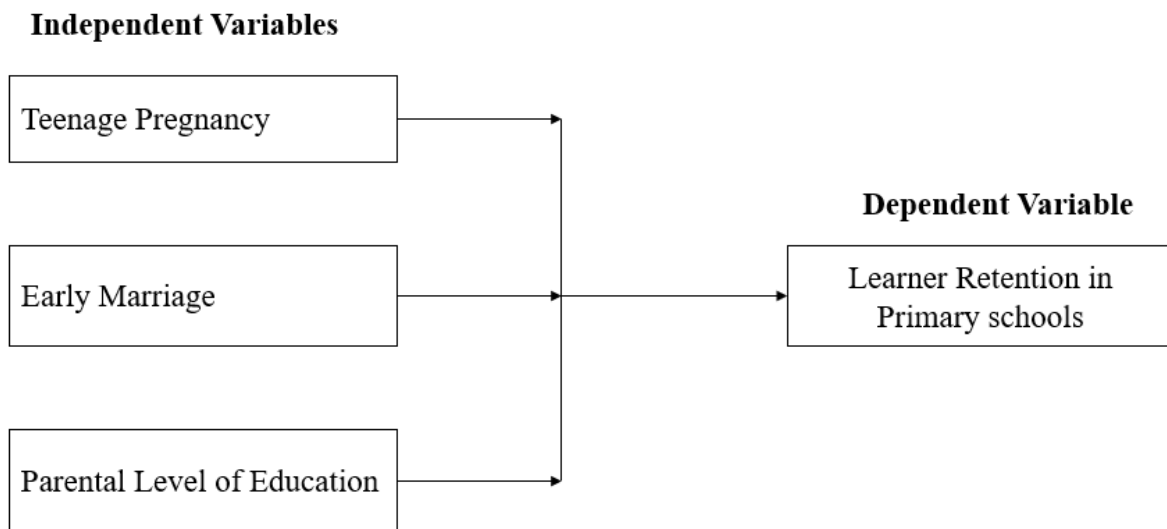
persist in their chosen institution when they have well-defined personal goals and perceive the institution as instrumental in achieving them.

Tinto's research and subsequent studies have expanded the conversation on dropout causes by emphasizing the impact of institutional factors on retention, particularly the role of academic and social integration in mitigating dropout rates (Wanyonyi, 2018). Despite Tinto's initial emphasis on these integrations, later interpretations underscore the critical interaction between individual and institutional elements. Notably, research on student withdrawal suggests that disengagement is rarely attributed to a singular factor; instead, students typically leave due to a complex interplay of interconnected factors (Isanda, 2015).

This study investigates the multifaceted factors that collectively function as determinants of learner retention in primary school education in Turkana County. By adopting Tinto's theoretical framework, the research aims to comprehensively understand and address the social-cultural intricacies influencing learner retention in primary schools in Turkana County, Kenya.

### 1.5 Conceptual framework

The study's conceptual framework illustrates the interaction between independent and dependent variables, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

Source: Researcher, 2023

## 2.0 Literature review

### 2.1 The Concept of Learner Retention

In Kenya, learner retention is a critical aspect of the educational system, and Turkana County serves as a case study in understanding the challenges and initiatives. Initiated by President Mwai Kibaki in 2003, the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy aimed to increase enrollment and

enhance educational opportunities. Despite these efforts, many students still face school challenges, reflecting broader socio-economic and cultural issues that hinder universal enrollment.

Notably, the dropout rate in Kenya, as of 2012, was reported to be 2.7%, highlighting persistent challenges in maintaining students throughout their primary education. The government collaborates with development partners to address these issues, particularly in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), where children from pastoralist communities face barriers to education. To tackle challenges like child, early, and forced marriages, Kenya aligns with international commitments, including Sustainable Development Goal 5.3. Various legal frameworks, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, set the minimum age for marriage at 18. Kenya actively participates in campaigns against child marriage and has committed to ending it by 2030.

In Turkana County, the government collaborates with organizations like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to implement programs like Integrated Nomadic Education and Child-Friendly Schools to improve access to education. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, including drought conditions leading to food insecurity and posing risks to children's education. In conclusion, while Kenya has made strides in promoting learner retention through initiatives like FPE and addressing issues like child marriage, persistent challenges, especially in ASALs, underline the need for continued efforts and partnerships to ensure education for all. The case of Turkana County exemplifies the multifaceted nature of the struggle for learner retention, involving legal, cultural, and socio-economic dimensions

## **2.2 Teenage Pregnancy and Learner Retention**

Teenage pregnancy poses a formidable obstacle to the sustained enrollment of learners in primary school education, marked by various determinants leading to the discontinuation of girls' education. These determinants encompass a spectrum of influences, ranging from poverty, pregnancy, and early marriage to gender norms, peer and parental influence, family size, inadequate housing, and a dearth of qualified teacher mentors. Distinct regional patterns emerge, such as the prevalence of early pregnancies within marriage in South Asia, higher rates of early pregnancy outside marriage in Latin America and the Caribbean, and considerable occurrences both within and outside marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2017).

In Africa, 26 countries within the African Union have instituted laws, policies, or systems safeguarding the educational rights of pregnant girls, yet certain nations explicitly permit the exclusion of pregnant learners from school (Martinez & Odhiambo, 2018). Child marriage is widespread in South Asia, but establishing a conclusive link between child marriage and school dropout proves challenging. Globally, around 90 percent of adolescent pregnancies in low and middle-income countries transpire among married girls, influenced by factors like increased exposure to sex, lower contraception use, and societal pressure to conceive shortly after marriage (WHO, 2014).

Despite the global understanding that child marriage has economic ramifications—highlighted by the World Bank and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), establishing a direct and causal link between early marriage, pregnancy, parental level of education and learner retention remains intricate due to the bidirectional nature of this relationship. Some girls drop out

because of pregnancy or marriage, while others may get married or pregnant after leaving school (UNESCO, 2017). Whereas empirical studies in various regions, including Uganda and Kenya, point to specific causes of dropout, such as early marriage and pregnancy, and the substantial impact of teenage pregnancy on learner retention in primary school education is undeniable, a more holistic understanding necessitates research that bridges gaps in understanding the interconnected factors contributing to low retention in primary schools (Petroni et al., 2017). In conclusion, however, the research landscape reveals gaps that must be addressed for a comprehensive understanding. These gaps include investigating the relationship between teenage pregnancy and learner retention in diverse social-cultural contexts.

### **2.3 Early Marriages and Learner Retention**

Despite global efforts to reduce child marriage, substantial challenges persist, necessitating intensified efforts to achieve the goal of ending child marriage by 2030 (UNICEF, 2017). The intersection of education and marriage has become a contentious issue, especially regarding the rights of pregnant and married girls to continue their education, leading to debates on morality and cultural beliefs (UNICEF, 2018).

Education is often perceived as a privilege that can be withdrawn as a punishment in some countries, exacerbating challenges faced by pregnant girls and boys who impregnate girls. The intricate link between school dropout, marriage, and pregnancy poses challenges in isolating factors influencing these interconnected processes (Birchall, 2018). Poverty emerges as a significant driver of child marriage, especially in South Asian countries, where it becomes a coping strategy for economically insecure families. The contribution of education to improving marriage prospects primarily benefits families capable of affording settlements required for more educated grooms. However, entrenched practices, coupled with growing parental support for child marriages, persist in South Asia (Psaki, 2014).

The timing of marriage and leaving school for girls in South Asia is closely tied to gender and sexuality norms, viewed as protective measures by families against perceived threats. Despite progress, child marriage remains prevalent globally, affecting over 650 million women who marry before 18, with uneven decline rates, especially in rural areas and among economically disadvantaged families (UNICEF, 2017).

Marriage transactions, like dowries, significantly impact decisions concerning the trade-off between marriage and education for girls in regions where child marriage is common (Parsons et al., 2015). Poverty influences this dynamic, leading families to marry off daughters to cope with economic challenges. Research indicates a negative impact of child marriage on girls' education, with higher dropout rates observed in married girls compared to unmarried peers (Wodon et al., 2017). The complex interplay of cultural, social, and economic factors contributes to the persistence of child marriage and its detrimental effects on girls' education globally (Walker, 2015).

In light of these challenges, Malelu et al. (2020) posited that there was a high rate of gender imbalance in primary schools, which was attributed to social-cultural factors such as early marriages, pregnancy, and cultural rites of passage. This led to low participation in school and, consequently, low retention. However, this study was conducted in Marsabit County.

The identified research gaps necessitate the significance of context-specific interventions on early marriage as a social-cultural factor influencing learner retention. Against this backdrop this study attempts to fill that gap.

## **2.4 Parental Education Level and Learner Retention**

Learner retention in primary schools emphasizes the crucial role of parental education, with studies showing a positive correlation between parental involvement and learner attitude towards school. This underscores the impact of parental educational backgrounds on academic achievement, highlighting a direct link between parents' education levels and learners' success, particularly with mothers (Koskei, 2020).

Parental education instills discipline in parents, positively influencing children's learning experiences by fostering respect for authority (Samiullah, 2017). The research consistently links parental education level to a child's educational and career choices, showing that higher parental education is associated with increased access to education, higher attendance, and lower dropout rates (Delaney et al., 2011). This emphasizes the significance of parental education in recognizing the benefits of supporting children's education. Thus, children from educated families tend to achieve higher educational accomplishments due to familial support, conducive environments, and parental assistance (UNESCO, 2017).

Parental involvement is considered a significant contributor to improvements in academic achievement, behavior, and social adjustment (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). Effective collaboration between parents and teachers is crucial for a learner's success and retention, with continuous parental engagement positively influencing learners' school engagement, self-perception, and identification with the school. Moreover, parents with higher educational level could motivate the intellectual potential within their children that may lead them to perform better in school and return the strive for further education (Kirimi & Muteti, 2016).

In conclusion, parental education level plays a pivotal role in learner retention, academic success, and overall well-being. The research underscores the need for continuous parental involvement in a child's education to ensure positive outcomes and establish a foundation for a successful academic journey. The identified research gap for the current study lies in examining the specific influence of parental education on learner retention in the context of Turkana County, Kenya, providing valuable insights into the unique factors shaping educational outcomes in this particular region.

## **3.0 Methods and Materials**

The study adopted a Mixed Methods approach and a concurrent triangulation research design. The study was conducted in seven Sub-Counties of Turkana County, and the target population was 461 teachers, comprising 419 in public primary schools and 42 in private primary schools. A proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 291 teachers, while a purposive sampling technique was used to select 14 senior teachers from each of the seven Sub-Counties. Quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire, while qualitative data was generated using semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics

(percentages, means and standard deviations) and multiple linear regression, while the qualitative data was analyzed thematically.

The research instruments were tested for validity and reliability before use. The questionnaire was self-constructed and was thus checked for face and content validity through expert judgments to verify whether it contained an adequate range of items to test all the concepts under investigation. The reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha, as indicated in Table 1. Each variable exhibited a Cronbach value exceeding 0.7, signifying that the questionnaire items were reliable and internally consistent (Hair et al., 2019). For semi-structured interviews, we member-checked the responses with the participants to ensure the trustworthiness, credibility, and dependability of the generated data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethical issues such as confidentiality, informed consent, and anonymity were observed in the study.

**Table 1: Reliability of the study Variables**

Study Variable	Cronbach Alpha $\alpha$
Learner Retention	0.832
Teenage Pregnancy	0.765
Early Marriage	0.790
Parental Level of Education	0.812

## 4.0 Results and Discussion

Three research objectives guided the study: to assess the influence of teenage pregnancy on learner retention, to determine the influence of early marriage on learner retention and to examine the influence of the level of parental education on learner retention. Each variable under investigation was measured on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree and 5=Strongly Disagree).

### 4.1 Learner Retention

Learner retention formed the dependent variable in the study. The results in Table 2 on respondents' perspectives of learner retention show strong agreement among respondents on several crucial issues. Firstly, a significant majority strongly agree (Mean = 1.388, SD = 0.548) that education should provide open access to all learners, reflecting a collective belief in the importance of accessible education to prevent dropouts. Additionally, participants express a widespread agreement (Mean = 1.839, SD = 0.549) that dropouts face limited life opportunities, emphasizing the long-term impact of educational attainment. Similar findings were reported in the interviews. One of the participants had this to say;

*"When students drop out of school, they are left with very few options for better opportunities in life. Life in general becomes sometimes unbearable."* (Senior teacher 5)

The results also indicate a prevailing view (Mean = 1.598, SD = 0.761) linking low learner retention to family socio-economic status, highlighting the need for targeted interventions. Furthermore, respondents generally agree (Mean = 1.79, SD = 0.720) that legal frameworks exist



to protect the right to education, aligning with international commitments such as those outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The data also suggests a positive perception (Mean = 1.591, SD = 0.665) regarding Kenya's commitment to international laws and statutes for learner retention. Notably, the findings indicate that Turkana County is perceived to have partnerships (Mean = 1.821, SD = 1.439) aimed at improving learner retention, particularly through collaborations with NGOs and international aid bodies. Lastly, there is an acknowledgment (Mean = 1.663, SD = 0.754) of low learner retention in arid and semi-arid regions, underscoring the challenges faced by these areas. The overall Grand Mean of 1.67 with a standard deviation of 0.777 signifies a generally positive and consistent outlook on the issues related to learner retention among the surveyed participants.

**Table 2: Learner Retention**

	<b>Issues related to learner retention</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
LR1	Education should give all learners open access to education	1.388	0.548
LR2	Dropouts have fewer life opportunities	1.839	0.549
LR3	Low learner retention is attributed to family socio-economic status	1.598	0.761
LR4	The law has been constituted to protect the right to education	1.79	0.720
LR5	Kenya is committed to international law and statutes to ensure learner retention in school	1.591	0.665
LR6	Turkana County has partnerships with other stakeholders to improve learner retention	1.821	1.439
LR7	ASAL regions have low learner retention in the country	1.663	0.754
	Valid N=291		
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>0.777</b>

#### 4.2 Teenage Pregnancy and Learner Retention

The results in Table 3 show that the low overall grand mean (1.687) and low standard deviation (0.712) indicate that the majority of the respondents were in strong agreement that teenage pregnancy contributed to low learner retention. For instance, the low mean in item TP1 (Mean=1.560, SD=0.580) suggests a general agreement that early pregnancy contributes to girls dropping out of school. The relatively low standard deviation indicates a degree of consensus among respondents. Item TP2 (mean=1.77, SD=0.691) indicates a stronger agreement that early pregnancy is associated with family-related issues. Notably, the majority of the respondents agreed that there was a high rate of child marriage in Turkana County (item TP4, mean=1.739, SD=0.690). Item TP9 (mean=1.787, SD=0.716) reflects a stronger agreement that early teenage pregnancy has high adverse effects on learner retention in primary schools in Turkana County. It was also evident that failure by parents to support girls' education led to early teenage pregnancies (Item TP7, mean=1.588, SD=0.753). The above results were not different from the findings from the teacher interviews. Most teachers felt that most parents had left the responsibility of advising and guiding their children to the school. One of the teachers highlighted this viewpoint as follows:

*"Parents have that tendency and say that teachers are the ones who will manage their children. You can send them back home from school at 6 pm, but you find them in their school uniforms in the trading center at 9:00 pm. It should be that once this child gets home late, a responsible parent*

*must question them where they have been, but when the girls go back, and they are not tasked, they consider it as something very normal and have left the children to whom it may concern.”* (Senior teacher 8)

These findings are consistent with a report highlighting that in Sub-Saharan Africa, high rates of early pregnancies are among the leading causes of girls' dropouts in schools (UNESCO, 2017). Similarly, Uche (2013), in his study on an examination of girls' dropout in Nigeria, 74 percent of school dropouts was attributed to teenage pregnancy

**Table 3: Teenage Pregnancy and Learner Retention**

	<b>Issues related to pregnancy that contribute to low learner retention</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
TP1	Early pregnancy has contributed to girls dropping out of school	1.560	0.58
TP2	Early pregnancy is associated with issues related to the family	1.777	0.691
TP3	There are laws to ensure teenage pregnancy is not a stumbling to schooling among girls	1.601	0.738
TP4	There is a higher rate of child marriage in the county	1.739	0.690
TP5	Early pregnancy is associated with school dropout among girls	1.622	0.696
TP6	Early pregnancy is predominant among school-going girls	1.790	0.806
TP7	Failure by parents to support girls' education leads to early pregnancy	1.588	0.753
TP8	Early pregnancy has high negative effects on learner retention in primary school education	1.787	0.716
TP9	Childbearing contributes to school dropout upon re-entry/readmission	1.577	0.750
TP10	Girls who drop out are at risk of getting pregnant	1.828	0.698
	<b>Valid N=291</b>		
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>1.687</b>	<b>0.712</b>

### 4.3 Early Marriages and Learner Retention

The results on early marriage and learner retention in Table 4 indicate a strong agreement among respondents on the tested items. The Grand Mean of 1.665 with a standard deviation of 0.697 suggests a prevailing agreement on various aspects of early marriage in Turkana County. The results reveal that respondents strongly believe there is a tendency for early marriage among boys and girls in the county (item EM1, mean = 1.481, SD = 0.606). Furthermore, the results indicate that early marriage has led to gender inequality in education in the county (Item EM2, mean = 1.756, SD = 0.626) and that cultural traditions play a significant role in the majority of early marriages (item EM3, mean = 1.636, SD = 0.751). The data also suggests a strong association between early marriage and school dropout (item EM4, mean = 1.818, SD = 0.722), particularly prevalent among pastoralist communities in arid and semi-arid regions in Kenya (item em5, mean = 1.622, SD = 0.748). one of the participants in the interview opined a similar opinion;

*“In our school, we have witnessed several young girls who get married as early as class 6 or class 7 and not come back again in school.”* (Senior teacher 3)

Additionally, the results highlight concern about the societal normalization of early marriage practices (item EM7, mean = 1.663, SD = 0.75) and the impact of dowry payments on driving girls into early marriages (item EM6, mean = 1.512, SD = 0.634). Similarly, most of the interview participants revealed that the region's social-cultural norms require that once the dowry is paid, the

young lady has matured enough and should be married immediately. For instance, one of the participants reported;

“The society here believes, once the dowry is paid, it is seen as a signal that the girl has reached a suitable age for marriage, and the expectation is for her to be married promptly” Headteacher 6

Respondents also agree that early marriage decreases the probability of girls completing their schooling (item EM9, mean = 1.787, SD = 0.672), and cultural practices such as beading contribute to this phenomenon (item EM10, mean = 1.601, SD = 0.738). Overall, the data reflects a shared viewpoint among respondents on the complex interplay between cultural practices, early marriage, and its detrimental effects on education, particularly for girls. These findings are consistent with Raj et al. (2019) who opined that child marriages diminish education possibilities for the girls by shortening their education. Hence, it prompts a lower profit for young girls in adulthood since an absence of education keeps them from landing great positions.

**Table 4: Early Marriage and Learner Retention**

	<b>Early marriage and learner retention</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
EM1	There is a tendency of early marriage among boys and girls in the county	1.481	0.606
EM2	Early marriage has caused gender inequality in education in the county	1.756	0.626
EM3	The majority of early marriages are done according to the traditions of the community	1.636	0.751
EM4	Early marriage is related to school dropout	1.818	0.722
EM5	Early marriage is predominant among the pastoralist communities in ASAL regions in Kenya	1.622	0.748
EM6	School girls are married early by young and older men who can afford to pay dowry	1.773	0.722
EM7	Early marriage practices are seen as normal in the community	1.663	0.75
EM8	Payment of dowry has driven many girls to early marriage	1.512	0.634
EM9	Early marriage decreases the probability of the girls to complete schooling	1.787	0.672
EM10	Cultural practices such as beading contribute to early marriage	1.601	0.738
	<b>Valid N=291</b>		
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>1.665</b>	<b>0.697</b>

#### 4.4 Parental Level of Education and Learner Retention

The results in Table 5 on factors related to parental level of education and learner retention reveal several key results. First, respondents generally agree that parental financial ability significantly influences learner retention, as indicated by the low mean of (item PLE1, mean=1.512, SD=0.702). This implies a strong agreement on the impact of financial resources on education. Secondly, item PLE2 (mean=1.808, SD=0.641) concerning the belief that most children-headed families experience low learner retention underscores a prevalent perception of the challenges faced by such families in supporting education. Additionally, item PLE3 (mean=1.643, SD=0.836) suggests an agreement that parental educational attainment is an essential factor in learner retention, emphasizing the perceived role of parental education in shaping a child's educational journey. Moreover, item PLE7 (mean=1.780, SD=0.947) indicates a strong agreement that children from educated parents receive more help for their education than those with uneducated parents.

Majority of the participants highlighted the perceived benefits of an educated parental environment;

*“Of course, educated parents are more likely to see the importance of guiding their children with their homework.”* (Senior Teacher 2)

However, few were of contrary opinion. One of the participants reported that;

*“... sometimes u may find even a learner whose parents did not go to school have completed all the homework tasks.”* (Senior teacher 11)

Although there was some variability in the overall opinions, as indicated by the standard deviation of 0.809, the grand mean of 1.726 consistently agrees on these factors, emphasizing the importance of parental characteristics in shaping learner retention. These findings agree with Oduro-Ofori et al. (2023) who indicated that learner' accomplishment was relative to the educational level of their parents. Therefore, educated guardians can relate to the school learning experiences of their children and, in this manner, are ready to give fundamental help to them.

**Table 5: Parental Level of Education and Learner Retention**

	<b>Factor related to parental level of education and learner retention</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
PLE1	Parental financial ability related to educational achievement is significant in learner retention	1.512	0.702
PLE2	Most children-headed families experience low learner retention	1.808	0.641
PLE 3	Parental educational attainment is an essential factor in learner retention in primary school education	1.643	0.836
PLE 4	Educated parents can handle issues related to the child's learning	1.794	0.733
PLE 5	Educated parents can bring up disciplined children who can obey teachers while in school	1.674	0.851
PLE 6	Uneducated parents do not see the importance of helping children with their homework	1.670	0.843
PLE 7	Children from educated parental backgrounds get help for their education compared to uneducated parents	1.780	0.947
PLE 8	Educated parents are aware of the rights of the child, leading to retention	1.725	0.839
PLE 9	Educated parents are more involved in the education of their children with teachers	1.859	0.786
PLE 10	Educated parents assist their children more often with their homework and studies	1.794	0.909
	<b>Valid N=291</b>		
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>1.726</b>	<b>0.809</b>

#### 4.5 Correlation analysis

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient test was used to determine relationships between the study variables. The results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between parental level of education and Learner retention. Notably, both teenage pregnancy and early marriage had a significant relationship with learner retention. However, the relationship was negative, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6 Correlation Analysis Matrix (N=291)**

	Learner Retention	Teenage Pregnancy	Early Marriage	Parental Level of Education
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Learner Retention	1			
Teenage Pregnancy	-0.365**	1		
Early Marriage	-0.291**	0.804**	1	
Parental Level of Education	0.234**	0.102**	0.04**	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 4.6 Linear Regression Results

The relationship between the independent variables (teenage pregnancy, early marriage and parental level of education) was determined, and the dependent variable (learner retention) was determined using multiple linear regression analysis. The outputs in terms of coefficient of determination, test of statistical significance and regression coefficients are shown in Tables 7, 8 and 9.

**Table 7 Model Summary of Multiple Linear Regression**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.402a	0.161	0.147	2.62742	1.964

a. Predictors: (Constant), Teenage Pregnancy, Early Marriage, Parental Level of Education

b. Dependent Variable: Learner Retention

The model in Table 7 showed that R square (coefficient of determination) is 0.161, which means that approximately 16.1% of the variation in learner retention in Turkana county schools is explained by social-cultural factors (teenage pregnancy, early marriage and parental level of education).

**Table 8 Test of Statistical Significance**

Model		ANOVA				Sig.
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	
1	Regression	378.718	3	75.744	10.972	.000b
	Residual	1967.447	287	6.903		
	Total	2346.165	290			

a. Dependent Variable: Learner Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Teenage Pregnancy, Early Marriage, Parental Level of Education

The ANOVA results in Table 8 indicated that the regression model significantly predicted the dependent variable at  $F(3, 287) = 10.972, p < 0.05$ . This implied that social-cultural factors (teenage pregnancy, early marriages and parental level of education) had a statistically significant influence on learner retention and thus predicted the dependent variable. In order to determine the contribution of each factor in the overall model, the regression coefficient output was examined, and the results are shown in Table 9.

**Table 9 Regression Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	6.197	0.873		7.101	.000
	Teenage Pregnancy	-0.248	0.064	-0.356	3.866	.000
	Early Marriage	-0.072	0.065	-0.126	-2.179	.030
	Parental Level of Education	0.466	0.185	0.168	2.282	.023

*b Dependent Variable: Learner Retention*

H01 stated that teenage pregnancy had no statistically significant influence on learner retention. However, findings in Table 9 showed that teenage pregnancy had coefficients of the estimate which were negative and significant ( $\beta = -.356$ ,  $p$ -value = .000), which is less than (.05), implying that there was a predicted .356 unit decrease in learner retention for each unit increase in teenage pregnancy hence null hypothesis being rejected. The conclusion was that teenage pregnancy had a significant and negative influence on learner retention.

H02 stated that early marriage had no statistically significant influence on learner retention in primary schools. The study findings showed that Early marriages had a negative and significant effect on learner retention based on the  $\beta = -.126$  with a  $p$ -value of .030, which is less than (.05), implying that early marriage has a negative influence on learner retention; hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

H03 stated that parental level of education had no statistically significant influence on learner retention in primary schools. The findings showed that parental level of education had coefficients of estimates which were positive and significant ( $\beta = .168$ ;  $p$ -value = .023), which is less than (.05); thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that parental level of education had a positive and significant influence, on learner retention in primary schools. Hence, as parental education levels increase, there is a corresponding positive impact on the retention of learners in primary education.

The triangulated findings from the qualitative research questions complemented the quantitative results, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions regarding the influence of social-cultural factors on learner retention in primary schools. The impact of teenage pregnancy and early marriages on learner retention emerged as a multifaceted challenge and was found to exert negative effects on learner retention, increasing dropout rates and thereby decreasing the probability of girls completing schooling. Conversely, parental level of education was identified as a positive influence on learner retention, with parental educational background seen as a protective factor enhancing the likelihood of learners remaining in school.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The study on the influence of social-cultural factors on learner retention in primary schools in Turkana County, Kenya, revealed significant insights. In conclusion, the research demonstrated a generally positive and consistent outlook on learner retention issues among participants, with strong agreement on the importance of accessible education, the limited life opportunities faced

by dropouts, and the impact of family socio-economic status on retention. Furthermore, the study highlighted the significant influence of teenage pregnancy and early marriage on learner retention, with a consensus among respondents on the negative effects of these factors. The correlation analysis affirmed a significant relationship between parental level of education and learner retention, emphasizing the role of educated parents in supporting their children's education. The multiple linear regression analysis confirmed that social-cultural factors (teenage pregnancy, early marriage, and parental level of education) collectively explained approximately 16.1% of the variation in learner retention in Turkana County schools. Recommendations based on these findings should focus on targeted interventions addressing teenage pregnancy, early marriage, and enhancing parental education to improve learner retention in primary schools in Turkana County. Additionally, community engagement and awareness programs could be implemented to challenge cultural norms contributing to early marriages and teenage pregnancies.

## 6.0 Recommendations

The study's recommendations address the identified social-cultural factors to enhance learner retention. Firstly, targeted interventions should be developed to mitigate the negative impact of teenage pregnancy, emphasizing the importance of sex education, reproductive health awareness, and community support systems. Secondly, efforts should be directed towards reducing early marriages through community sensitization, legal advocacy, and promoting alternative pathways for girls' empowerment. Thirdly, initiatives should be implemented to enhance parental education, including awareness campaigns on the benefits of education, parental involvement in children's learning, and support for children from financially challenged backgrounds. A holistic approach involving community collaboration, policy advocacy, and educational support is essential to improve learner retention in Turkana County primary schools.

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