

Influence of Keiyo Traditional Circumcision on Aspirations for Higher Education Among Boys in Secondary Schools, Keiyo South District, Elgeyo-Marakwet County, Kenya

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to carry out an in-depth investigation into the influence of Keiyo traditional circumcision on aspirations for higher education among boys in selected secondary schools in Keiyo South District. The study was given credence by poor academic performance and general lack of enthusiasm in schooling among circumcised Keiyo boys. The theoretical foundation of this study is functionalism. Functionalism is centred on two claims: first that any society is a unique functioning whole and second that social arrangement and cultural forms have functional significance in relation to the psychological needs of individuals. Stratified random sampling procedure was used to select school and students for the study. A total of 332 students representing 30% of form three secondary school boys in Keiyo South District were selected for the study. The study used causal comparative design. Views were collected by use of a five point Likert scale questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed using t-test, percentages, means and standard deviation. Validity of instrument was done by comparing aspirations score to academic performance, computed using rank order correlation coefficient while reliability was affirmed through test-retest and correlation coefficient computed.

Keywords: Influence, Traditional, Circumcision, Aspirations, Keiyo, Education

1.0. Introduction

Oxford advanced learners dictionary defines culture as the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group. Cultural practices therefore need to be moderated to reflect the dynamism of our society today and embrace change as an inevitable reality.

Levinson and Ember (1996) point out that while biologists usually speak of organic evolution, they argue that societies have at times reversed the course and regressed from a more complex to a simpler level. The argument gives hope to African communities which after years of blindly aping the Whiteman's culture discover it is discordant with his aspirations and way of life. This study therefore wishes to call upon African scholars to rededicate their energies to re-evaluating various cultural aspects with an aim of salvaging those practices that could be beneficial before they are extinct and identifying those that stand in the way of progress.

In depth research has been carried out on various aspects of Keiyo culture. Indeed serious research on Keiyo and by extension the Kalenjin culture dates back to as early as the colonial period when Massam (1968) wrote with great precision on several of Keiyo culture. Various other related researchers have been carried out by prominent scholars and researchers such as Kipkorir and Welbourne (1973) and Snell (1954). More recent researchers include Chebet and Ton Dietz (2000), Rono (2002), Chepkwony (1997), Chemitei (2010) and Sambu (2007).

In all these studies however, nothing is said about education of boy. Most researchers take it for granted and dwell on the girl's welfare among the Keiyo, yet boys are circumcised and are also expected to be the sole bread winners.

They are in fact ignored and sometimes unfairly termed as unruly when in actual sense, they lack necessary guidance from women, men and institutions of learning because they are least understood. This study has come in to fill the knowledge gap. The real vehicle of progress today is education (Ministry of Education, 2007). Education in this case should not be constricted to mean writing and reading western literature; but be expended to incorporate African customs and values scholars should therefore find ways through which totally integrated quality learning that conforms to the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can be put in place.

The notion of 'Education quality' gives way to the wider array of concepts; African traditional education gave priority to both social and psychomotor dimensions. The western concept of education gives priority to cognitive understanding and development. Today, we recognize that the social and other dimensions of learning are important. Chang'ach (2012 a) points out that while most people understand intuitively what they mean by 'quality of education; there may not be a common understanding of the term. Chang'ach (2012 b) argues that this is especially true, at the beginning of the 21st century when education is increasingly understood to be more than 'writing arithmetic'. He asserts that there is a growing consciousness on the importance of aspects such as relevance, universal values, peace and security and informed decision making.

Evon and Volgot (2006) add that the assumption that change is an orderly, rational and linear process that provides centrally defined fixes to the quantity of problems is one that has been found to be false in almost every instance. Evon and Volgot assert that there is an emerging consensus that change is essentially a local process with the schools being the unit of change; that local learning and adaptation is key and that developing a local capacity at the school level, the community level and the district level is a condition for success. There is need to examine various aspects of African culture, identify those that work against schooling and harmonize the various aspects of schooling with culture to produce a functional system that addresses the peculiar needs of learners without generating conflicts. This may help improve the school completion rates. Evon and Volgot further point out that nine in every ten children in sub-Saharan Africa enter primary school. Out of the nine, only six finish primary while only three enter secondary school. The question that lingers is, why so much wastage in the education system? The answer is simple, 'children are not ready for the school system and the schools are not prepared for the children.'

There is therefore need for relevant curriculum that connects the learners experiences and environment, one that responds to parental expectations and demands and at the same time prepares the students not for today's world but for the society as it will develop in the next fifty years. Connecting to the student's context means first and foremost moving to mother tongue instruction at least in the lower grades and operating contents that build on the local environment and culture. This may provide a *modus oparendi* that could serve to make learning more relevant to the learner and in so facto enhance the learners' aspirations and enthusiasm for higher education.

1.1. The Keiyo

The Keiyo are part of the larger ethnic grouping of eight culturally and linguistically related ethnic groups known as the Kalenjin, a heading which includes the Kipsigis, Nandi, Tugen, Marakwet, Pokot, Sabaot and Terik (Chang'ach, 2011 a). These groups were earlier known collectively as Nandi speaking peoples or alternatively, as the southern Nilo-Hamites. The more recent name Kalenjin, which translates as "I tell you," is a relatively new historical phenomenon dating to the time around World War II, and stemming from a desire to draw political strength from the larger numbers such an association would bring. Kipkorir and Welbourne (1973) has argued that the Kalenjin have occupied these parts of Kenya for 2,000 years or more. All of these groups speak dialects of a common language of the Southern section of the Nilotic branch which, according to Greenberg is part of the Chari- Nile Group. Chang'ach (2011 a) has identified three dialect clusters: one comprised of the Sabaot, along with the Sebei and Kony; another made up of Pokot, northern Marakwet and northern Tugen; and the third dialect includes the Nandi, Kipsigis, Keiyo, Terik and Southern Tugen and Marakwet. Although these dialects are all supposedly mutually intelligible, speakers of one dialect often have difficulty understanding another.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In the recent years there has been much talk about the rights of the girl child. The wider perception presupposes that the rights of the girl child are greatly undermined by circumcision. Terms such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) have been coined purposely to demonize. The boy child too goes through rigorous cultural education under circumcision during seclusion period which puts young boys at crossroads thus affecting their academic performance and aspirations for higher education. This is so as in this regard traditional practices such as Keiyo circumcision for boys is still practiced. As it is path towards change from childhood to adulthood. After this many adolescent change in behavior, they learn their roles and adopt them. Many begin to despise their teachers especially female teachers are not respected. As well as what they are needed to. This leads to retardation in learning and thus leading to truancy and school dropouts. To make matter worse, with Western education, language and ideas dominating our scene, we now experience constant conflict of identification.

Social trends have changed. Yet the culture of circumcision for boys is greatly honoured among Keiyo as in the case with majority of the Keiyo. This scenario presents a peculiar situation where acceptable blend of the two cultures must be sought. Despite great research on various aspects of African culture, much thought has not been given to the influence of Keiyo traditional circumcision on aspirations for higher education. Such cultural practices need a fresh look with great emphasis on understanding and re-interpreting the rituals vis-à-vis the current situation and realities. This paper will seek to investigate the nature of influence of Keiyo traditional circumcision on aspirations for higher education among secondary school students learning in Keiyo South District.

1.3. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to determine the nature of influence of Keiyo circumcision by comparing the aspirations for higher education between:

- i) Circumcised and uncircumcised form three Keiyo boys learning in selected secondary schools in Keiyo South District
- ii) Circumcised and uncircumcised form three Keiyo boys learning in mixed boarding schools.
- iii) Circumcised and uncircumcised form three Keiyo boys learning in boys boarding secondary schools.
- iv) Circumcised and uncircumcised form three Keiyo boys learning in day secondary schools.

1.4. Conceptual/ Theoretical Framework

Keiyo circumcision involves religious indoctrination of the society's core values which form basic doctrines in which every adult in the society is expected to be knowledgeable about. Kipkorir and Welbourne (1973) acknowledge that no event in life is of equal importance. Apart from physical changes, circumcision has profound psychosocial effect on the initiates which work to change their focus, preferences and ultimately aspirations of higher education. Once circumcised, the Keiyo youth assume new social roles and responsibilities. Psychologically, he is expected to exhibit behavior ascribed to adult code of conduct. His environment is altered as he is not expected to mix freely with uncircumcised and should respond to women in specific ways. Our schools have all the above players and calls for unbiased co-operation for success. The new status alienated the youth and impact on his educational aspirations. The psycho-socio-environmental factors intervene and influence the dependent variable-educational aspirations.

The theoretical foundation of his study is the functionalist perspective as developed by Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist and refined by Robert K. Merto, Talcott Parsons and others as quoted by Zastrow and Ashman (2001). The theory views society as a well organized system in which most members agree on common values and norms. Institutions, groups and roles fit together in a unified whole. Members of the society do what is necessary to maintain a stable society because they accept the regulations and rules. The theory serves as a model for this study. This is because the Keiyo society is stratified with various cultural forms coming together to form an organized cohesive and functional system. Circumcision component occupies a key position in the cultural strata. Functionalism is centered on two claims first any society is a unique functioning whole and second, that the social arrangement and cultural forms obtained in a society have functional significance in relation to the psychological needs of individuals.

The practice of circumcision serves to elevate the esteem of the man and his position in society is accepted as superior. Introduction of new ideas by Western education and which are apparently being forced to form part of the already existing functional whole has caused dysfunctional tendencies which is the major concern of the paper. Functionalist approach asserts that systems have a tendency to resist social change; change is seen as disruptive unless it occurs at slow pace. The changes introduced to the Keiyo system by Westernization mainly through education pose a threat to the position initially held by a circumcised man. Yet the position as prescribed by the rituals associated with circumcised has not changed significantly. This conflict could be a source of lack of enthusiasm for higher education among the circumcised Keiyo youth. In a nutshell, the theory postulates that as a result of being interrelated and interdependent, one organ can affect the others and ultimately the whole. The whole can also affect one or all the social institutions.

This makes the theory relevant in trying to locate those aspects of Keiyo circumcision practices that may pose a threat to the society attempt to conform to the emerging realities.

2.0. Review of Related Literature

There is no doubt that African cultures have gone through many phases. The early impact and continuing spread of Islam and Christianity, the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms throughout the centuries, diplomatic and economic contracts within and outside Africa, movement and communication between different people economic and social changes, wars, rebellion, conquest etc all add up to the wealth of the African culture. For instance Sambu (2007) has successfully linked up the Nandi religious concepts and customary practices to Pharaonic Egypt (Egyptology). Sambu (2007) argues that the ancient Egyptian religion was similar to the traditional Keiyo one so to other Kalenjin communities. To him therefore, the Kalenjin and by extension the Keiyo had similar to what was exported out of Egypt and later re-imported into it. According to Sambu (2007), this legitimizes Keiyo use of elements that are only borrowed in order to give credence to the residence of some of these features as expounded in the Keiyo circumcision. Thus, they have remained to this day because they served as purpose and still do so today. This paper therefore proposes that an amicable way to bridge the gap between Keiyo rite of circumcision and modern schooling will be sought in order to bridge the adverse influence the rite has and enhance the aspirations of its graduands.

This is so as times goes by cultures disappears, they are eroded, evolve or are sub-summed because of benign organic development within the culture or because of coercive pressures on that culture, through culture as a habit dies hard. And since cultural homogenization lead to a particular set of ideas, values and word views coming to prevail and legitimizing a world order. The new developments have impacts on indigenous cultures and thus changes in behaviour. Though according to the Keiyo, cultural norms were and still are highly held and adhered to despite the changes in environments and technological advancements and educational diversities.

2.0. Educational Aspirations

Everyone has long term goals or aspirations. These are the things that individuals hope to accomplish over the course of their lives. This paper is seeking to investigate the influence of Keiyo traditional circumcision on the aspirations for higher education among the youth. According to James (2007) students with low aspirational sense for higher education possess the following characteristics and vice versa:

- Have little interest in the subjects they could study at the university or any other institution of higher learning.
- Have a stronger interest in earning an income as soon as they leave school. This is true here – on getting circumcised boys drop out of school and become *matatu* (local means of transport) touts earning peanuts to their satisfaction.
- Are less confident that their academic results will be good enough for entry to courses that might interest them.
- See higher education as less personally relevant.

Young people who are presently in secondary school are preparing for a life in which knowledge and the capacity to renew knowledge is critical in their future lives. They will have working careers that will extend through to the year 2050 and beyond (Ministry of Education, 2008). While we cannot foresee the future nature of work with precision we can anticipate that these young people will have working careers which requires unprecedented levels of knowledge and skills. The majority of the workers will add value through highly specific knowledge that will need regular renewal. These trends will place a premium on initial levels of educational attainment and many people may require them to participate in formal education and training at certain stages in their lives. This makes their present levels of aspirations for higher education of paramount importance.

The imperative for lifelong learning makes it important to understand students aspirations, the influences on them and their decision making process for these are likely to be central in shaping their aspirations in ongoing involvement in formal learning. In these circumstances it is particularly important to understand the conditions that lead to educational advantage and disadvantage if the current gaps in higher education participation between community sub- groups are to be narrowed, (James, Badin and McInnis, 1996).

This paper is based on data collected between April and August 2012. The database comprises information of the aspirations for post secondary education of 332 form three students in Keiyo South District. These young people were asked to respond to items in questionnaire form. This database is significant in two ways: First, the student sample is large and sufficiently representative and second, the study asked students about their post secondary school aspirations in regard to work and education options. The report examined student's aspirations regarding higher education according to their cultural background focusing specifically on the aspects of Keiyo traditional circumcision while taking into account the different school types and their possible influences.

In higher education there are persistent participation inequalities. Despite the steady expansion in the number of people entering higher education, certain imbalances in the student mix overall representation is experienced. Patterns of access to universities and courses and across fields of study are significantly ethnically stratified with pastoral communities being under represented in prestigious courses. Since the more highly selective courses and institutions confer particular benefits and opportunities, the stratification experienced in Kenyan institutions of higher education is a significant equity consideration, one which tends to be overlooked if aggregate participation figures alone are considered. The initial remedial step to correct this situation is in understanding the levels of aspirations for higher education among the youth of the affected subgroups such as Keiyo. This paper thus borrows from Chemitei (2010) who hypothesized a causal ordering of variables influencing student aspiration for tertiary education. They report that young people's aspirations towards education are shaped by interwoven psychosocial factors which include personal factors social, cultural factors, school type and influence by significant others. Keiyo circumcision is an epitome of most of these attributes.

2.1. Circumcision vs. Educational Aspirations

Unexamined beliefs such as those propagated by the Keiyo culture of circumcision produce moral certainty if not arrogance. Keiyo traditional circumcision hinges more on the belief system than the symbolic act of the removal of the foreskin. It indeed sets a philosophy of life for its adherents. As from this stage still, the youth learn what is expected of them, culture controls and gives safeguards on living. It directs them on what to do and what they should desist from doing. Throughout history differing belief systems have caused potentially fascinating exchanges of philosophical opinions while it is true that every culture is penetrable and comprehensible to any newborn, once socialization has taken place, its effects upon human cognition are such that understanding is not only universal but achievable among differently socialized individuals only with effort.

It should be noted that belief systems persist over generations and centuries, while belief systems may be more or less efficacious, the more areas of life they address the more influence they have on thought, behavior and adaptation. Although the Keiyo culture of circumcision may not be congruent with the modern level of technological sophistication, it takes a holistic approach to life. This is contrary to western education which is excessively individualistic mainly dealing with the cognitive aspects of the human person while neglecting the effect, behaviour, socialization and general life demands of the individual within the society. Belief systems as embedded in the Keiyo culture of circumcision included a notion of religion and society. Some thinkers, most notably Thomas Hobbes saw society as necessary evil allowing individuals to survive.

Emilie Durkheim saw the group as the primordial ground of individual's life and being. The opposing theories however agree on the relevance of society to the individual Keiyo culture clearly captures this reality and for this reason has always risen to threaten the aspirations for higher education among the Keiyo youth.

The momentum of a cultural belief system is illustrated in the united state propensity to sustain the effects of formative Calvinist theology in the face of the near disappearance of its dogma of double predestination. Eighteenth century minister Jonathan Edwards preached explicit Calvinism. In the 1990's one was more likely to hear extortions to personal fulfillment. Nevertheless, the dogma continues to be operative and influential even in the society's popular sphere, which many describe as being increasingly dominated by obsessive narcissism and desperate hedonism. As pointed out by the functionalist theory on which this study is based, social arrangement and cultural forms have functional significance in relation to the psychological needs of individuals as illustrated by the conceptual/theoretical framework of the paper. The in-depth description of the Keiyo culture of circumcision in this study clearly indicates the holistic approach to issues by the cultural phenomenon. Mead (1928) argues that the amount of knowledge that we obtain is filtered through a cultural screen that selects stimuli for attention. These stimuli effectively define the larger experience, the object, person or idea.

On this basis, cultural rules organize the field of experience into categories. These categories are inventions of the human mind. They make experience manageable by generalizing about similar experience and placing them together. On the basis of cultural knowledge, we discover meaning by grasping the underlying pattern and the implicit frame of reference that people have learned. Cheison (2008) emphasized this structural aspect of culture when they identified culture as patterns of values, ideas and other symbolic meaningful systems. Towett (1979) adds that culture concerns the forms of things that people have in their minds. It functions as a set of plans for ordering behavior. The above attributes are greatly embedded in the Keiyo culture of circumcision. The cultural screens therefore determine the learner's level of aspirations for higher education. Cloninger (1993) points out human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings which these things have for them. According to Fennegan (1970) cultural knowledge as expressed in Keiyo traditional circumcision is coded in complex systems of symbols. It involves the definitions of the situation that must be learned by each generation. The culture of circumcision teaches its members to see the world in a particular way. Cultural activities require that one assumes a particular identity and perform them in a specified way. Magesa (1998) says that;

“If there is a time an African person's life during which a verifiable forest of symbols is employed for the sake of instruction, it is during the period of circumcision. Initiation is marked by special symbolic activities such as seclusion from community, oaths of secrecy, induction into certain age groups societies and blood friendship”. Changwony (1996) confirms this by asserting that the symbols produced a state of heightened awareness. Kelly (1955) points out that in order to make sense out of human behavior, we must begin with the person's definitions of the situation and a crucial feature of such meaning is the principle of contrast with Keiyo circumcision providing the background for schooling, its influence on educational levels of aspirations is real. It should be noted that as Bourguignon (1994) theorized, cultural systems are extra ordinary powerful. Once, thoroughly embedded cultural systems tend to reside at the level of assumptions and presupposition rather than at the constructed explanations. This is one of their most salient characteristics, and the importance of this feature can hardly be overstated for its influence on learning. Cultural systems affect the most objective enterprises and indeed interfere with educational aspirations.

Cultural practices that persist over generations and centuries are rich in opinions on a variety of subjects (Chang'ach, 2011 c). While cultural systems may be more or less efficacious, the more areas of life they address the more influence they have on thought, behavior and adaptation. Keiyo traditional circumcision uses a holistic approach. It holds concepts about value of life and the way life should be managed. For instance, Chemitei (2010) argues that religious perspective engendered on psycho- religious attitude of culture, has enormous influence on the form of capitalism adopted by the society. Consequently, cultural perspectives engendered through the culture of circumcision influence perceptions and aspirations for higher education.

Tausing (1980) points out that cultural practice such as circumcision have sustained independence from great forces of change. He points out that the struggle is not on the preservation of original cultural forms, but on the need to expose voices that might have been silenced during the course of transformation and on the process by which weak positions relative to colonial states, markets, capitalist economies, educational practices and other agents of change recreate and salvage themselves through struggle for their own forms of culture. The surge by cultural agents to re-assert their perceived superiority thus interferes with schooling and aspirations for higher education. Hollis (1909) say that cultural control is used as a masking device, a legitimizing strategy or as a model of social life. This may not be in line with emerging educational trends particularly in Africa. Yet, as Rono (2002) put it, culture provides a blue print for social organization and social life. The findings of this study will statistically confirm that Keiyo traditional circumcision indeed has significant influences on the aspirations for higher education among the Keiyo youth.

2.1. The Keiyo Concept of Traditional Circumcision

The Oxford advanced learners dictionary describes circumcision as: the act of circumcising; the religious ceremony when somebody, especially baby is circumcised. The word circumcise is explained as; to remove the foreskin of a baby or a man for religious or medical reasons. To further this support; according to Mbitiny (2012), it is unclear where or how male circumcision originated. General agreement is as 'good' as the origin of human kind is. Anyway, the oldest documentary evidence comes from ancient Egyptian drawings dating 2340 BC. The reasons for male circumcision are as varied as the smorgasbord of humanity that circumcises males.

Here are some; religious sacrifice, rite of passage, virility of fertility, enhancing sexual pleasure or reducing it, hygiene, humiliating enemies, setting groups aside, demonstration of ability to endure pain, discovering masturbation, on and on. The latest reason is that circumcision reduces by 60% chances of males contracting HIV through intercourse. To the Kalenjin, the word circumcision is a complex term that denotes a series of activities and meanings. Indeed, under some special circumstances, persons have been circumcised without having to go through the 'cut' removal of foreskin.

According to Chebet (2007), the Keiyo terminology for circumcision is *tumdo*. To her, the core purpose of the cut was to immobilize the initiates to enable them stay in one place to facilitate the initiation. However, the appropriate terminology for the word circumcision in Kalenjin is *kemuratan* this word is rarely used since the function is mainly seen as a process of initiation and the 'cut' is never given much prominence. In many instances, the word circumcision has been interchangeably used with initiation; Magesa (1998) clearly captures the definition of the concept to include; seclusion – separation- transition – physical impression-removal of foreskin from the penis-integration and covenant. Snell (1954) and Kipkorir and Welbourne (1973) prefer to use the initiation to circumcision. This term too may not be precise as Kalenjin prefer many initiation ceremonies in an individual's lifespan. For instance one may be initiated into the warrior group, junior elder among others, even with the function here described as circumcision – *tumdo* – individuals go through various stages of initiation. Kipkorir and Welbourne however, have this to say, 'not birth, but initiation makes a man or woman of Marakwet. No event in life is of equal importance'.

All however agree on one issue; that the magnitude of meaning in the function cannot in any way be equated to the meaning ascribed to the word 'circumcision' in the English context. In this presentation therefore the word 'circumcision' is used for lack of a better word. Once initiated, a Keiyo man belonged to an age set. Sambu (2007) point out that the age set assumed by the initiates does not merely play a normal role, it is a point of reference for each member's commitment to his initiates and to the community at large. Each member of an age-set has to give up to the expectations the community has towards each age-set. This is because in the final analysis initiation is not social prestige but beginning of definite social responsibly.

Chebet and Dietz (2000), argue that circumcision did not involve the act of cutting off the prepuce of male's or female's genitals, but was a culmination of the cultural socialization process which started right at birth. This involves religious indoctrination of the society's core values which formed the basic doctrines in which every adult in the society was expected to be knowledgeable about. Circumcision should thus be understood. Circumcision should thus be understood in that context.

3.0. Research Design and Methodology

The study employed causal-comparative research design to compare the cause effect relationship that already exists between the two variables; circumcision and aspirations for higher education.

Using this design, the study has given sufficient evidence to show that without the first condition, circumcision, the second condition, aspiration, would have occurred differently. This design is employed because the independent variable is fixed and could not be manipulated.

3.1. Research Population

The population comprised of all form three Keiyo boys in selected secondary schools. Primary investigation revealed that half of Keiyo boys in form three are circumcised. Most of the boys in form one and two are uncircumcised while more than half of those in form three and four are circumcised. Form three therefore served the study well as it allowed comparison of the educational aspirations of a cohort.

The research was conducted between April and August 2012. Keiyo South District has 36 secondary categorized as follows: boy's schools 5, girls' schools 6, mixed boarding schools 5, days schools 20. Two schools were randomly selected from the boys boarding category, three from the mixed boarding category and nine from the day school category. A total of 14 schools were involved, constituting 38% of the total number of school in the district.

4.0. Findings and Recommendations

4.1. Keiyo Traditional Circumcision and Aspirations for Higher Education

This paper aimed at investigating the influence of Keiyo traditional circumcision on aspirations for higher education. The findings of the paper indicate that students who had undergone Keiyo traditional circumcision had significantly lower aspirations for higher education as compared to the uncircumcised. The study compared the aspiration levels of a cohort in order to minimize other factors from undermining the competence of the findings. Keiyo traditional circumcision to this effect greatly influences the way its graduates continue their experiences. The findings of this paper agree with some aspects of George Kelly's (1955) theory of personal construct. A construct thought that a person uses when attempting to interpret his or her own personal experiences. Kelly believed that individuals are free to create their own construct systems, and that a person's life is strongly influenced by the way he or she construes experiences. From the findings of the paper, Keiyo traditional circumcision at times, form the basis that guides individuals in constructing their experiences and the world. The result according to this study as conceived in the conceptual framework is that traditional circumcision has strong psycho-social influence which may determine the way the individual perceives himself which has a bearing on how they construe events. Kelly says some individuals arrive at inflexible convictions about the world and become slaves to them. Keiyo circumcision could have this effect.

The finding of this paper are also supported by the findings of Magesa (1998) who pointed out that African initiation is marked by special symbolic activities such as seclusion, oaths of secrecy, inductions and blood friendship. Magesa concluded that this produced a state of heightened awareness on the individual. The net effect of this is an altered philosophy of life while effect is reduced aspiration for higher education. Chebet and Dietz (2002) add that Keiyo traditional circumcision core values which formed the basic doctrines in which every adult in the society was expected to be knowledgeable about. A product of Keiyo traditional circumcision therefore goes to school having two masters with distantly different goals: adherence to cultural practices and allegiance to the community expectation on the one hand, and the need to compete favourably in the world of academics on the other hand. Tausing (1984) also point out that belief systems are extraordinary powerful and that it affects even the most objective enterprises and indeed interfere with the proceedings of science itself. Tausing supports this with the examples of the findings of a famous 16th century German astronomer Johannes Kepler whose scientific findings were rejected on the basis of religion. Keiyo traditional circumcision has a strong religious connotation. It is therefore no doubt that the study confirms its negative influences on aspirations for higher education.

4.2. Keiyo Traditional Circumcision and Aspirations for Higher Education among Boys in Mixed Boarding Schools

Mixed boarding school provides serious challenges to boys who have undergone Keiyo traditional circumcision. Boys in mixed boarding school learn alongside girls. The cultural induction provided under the initiation curriculum puts the 'man' above the 'woman' competing with the girl therefore poses a serious challenge to the boy who has been indoctrinated to believe that he is superior to the girls. Unable to prove this superiority in class, the boy student in the mixed boarding school seems to give up his aspirations for higher education. It is not surprising therefore to note that the findings of the study indicate a lower aspiration index for the circumcised boy in a mixed boarding school compared to his counterpart in boys boarding school. Traditional circumcision, as a cultural rite impedes on the boys aspiration for higher education.

Okolla (2004) describes circumcision as 'expressing a community identity'. Usually religions are wrapped in complex meanings that invoke numerous myths. Definitely the cultural belief expounded by Keiyo circumcision that designates a woman as a lesser creative is mythical. This finding agrees with Bore (2006) view. When this myth is disapproved in class, the circumcised Keiyo boy student unconsciously rejects education. For this reason, his aspirations for higher education are challenged. The findings of this study also agree with Massam (1968) assertion that circumcision among a number of African and Australian religious traditions represent a removal of 'feminine' aspect of the male, turning boys into fully masculine males. To confirm this, Sambu (2007) points out that Keiyo and aboriginal circumcision ceremonies, which also constitute a rite of passage re noted for their painful nature. Indeed much of their teaching look down upon women and a man should not pose any feminine attribute. From Snell (1954) description, it is easy to infer that a boy who has gone through such a ritual may not take defeat in academic performance by the girl student positively.

Keiyo traditional circumcision therefore works to inhibit the process of learning and aspirations for higher education in school. Although not within the scope of this paper, it is important to note that many boys who are circumcised before joining secondary school more often than not are unwilling to proceed with secondary education. This idea is only borrowed to support the statistical confirmation of low aspiration for higher education among boys in mixed boarding secondary school. The paper too agrees with Levinson and Ember (1996) that cultural systems that persist over generations and centuries are rich in opinions on a variety of subjects. They determine the roles of men and women in the society. Such determine tendencies are contrary to the goals of education where individual's effort is given prominence. Graduates of Keiyo traditional circumcision who are taken captive by the cultural teaching are more likely to have lower aspirations for higher education as a latent way of rejecting a system which denies the privileged position assigned to him by the cultural rite.

4.3. Keiyo Traditional Circumcision and Aspirations for Higher Education among Boys in Boys Boarding Schools

The study also sought to investigate the influence of Keiyo traditional circumcision among boys learning in exclusive boys boarding schools. Though the aspiration index for circumcised Keiyo boys' boarding school was nominally higher than that of boys in mixed boarding secondary schools, they scored a lower mean compared to uncircumcised Keiyo secondary school boys in any school type. This therefore rules out school type as an agent of variation in aspiration index. Nandi circumcision therefore becomes the core cause of variation. In this respect, this study agrees with the expression by Gaidner (1949) that 'no matter how much respect one has for circumcision, one cannot help being struck by the lack of sober reflection of the subject. Chebet (2007) add that the practice of circumcision could become one of the great subjects of discussion and controversy in the 21st century. Although this study is not about to recommend that Keiyo traditional circumcision be dropped, it confirms that it has negative impact on the aspiration of the learners towards higher education. This retrogressive tendency goes contrary to the national goals, Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. Circumcised boys in boys' boarding school represented a control group with fewer extraneous factors. The 'harsh' reality of competing with girls and the challenges of a day school are minimized. Yet, their aspirations fall lower than the aspirations of the uncircumcised in all school types. The conclusion therefore borrows from Gaidner (1949) that circumcision as a rite of passage undermines objectivity and Tausing (1984) that belief systems are extraordinary powerful and affect the most objective enterprises.

4.4. Keiyo Traditional Circumcision and Aspirations for Higher Education among Boys in Day School

The study too sought to investigate the influence of Keiyo traditional circumcision among Keiyo boys in day school. Students in day school experience a high magnitude of challenges. The greatest among the challenges is that psychologically, they are required to play their roles as students, yet half the time they participate in community enterprises. Their total allegiance is neither to the community or the school. Surprisingly however, though not significant, they posted a higher aspirations index than their counterparts in boys boarding and mixed boarding secondary schools. Most of the students from this school type come from economically humble origins. This study postulates that due to their socio-economic status backgrounds they may perceive education as the only tool that would liberate them from their economic quagmire all in all however; the circumcised boys in day schools registered a lower aspirations index compared to the uncircumcised in all categories of school. This leaves Keiyo traditional circumcision as the main explanation for lower aspirations among circumcised boys in day school.

4.5. Summary of the Findings

This study adds to knowledge of the nature of influence of Keiyo traditional circumcision on aspirations for higher education amongst the Keiyo youth. An important finding is that while there are only marginal differences between the aspirations for higher education among students in different school types, the thought of higher education shows marked aspirational differences between the circumcised and the uncircumcised. Significant patterns of difference emerge between students on questions to do with the usefulness and attainability of higher education. Generally, there is significant belief mainly among the young circumcised Keiyo boys that higher education does not provide valuable career outcomes. So long as they see a lot of those with higher education still tarmacking or in lowly job placement.

A significant number of the subjects surveyed indicated that most of the uncircumcised boys strongly believed that higher education would enable them attain what they needed in life. On the contrary, there existed a statistically significant difference in opinion among the circumcised who think higher education is not relevant to the jobs they need.

The uncircumcised reported that they were definitely planning to enroll at university and share strong career motives. Ironically, there was no significant difference between the circumcised and the uncircumcised in their wish to do well in their secondary education. Generally all respondents reported a strong desire to do well in school. The circumcised boys however were more likely to experience inhibiting factors and less likely to experience various influences that might encourage higher education participation. They were less secure about their personal achievement, capacities and likely lack enthusiasm. The findings of the study agree with the finding of James (2000) since the circumcised boys displayed:

- a) A weaker interest in the subject they could study in university.
- b) Less confidence and interest to discuss their school work with their parents
- c) A stronger belief that years of schooling are ways of delaying the hunt for a job.
- d) Less confidence that their academic results would be good enough for entry into courses that might interest them.
- e) Less confidence that they would have the subjects requires for courses that might interest them.

The differences in the views of the circumcised and uncircumcised boys are substantial. A higher proportion of the uncircumcised Keiyo form two boys thought the university would allow them to meet interesting people. On the other hand a higher proportion of the circumcised believed university education could be very tedious. In terms of student's personal aspirations for higher education, the study provides evidence of a set of potentially encouraging trends that are consistently stronger for the uncircumcised Keiyo students. It provides evidence of the cumulative effect of discouraging or inhibiting factors that are more prevalent for the traditionally circumcised individuals. It can be concluded that not only do the traditionally circumcised students experience inhibiting circumstances they also lack enthusiasm and motivation that might make going to university seem relevant and attainable.

In the analysis it was found out that a higher proportion of the uncircumcised boys responded positively to items that encouraged higher education participation. Items which encouraged higher education participation which revealed the compelling factors that assisted in explaining the weaker aspirations among the circumcised. However, secondary education appears to be accepted norm as there was no statistically significant difference in the responses of the sub-groups. A higher proportion of the circumcised responded positively to items discouraging higher education participation. It is also important to point out that most of the extraneous variables such as intelligence, socio-economic status, difference in parental levels of education etc were kept constant by employing a large sample drawn from a cohort of almost similar background leaving a common denominator – Keiyo traditional circumcision – as the prime cause of the difference in scores obtained.

This study can therefore authoritatively attribute means of scores obtained to the influence of the Keiyo rite of circumcision. The findings are particularly considered reliable since means of scores obtained by the circumcision in all types did not indicate significant differences as compared to the uncircumcised. It is therefore possible that the differences in aspirations for higher education amongst the cohort could be a product of induction courses provided in seclusion after circumcision. The courses could have altered the philosophical approach to life making the priorities of the circumcised different. This agrees with the findings of Tausing (1984) on the power of cultural belief system. It is for this reason that the circumcised gave a statistically significant difference indicating that university was not very important in so far as getting a job was concerned. A significant proportions of the circumcised saw higher education as a way of delaying their search deviated to driving schools as they have argue that they could have deviated to driving schools as they have assumption that those who didn't even see inside of a classroom, are drivers or even owners of a fleet of matatus. And that they were not planning to enroll for a university course in future.

4.6. Conclusion

This paper has provided evidence that due to its inability to adopt itself to new developments; Nandi circumcision has produced dysfunctional tendencies that serve to undermine the aspirations of the Keiyo youths towards attainment of higher education. As a result of the static nature of the rite this study draws the following conclusions that may basically serve as a wakeup call to those who observe the rite.

- i) To indicate to the Keiyo members that the secrecy associated with the Keiyo circumcision is an illusion. Details of this practice were documented at last a century ago. The perceived secrecy is indeed the oil that lubricates the wheels of the practice making it look too relevant and superior to the present realm of knowledge provided by schooling. Destruction of the perceived marginal beliefs associated with the practice would liberate the Keiyo youth and improve their aspirations towards higher education. A goal of the study was to unlock the potentials of the Keiyo which the study believes are locked by the cultural practices which inhibit aspirations for higher education.
- ii) To show the Keiyo that the cultural practice has remained static for at least one century. Life is dynamic and changes are inevitable. A society that does not embrace change will surely perish. The Keiyo culture of circumcision has remained static for far too long. It still teaches aggressiveness in the literal meaning of the world. It defines Keiyo in terms of courage and war. Its aim was therefore to provide a reawakening call on the need to revise the rite and promote pursuance of the presently covered modern education.
- iii) The tools of trade under the practice are still bows, shields, arrows and spears and white clay soils for camouflaging the initiate's identity while in seclusion. The reality on the ground however is different and the effective tools of trade have changed from arrows and shields to pen and paper. The practice should thus be sufficiently dynamic to reflect the current reality. It must acknowledge the fact that rising levels of community awareness and modern educational attainment will have long term generational effects on tertiary education participation whose net effect will be societal transformation. It is a misnomer for any social practice to remain the same for a century. It should have the ability to be adapted to changing realities.
- iv) To show that the Keiyo elites have left the management of the practice to the illiterate and semi-illiterate and yet allow their own sons to be inducted by the same people. The future of the society depends on the philosophical predispositions and knowledge level of the youth. Leaving the semi- illiterate to shape the opinion and life philosophy of the youth is a luxury the elites can no longer afford. In order to improve the aspirations of the youth towards higher education, the Keiyo youth should be tutored by modern role models, represents by the learned and technocrats.
- v) To show that many aspects of Keiyo traditional circumcision are quite relevant to modern life when the society is faced with challenges of moral decay. The study does not in any way advocate for the cultural practices to be discarded but questions the static nature with which the practice is embraced.
- vi) To show that the culture of circumcision has remained intact despite the rising challenges of modernity. It has only remained so because it serves a purpose which the modern educational practices have not been able to provide a substitute. It is holistic in approach and therefore superior in methodology to the western education which only stresses academic development. An amicable way of marrying the different approaches may not only be relevant but may also provide a concrete system that will unlock the potentials of the youth. Cultural practices are not moribund.

Most important, the paper has provided evidence that the Keiyo circumcision influences the aspirations for higher education negatively. Presently, the clarion call particularly advocated by the slogan embodied in the Keiyo electronic media, through KASS FM radio station is '*kimmatet naet*' its equivalent English translation is 'knowledge is power'. This slogan enjoys popular publicity among the Keiyo within and outside Kenya, the findings of this study confirm the difficulty in achieving this if the Keiyo cultural rite of circumcision is not moderated and harmonized in line with modern social and technological advancements. Modern and relevant knowledge can only be gained through attainment of the highest levels of education. This paper thus proposes this call '*kimmatet naet*' to be incorporated in all Keiyo traditional circumcision rituals as a first step of cultivating new dimensions on the relevance of higher education to all.

4.7. Recommendations

The aspirations of young people towards post-secondary education as they near the end of secondary schooling are of critical importance to their ongoing education participation. In as far as aspirations for higher education are concerned, this paper has shown that there exist a relationship between circumcision and aspirations for higher education and raised a number of considerations for education policy and programmes:

- a) Clearly the issue of circumcision is complex and related to deeply entrenched social cultural influences. It is therefore misleading for policy makers to conceptualize the problem of differential access to higher education merely in terms of constricting factors such as finance and educational achievement; participation imbalances are also caused by side factors such as cultural practices. This may account for the educational lag mainly among the pastoral communities who still perform elaborate cultural rites on their youth. Policy makers should thus seek to prepare programmes to reach out to these disadvantaged groups.
- b) Although cultural practices are emotive subjects in nature policy makers should have courage and prepare remedial or corrective programmes aimed at modernizing cultural perceptions once the youth go through cultural rites such as circumcision, they perceive themselves as adults equipped with life skills. The predominant effects may be to do with the relevance of higher education vis-à-vis cultural definitions of adult roles. The problem runs deeper and is associated with psychological or psycho-social factors that result in differing levels of importance and value being attached to higher education.

These are not factors that can be rapidly influenced through short term measures. A comprehensive policy is needed to remedy the situation.

- c) Since many factors influencing students aspirations for higher education may not arise simply at the point of transition to university or colleges, policy makers need to understand ways in which collaborative between the teaching fraternity and the students might serve to broaden the horizon of youth and assist then in making higher education seem relevant and rewarding. The new subject under piloting – Life Skills Education (LSE) could be broadened, strengthened and tailored to meet the regional and cultural needs of learners. Sufficiently trained personnel such as the trained teacher counselors may be trained further on the region specific needs and allowed to dispense the circular.
- d) Little is known of the possible impact of cultural practices on aspirations for higher education and the changing expectations of students. Policy makers should therefore strive to diversify the curricular to incorporate educational alternatives relevant to wider range of personal interests, abilities, life stages and cultural diversity.

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