

# Gender Based Violence against Females in Narok County: The Dragon in their Way to Achieving Education and Safety

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**Abstract:** *All over the world, Kenya included, there have been long standing attempts to eradicate all forms of violence against females.. The purpose of the study was to identify indicators of Gender Based Violence and factors reinforcing Gender Based Violence against females in Narok County, Kenya. Narok County was selected purposively because the county has been on the limelight on GBV and women's literacy is low. The study was guided by cultural lag theory by William Ogburn. Questionnaires, interview schedule and focus group discussions were used to collect data. Findings revealed that GBV such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child marriage and polygamy are still rampant in Narok County. The main factor reinforcing GBV against females was culture. Other factors were poverty, illiteracy among women and lack of economic empowerment among women. The study recommends the need to educate girls and women on their rights and laws that protect them, lobbying for change and change of strategy by law enforces. The study also recommends a broad view of the problem and focus on other factors such as eradicating poverty, improving women literacy, empowering women socially, economically and politically and supporting women to speak out on issues that violate their rights without fear.*

**Keywords:** Discrimination, Empowerment, Gender Based Violence, Gender Roles, Human Rights,

## 1. Background to the Study

Gender Based Violence is a worldwide phenomena. A number of international and regional human rights treaties and consensus documents provide protection against harmful cultural practices including FGM and child marriage. Key among these treaties includes the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which called for eradication of harmful traditional practices including FGM and child marriage. In 2012 the UN General Assembly adopted a milestone Resolution calling on the international community to intensify efforts to end all harmful practices and more recently, the 2015 SDGs aiming at eliminating all harmful practices, such as early forced marriage and FGM by 2030. The UN (2015) National Assembly adapted Girl Child Resolution (Resolution / 70/ 138) that recognised FGM as discrimination against the girl child and violation of the rights of girls.

In Africa international treaties and convention providing protection against harmful cultural practices are African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACRWC); and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). About 20 African countries have enacted national legislations that prohibit and penalises FGM. Uganda, Kenya and Guinea Bissau adopted laws to end FGM. In Ethiopia those responsible have been arrested, tried and penalised. Kenya is party to several of the aforementioned international human rights conventions and has not been left behind in enacting laws that protect girls and women from GBV. In Kenya laws

that prohibit Gender Based Violence most of it cultural are Children's Act (2001), Sexual Violence Act (2006), the 2010 constitution, Domestic violence Act (2011), Anti-FGM Act (2011)and the Marriage Act (2014).

According to the UN (1998) violence against women should be understood within the context of women and girls subordinate status to men and boys in society. Many cultures have beliefs, norms and social institutions that legitimize women subordination, and as a result they perpetuate violence against women (Heise *et al*, 1990). Guedes (1999) argues that violence against women cannot be separated from norms, social structure and gender roles that influence women vulnerability to violence. Norms of females depending on males are institutionalised through a range of social mechanism so that they come to appear natural and immutable. These social institutions and positions in the community play a role in elevating men over women, with men dominating all areas thus leaving women with few choices about their life.

Social norms play a significant role in explaining why and how gender differentiation occurs, how it becomes legitimized through the division of labour between men and women and how division of labour results into contribution of girls and boys being valued differently (Mulwa 2007). Children are socialized to prepare them for different adult roles and work, only in this sphere appropriate to their sex (UNDP 1999). In the society in comparison with boys, girls are often disadvantaged because of this gender prescribed roles.

FGM is the main form of Gender Based Violence and remains the main rite of passage in many countries such as Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia Sudan Egypt and Middle East. Rites of

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passage for girls differ from those of boys around the world, but in most cases, they reflect gendered norms and beliefs about appropriate roles for adult life (Koita 2012). FGM is associated with puberty, reproduction, marriage and control of women sexuality. It is widespread in both Islamic and Christian communities. It is also practised by people from all social classes including the educated elite. World Health Organization (2011) estimates that 100 to 140 million girls and women undergo the practice and estimates that 3 million girls and women are at risk in Africa. FGM is practiced in half of the rural Sub-Counties in Kenya (Mudia, 2011).

According Kenya Health Demographic Health Survey, 21% of the female population of child bearing age (15-49) reported having undergone FGM, with the Somali (94%), Samburu (86%), Maasai (78%), Embu (31%), Kalenjin (28%) and Taita Taveta (22%). Many young girls are forced into marriage after undergoing FGM. Marriage of children and adolescent girls before the age of 18 years is common in many parts of the world (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2004). It is difficult to access the statistic as most marriages are not registered. Worldwide more than 700 million women alive today were married as children. More than 1 in 3 or some 250 million were married before the age of 15 years (UNICEF 2014). According to African Union (2016) about 14 million underage girls are married on the continent each year- almost all of them are forced by their parents. Early marriage in Kenya is rampant despite laws that outlaw it. Communities that child marriage is common in Kenya are the Pokot, Maasai, Rendile Samburu and Somali (UNICEF 2016).

Cultural practices are a more complex issue affecting girls and women. In the name of culture these practices persist, preventing girls from enjoying their rights and freedoms associated with childhood. Many of them are linked to construction of sexuality of young girls and in most cases results in restriction being placed particularly to the freedom of girls (Koita, 2012). These practices may justify GBV as a form of protection or control of women.

GBV cuts across race, class, religion and culture. Women around the globe continue to be confronted with gender stereotype, discrimination, abuse, exploitation, vulnerability and denial of their rights.

Worldwide millions of women and girls live with the threat of Gender Based Violence that violates their fundamental rights and integrity (Koita 2012). Women in Asia, Latin America, Europe and Africa have experienced Gender Based Violence (Mulwa 2007). Worldwide millions of women and girls live with the threat or consequences of harmful traditional practices that violate their fundamental rights to physical integrity (Koita, 2012).

Despite judicial sanctions and awareness raising efforts by variety of organization and governments, GBV including harmful cultural practices such as FGM and forced child marriage is still endemic in Kenya (Kariuki, 2016). The problem of Gender Based Violence mainly cultural is spread

all over Kenya. The most affected are the women living in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) which are mainly occupied by pastoral communities (Limangura, 2000). Narok County is found in the ASAL region. Most of the people in the county uphold their culture. The people of Narok County are conservative and are not ready to give in to current changes in the world despite all the efforts being undertaken by various groups. The study aims at identifying the level of GBV most of it cultural and factors reinforcing GBV against females in Narok County, Kenya. Apart from contributing to existing knowledge on level of GBV, this research would be of benefit to policy makers, law enforcers, County Government of Narok County and Kenya at large.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The study was based on Ogburn's (1964) "Cultural Lag Theory". According to Ogburn, cultural lag occurs when one or two parts of culture which are correlated change before or in a greater degree than the other part does thereby causing less adjustment between two parts that existed previously" (Ogburn 1964). This theory of cultural lag suggests that a period of maladjustment occurs when non-material culture is struggling to adapt to new material conditions. Ogburn (1964) the proponent of the theory argues that within a society as a whole, a change takes place in the material and the adaptive non-material culture (belief systems and institutional practices).

According to Ogburn one of the most important keys to understanding society is to be able to understand the motivation of both individuals and groups. In a cultural lag choice on both individuals level as well as in groups is motivated by many conflicting factors that influence how individuals perceive a given situation. Some causes for change and adjustment are ideological while others are political, cultural, or based on religious beliefs. Although Ogburn (1964) propagates cultural lag as a contradiction or maladjustment between development in technological material culture and non-material culture, he also states that independent variables causing the lag could be ideological, economic, political or social.

The girl child and women in Narok County are a product of such a society that resists change thus causing maladjustment, they find themselves in the midst of contrasting forces of two elements of non-material culture (education and empowerment and retrogressive cultural practices). They ought to undergo formal schooling (non-material culture) and at the same time they are culturally compelled to be socialized into societal norms and values, where they have to undergo FGM in readiness for marriage and they are taught gender roles and to be submissive to men (another non-material culture). This is like parallel education. If a girl undergoes FGM at her tender age; she automatically graduates, into womanhood and adulthood hence ready for marriage.

Therefore, there exists a conflict as follows, on one hand the culture of her people which if she doesn't follow will result

into rejection and make her an outcast therefore a social misfit as she has the desire to belong and on the other the formal education that will educate her on her rights. The Maasai community has lagged behind in terms of changing from elements of their traditional non-material culture by continuing to practice retrogressive cultural practices, even with the introduction of formal education; which is also an aspect of non-material culture. This maladjustment between aspects of non-material culture has created a conflict between opposing forces thereby greatly contributing to the lag. The Maasai girls and women are caught between these two opposing forces and in most cases choosing to identify with their long-standing traditional culture which is resistant to change. The Maasai community is extremely reluctant to abandon their old held cultural practices and their girls and women lag behind in all sectors of the economy thus making it difficult for them to fight for their rights.

### 3. Methodology

The study was conducted in Narok County because of various reasons. First of all, it is found in ASAL where most women are affected by outdated traditions that violate their rights. Further to this the communities in Narok County uphold their culture and cannot easily accept change.

The study population comprised 864 teachers and 111,925 female students in public secondary schools, 351 government officers, 546 Village elders and 169,220 households. Samples were drawn using purposive, simple random sampling, stratified sampling and systematic sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select County Commissioner, County Director of Education, Deputy County Commissioners, and Sub - County Directors of Education, Directors of Public Prosecution and Officers from Children Department. Simple random sampling was used to select the divisions, locations, sub- locations and education zones. All the government officers in the aforementioned administrative units were purposively selected who included Assistant County Commissioners, chiefs, and Assistant Chiefs and Curriculum Support officers.

Purposive sampling was used also to select women from the sub -location selected in the study and village elders from the divisions selected in the study. The principals were selected purposively and teachers were selected using simple random sampling. The study used stratified sampling to categorize the schools into girl's secondary schools, and mixed secondary schools. Simple random sampling was used to select 10 mixed secondary schools and 5 girls' secondary schools. To select the female students, purposive sampling was used to select Form Three and Form Four students and systematic sampling was used to select the number of students. A sample of 998 respondents was utilized as the sample size.

Ex-post facto survey design was appropriate for this study because it involves investigation of possible causes by observing on existing condition and searching back in time for possible causal factors (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The

ex-post facto was used because the researcher was interested in facts as they exist in the field without manipulating them. The descriptive survey was chosen since the researcher was to collect information, describe situations, assess attitudes, opinions towards individuals, organizations and procedures hence draw conclusion on the level of GBV and factors reinforcing GBV against females in Narok County, Kenya.

Data was collected by use of questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussions. Secondary data was obtained from literature review, which comprised documentary sources on similar studies and policy documents from national and international sources. Questionnaires were administered to students, Principals and teachers in order to collect data that cannot be directly observable as it enquires about feelings and attitudes. Interviews were conducted to all government officers and women and village elders were put in focus groups. Focus group discussion enabled the researcher to assess attitudes, beliefs, desire and reaction to concepts, therefore gather more information on the way specific groups of people in the community thought about GBV and factors reinforcing GBV against females. Data collected was analysed quantitatively by use of descriptive statistics and qualitatively transcribed and discussed based on established themes.

#### Indicators of Persistence of Gender Based Violence

Statement		SA	A	UD	D	SD
FGM is still being practiced in Narok County	Girls	215 55.56%	60 17.05%	4 1.03%	32 8.27%	70 18.09%
Early marriage is still common in Narok	Girls	251 64.86%	25 6.46%	5 1.29%	58 14.99%	48 12.40%
Polygamy is common in Narok County	Girls	214 55.30%	85 21.96%	9 2.32%	27 6.98%	52 13.44%
Domestic workload is more for girls than boys	Girls	221 57.11%	81 20.93%	5 1.29%	31 8.01%	49 12.66%
Women are dependent on men in decision making	Girls	180 46.51%	51 13.8%	6 1.55%	66 16.54%	86 22.22%

The study indicated that majority of the girls (55.56%) strongly agreed that FGM is still being practiced in Narok County. The village elders and women enormously agreed that FGM is still being practiced in the County. On the opinion of teachers and government officers 60.05% of the teachers ranked FGM first. The government officers interviewed mentioned FGM as one of the cultural practices that is rampant in the county and ranked it first. The results of the study indicated that despite the efforts being made to eradicate this harmful cultural practice it is still being practiced and it is there to stay. This may be because of cultural factors such as rite of passage and also ignorant.

Majority of the girls (64.86%) strongly agreed that child marriage is still common in the county. Group discussion with women revealed that majority of them agreed that early

marriage is still common in the County. Most of the women in the study were married before the age of 18 years. The elders stated that marriage of young girls was taking place in the county. The village elders further added that marriage of young girls is common because second or third wives should be young to be able to take care of the husband and other aging wives. This was further supported by 59.1% of the teachers who ranked early marriage second while 40.9% ranked it first. Interview with government officers revealed that majority agreed that there are many cases of early and forced marriages in the county and also ranked it second after FGM. They further added that it was cruel for young girls to be married to older men with no say on what was happening in their life. According to the study findings early marriage is still common in Narok County.

The study also revealed that most of the girls (55.30%) strongly agreed that polygamy is still common in the County. Group discussion with women revealed that majority of the women involved in the study agreed that polygamy is still common in the county due to factors such as men preference for young women and also men greed for livestock thus forcing their daughters to get married to rich older men as second and third wives. Quite a number of the young women involved in the study were second or third wives. Focus group discussion with the elders showed that polygamy exist in the county, due to factors such as aging men need young women to take care of them at old age, young women increase their libido and also men believe that women and large families are a sign of wealth. This was supported by responses from teachers where majority ranked it third. Interview with government officers also ranked polygamy third after FGM and early marriage. The study findings indicate that polygamy is common in the county.

Further findings of the study indicated that 57.11% of the girls strongly agreed that domestic workload is more for girls than boys. This was further supported by women who stated that their daughters have to walk long distant in search of water and firewood and also assist their mothers in milking in the morning before going to school sometimes they also stay home to baby sit. The women further added that that their daughters have to learn these chores because it is the duty of women to take care of the family. The village elders agreed with the statement, and retorted that it is the duty of girls as women to do domestic chores. 52.63% of the teachers said yes while 47.37% said no. 67.74% of the government officers said yes while 32.26 said no to the statement. In conclusion the findings asserts girls domestic workload is more for girls than boys thus exposing girls more than boys to child labour.

The question on whether women are dependent on men in decision making 46.51% of the girls strongly agreed on the statement 13.18% agreed and 1.55% were undecided while 22.22% strongly disagreed while 16.54% disagreed with the statement. Focus group discussion with women revealed that majority agreed that women are dependent on men in decision making and added that all decision in the family are made by men without consulting them and their work is to obey. They

further added that men control everything in their live and woman who goes against them will be met with violence. Group discussion with elders revealed that majority were in agreement with the statement and further added that women are like children who cannot make decision on their own and most the time their decision are wrong. Responses from teachers indicated that majority (52.63%) agreed that women are dependent on men in decision making. Interview with government officers indicated that majority agreed that women are dependent on men in decision making. They further added that Masaai women are dependent on their husbands who even keep their identity cards and even tell them whom to vote for during elections. The patriarchal nature of the Maasai community gives the male gender supremacy and female gender subordination. The study found out that women are dependent on men, this means that men have more rights, status and privileges than women.

In conclusion the study established that Gender Based violence most of it cultural such as FGM, child marriage, girls being exposed to child labour due to gender prescribed roles and women dependency on men due to cultural norms and social structures were common in Narok county. This cultural practices and norms are gross violation to human rights as they oppress demean, dehumanize and injure in the name of tradition. They are tools used by traditionalized to degrade women status in the society.

**Prevalence of FGM among Girls and Women**

Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD
I have undergone FGM	227 58.66	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	160 41.34%
If given a second chance I would not undergo FGM	209 54%	67 17.31	1 0.26%	44 11.37%	66 17.05%
Most girls of my age have undergone FGM	217 56.07%	69 17.82%	4 1.03%	39 10.08	58 15.0

On girls prevalence on FGM the study established that 58.66% of the girls involved in the study had undergone FGM, while 54% strongly agree that if given a second chance they would not undergo FGM 17.31% agreed, 0.26% were undecided, 11.3% disagreed and 17.05% strongly disagreed with the statement. 56.07% strongly agreed that their age mates had undergone FGM, 17.82% agreed while 15% strongly disagreed.

Group discussion with women revealed that 85.7% agreed to have undergone FGM and also 81.2% agreed that they were not forced to undergo FGM hence was voluntary. 63.16% strongly agreed that they would still undergo FGM if given a second chance because they would not want to miss their sons' initiation ceremony and other social events. 59.1% of the women agreed to have subjected their daughters to FGM. However 72.7% said if it were their decision they would not subject their young daughters to FGM but they were afraid that they might be forced to subject them to FGM by their husbands and the society and also to prepare them for marriage as no man would want to marry uncircumcised

woman. The study therefore concludes that the prevalence of FGM in Narok County is high.

**Reasons for undergoing FGM**

	Statement	SA	A	UD	A	SD
1.	FGM is an important rite of passage.	126 32.56%	42 10.86%	4 1.03%	60 15.50%	155 40.05%
2.	Social acceptance forces girls to undergo FGM.	214 55.30%	73 18.86%	5 1.29%	38 9.82%	57 14.73%
3.	Peer pressure forces girls to undergo FGM	195 50.39%	74 19.13%	4 1.03%	55 14.21%	59 15.24%
4.	FGM prepares girls for marriage	245 63.31%	2 0.52%	6 1.56%	3 0.76%	131 33.85%
5.	Most girls are forced to undergo FGM	183 47.29%	70 18.09%	3 0.78%	63 16.28%	68 17.56%

As revealed by data above 32.56% of the girls strongly agreed that FGM is an important rite of passage, while 40.05% strongly disagreed. 55.3% of the girls strongly agreed that social acceptance forces girls to undergo FGM, while 14.73% strongly disagreed. 50.39% strongly agreed that peer pressure forces girls to undergo FGM, while 15.24% strongly disagreed. 63.31% strongly agreed that FGM prepares girls for marriage and 33.85% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Focus group discussion with women revealed that the main reason for undergoing FGM were, FGM is a requirement for marriage, cultural stigmatization and fear of being excluded from sons' initiation ceremony. Other reasons given by women were social acceptance and rite of passage. The women further added that FGM is part and parcel of their culture and it is difficult to end the practice. The women also stated that it is impossible to stop a girl from being cut as some escape their parents to be circumcised in order to fit with their peers. The girls also go buy their razorblade and take it to the circumciser for the cut. Focus group discussion with the elders revealed that they view FGM is an important rite of passage, and added that the community believes it is a taboo to marry uncircumcised women. The clitoris is seen as a snake that men should not come into contact with.

The main reason given by teachers for a girl undergoing FGM was that girls were socialized to believe that the practice is important and preparation for marriage. Other factors given by the teachers were social acceptance and fear of rejection. An interview with the government officers revealed that the major reason for girls undergoing FGM as acceptance for a wife was an entrenched culture.

Therefore the study concludes that social acceptance and preparation for marriage as the main reason for undergoing FGM and FGM is necessary to ensure acceptance as a wife. FGM is an important rite of passage that transformed girls into women and which every Maasai girl went through. These findings are in agreement with the findings by Muthoni (2011)

in Pokot, who gave reason for FGM as rite of passage from childhood to adulthood and social conformity.

**Reasons for Early Marriage**

	Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD
1.	Honour	156 40.31%	67 17.31%	9 2.31%	76 19.64%	79 20.41%
2.	Peer pressure	166 42.89%	57 14.74%	5 1.29%	48 12.40%	111 28.68%
3.	Poverty	258 66.67%	73 18.86%	5 1.29%	29 7.49%	22 5.69%
4.	Lack of basic needs	284 73.39%	19 4.91%	2 0.52%	14 3.62%	68 17.57%

Results obtained from girls responses showed that 40.31% strongly agreed that honor or attaining social status forced girls into early marriage, while 20.41% strongly disagreed. 42.89% strongly agreed that peer pressure forces girls in early marriage, while 28.68% strongly disagreed. 66.67% strongly agreed that poverty forces girls into early marriage while 5.69% strongly disagreed. 73.39% of the girls strongly agreed that lack of basic needs forces girls into early marriage and 17.57% strongly disagreed. Results from group discussion with women showed that majority were married before the age of 18 years. The reasons given by women for early marriage were poverty, early pregnancies, pressure from parents and the society. Reason given by elders for marring off young girls were fear of early pregnancies and that young girls fetch more bride price.

The teachers gave the main reason for early forced marriage as early pregnancies and parents' greed for livestock. Other factors given by teachers were lack of funds to cater for girls needs and keep them in school and no value was attached to girl child. Interview with government officers revealed that large families were the main reason for forced early marriage. Other factors given by government officers were poverty and value attached to livestock, hence girls being seen as commodity that goes with the highest bidder. The bride wealth given in term of livestock is used to educate sons and pay bride price for young wives and sons wives.

The study therefore concludes that poverty, lack of basic necessities and value attached to livestock as the key factors forcing girls into early marriage. Early marriages are used as means to lighten the family economic burden as poverty is evident in many homes in Narok County and it is girls who bear the blunt of redeeming their families from poverty.

**Knowledge of health risks associated with FGM and early marriage.**

Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD
I am aware of the health risks associated with FGM and early marriage.	264 68.22%	70 18.09%	4 1.03%	21 5.42%	28 7.24%
FGM and early marriage violates the rights of girls and women	206 53.23%	36 9.30%	2 0.51%	45 11.63%	98 25.33%

On learners' awareness of the health risks associated with FGM and early marriage, 68.22% were aware of the health risks and 53.23% strongly agreed that FGM and early marriage are a violation to girls and women rights. There were mixed responses from women group discussions but most of them were aware of the health risks associated with FGM and early marriage and disagreed that FGM and early marriage are a violation to girls and women rights. Focus group discussion with village elders revealed that majority were not aware of the health risks of FGM and early marriage and disagreed that FGM and early marriage are a violation to girls and women rights. Majority of the teachers were aware of the health risks associated with FGM and early marriage and all agreed that FGM and early marriage are a violation to girls and women rights. Interview with government officers revealed that all the officers were aware of the health risks associated with FGM and early marriage and all enormously agreed that FGM and early marriage are a violation to girls and women rights.

The researcher sought the opinion of government officers on community awareness on the health risks associated with FGM and early marriage. Results from the interview revealed that 78.7% said yes while 23.3% said no. They also added that awareness campaigns had been carried out but the community is ignorance as they try to protect their culture.

Therefore the study concludes the community is aware of the health risks associated with FGM and early marriage but they choose to ignore the facts.

**Opinion of Teachers and Government Officers on whether education has helped in the fight against GBV against females**

Responses from the teacher showed that 51.58% said yes, while 48.42% said no. Those who said no indicated that girls with educated parents have also been exposed to the harmful practices especially FGM. Interviews with government officers indicated that 85.48% said yes while 14.52% said no, but added that although there is reduction of the practice among some of the elite the educated support it secretly. Education has tried to reduce the practices but the war is not yet over. Some of the government officers stated that the educated do not want to be involved in the fight against harmful cultural practices because they do not want to be seen as they are fighting their community. Further findings from the interview indicated that cultural believe systems are so entrenched that even the family background and education status did not exempt the girls and women from harmful cultural practices. According to the study findings education which is open to social change has not done much in eradicating GBV as the community has not transformed because they believe in powerful traditional institutions.

**Factors reinforcing Gender Based Violence against females**

Statement	F/%	SA	A	UD	D	SD
Culture	Girls	297 76.74%	4 1.03%	22 5.68%	20 5.17%	44 11.37%
	Teachers	74 77.78%	5 5.26%	0 0.00%	2 2.11%	14 14.74%
Customs and believes reinforces GBV	Girls	231 59.69%	92 23.76%	6 1.56%	25 6.46%	33 8.53%
	Teachers	47 49.47%	36 37.89%	5 5.26%	3 3.16%	4 4.22%
Traditional institutions reinforce GBV	Girls	269 69.51%	24 6.20%	3 0.78%	22 5.68%	69 17.83%
	Teachers	53 55.79%	33 34.74%	6 6.32%	3 3.15%	0 0.00%
Poverty reinforces GBV	Girls	260 67.18%	30 7.75%	5 1.29%	21 5.43%	71 18.35%
	Teachers	40 42.11%	35 36.84%	9 9.47%	9 9.47%	2 2.11%
Illiteracy reinforces GBV	Girls	257 66.41%	21 5.43%	4 1.03%	7 1.81%	98 25.32%
	Teachers	64 67.37%	17 17.89%	7 7.37%	2 2.11%	5 5.26%

**Culture reinforces GBV against females**

Finding revealed that 76.74% Of the girls strongly agreed that culture reinforces Gender Based Violence against females. All the women in the study enormously agreed that culture reinforces Gender Based Violence. They further added that people of the community have held into their culture and no education can change them. Further to this, culture of the community demeans and discriminate women. They also confirmed that the education the girls go through prior to FGM is like parallel education and nobody can stop them from undergoing the practice. The village elders agreed that culture reinforces GBV. They further added that the practices are part of their culture and if they have been practiced since the community came into existed then they have no reasons to stop them.77.78% of the teachers strongly agreed that culture of the community reinforces GBV. This was further supported by government officers who stated that culture of the community is so entrenched. The officers added that Cultural beliefs and rigidity of the community forces girls to accept the cultural practices as normal and acceptable.

According to the findings of the study culture was a factor reinforcing GBV against females in Narok County. The Maasai culture is so entrenched that it is nearly unescapable. Cultural beliefs and rigidity of the community forces girls to undergo harmful cultural practices. Culture of the Maasai community has prescribed roles for both the male and female gender. These prescribed roles put girls and women at a disadvantaged position. The study found out that girls are more exposed to child labour than boys. Related to gender roles are the pressure the society puts on girl child and women.

The patriarchal nature of the Maasai community gives the male gender supremacy and female subordination. The study found out that male dominance makes women to be dependent on men, this means that men have more rites, status and

privileges than women. The cultural beliefs, norms and social institution of the Maasai legitimizes women subordination, therefore perpetuating violence against women. The study noted that GBV mainly cultural cannot be separated from norms and social structure. The findings of the study are in line with those poised by Koita (2012) that in many parts of the world, women are taught to be submissive and obedient to their partners and a man's honour often depends on his ability to control wife's behaviour. Further the study found out that most of the social norms serves to entrap women in cultural practices that violate their rights by teaching them that these practices are normal and deserving, so any one who violates them will curse their families. In bid to protect culture communities in Narok County still practice harmful cultural practices. Cultural belief system are so entrenched that even he family background did not exempt the girl child and women from harmful cultural practices.. This finding of the study is in agreement with Kariuki (2016) that the magnitude of Gender Based Violence in Kenya is disturbing and this is due to patriarchal systems in Kenya.

#### **Customs and beliefs reinforce GBV against females**

The study indicated that 59.69% of the girls involved in the study strongly agreed that customs and beliefs reinforce Gender Based Violence. Majority of the women interviewed agreed that customs and beliefs reinforces Gender Based Violence against women and most of the customs and beliefs do not favour women and mostly violet their rights. Women have to comply with all the customary laws of the community which do not mostly favour them. The village elders enormously disagreed that customs and beliefs reinforce Gender Based Violence as they only uphold their culture. 49.47% of the teachers strongly agreed that customs and beliefs reinforce Gender Based Violence. The same statement was further supported by government officers were 78.4% of those interviewed agreed that custom and beliefs enhances Gender Based Violence.

#### **Traditional institution reinforces GBV**

Data indicated that 69.51% of the girls strongly agreed that traditional institution reinforces GBV. This was also confirmed by women interviewed who stated that traditional institutions that are supported by men elevate men over women thus violence against women goes unnoticed. As one of them explained "immediately their daughters receive their first monthly period they are supposed to report to their husbands and then circumcise them in readiness for marriage". The study established that the village elders supported the traditional institutions. Group discussion with the village elders asserted that the traditional institutions are symbols and pillars in entrenching their valued cultural practices. 55.75% of the teachers also strongly agreed that traditional institutions reinforce GBV. This was also confirmed by the government officers that traditional institutions are led by men who do not value women and look down on them. Most of the women are dependent on men and are there to obey.

#### **Poverty reinforces Gender Based Violence**

The findings of the study revealed that 67.18% of the girls strongly agreed that poverty reinforces Gender Based Violence as opposed to 18.35% who strongly disagreed with the same. Group discussion with the women mentioned poverty as a factor reinforcing Gender Based Violence as it is only by marrying off their daughters that the family will be redeemed from poverty. For their daughters to get married they have to undergo FGM. The village elders disagreed that poverty reinforces GBV because also the rich are also involved in the practices. 42.11% of the teachers also strongly agreed that poverty reinforces Gender Based Violence while 2.11% strongly disagreed. This was further confirmed by interviewing the government officers who overwhelmingly agreed that poverty was a factor reinforcing Gender Based Violence as a large number of the community was living in poverty and it is difficult to provide for the girls and the only way out was to marry them and use the bride price to provide for the remaining large families and also pay bride price for young wives and those of their sons. Poverty is evident in many homes in many homes in Narok County and It is girls who bear the blunt of riding the families from poverty. Early marriages are used to lighten the family's economic burden.

#### **Illiteracy reinforces Gender Based Violence**

Results from the study showed that 66.41% of the girls strongly agreed that illiteracy reinforces GBV while 25.32% strongly disagreed. Majority of the women interviewed had not been to school and did not seem to see anything wrong with exposing their daughters to FGM and early marriage and cooping with the male dominated society that looks down on women. The village elders were not sure whether illiteracy was a contributing factor. 66.37% of the teachers also strongly agreed that illiteracy reinforces Gender Based Violence. This was also supported by majority of the government officers who confirmed illiteracy reinforces Gender Based Violence. They further stated illiteracy level is high in the County especially among women and that is why advocacy has not helped much.

Illiteracy among women contributed to the persistence of the practices. Women lack social exposure and education thus creating a conducive environment for harmful cultural practices to continue. The study also found out women lack economic empowerment to support themselves and avoid dependency on men.

#### **Efforts made by teachers and government officers to protect girls and women from Gender Based Violence**

The findings showed that some of the measures taken by teachers to protect girls from GBV included: - educating girls on the health effects of harmful cultural practices, their rights and laws that protect them, working with the childrens' Department to protect girls by rescuing them, putting them in rescue centers and boarding schools and reporting those who violate the rights of girls.

Measures put in place by government officers to protect girls and women from GBV were educating the community on the

health effects of harmful cultural practices, sensitization through public Barraza's, encouraging girl child education, interpreting the laws that are made to protect girls and women, arresting the culprits and enforcing the law.

#### **Measures the government should use to end Gender Based Violence**

The teachers and government officers were asked to suggest measures that can be put in place to end GBV. The teachers suggested on approaches such as more emphasis on girl child education, use of alternative rite of passage and make follow up, a lot of advocacy, educating boys and men to accept uncircumcised girls and working with key actors like council of elders, laibons and political leaders and improving women literacy.

The government officers suggested that there was need to use approaches such as improving women literacy, empowering women socially, economically and politically, establishing relationships with council of elders who are respected, involving local leaders in campaigns, negotiating with elders for change because they believe these practices are normal and important. Government officers should interpreting and enforcing existing laws.

In conclusion there is need to identify critical issues of culture that are assumed to be normal yet they demean, degrade and put girls and women in disempowering position. There is also need to focus on other factors like poverty, early pregnancies, improving women literacy and empowering women socially, economically and politically. A field analysis should be undertaken to help identify the helping and hindering forces then working with the helping to reach the hindering forces. The opposing forces should be brought on board and be provided with appropriate training to help them change and change the whole community. It should also be noted that lobbying for change of cultural practices which are so entrenched is difficult especially when what is seen as right in the community is trouble making. Law alone cannot change deeply rooted traditions so there is need to change the strategy and use persuasion. The community should be encouraged to act on their values and be persuaded to change their beliefs gradually. There is need to use the family socialization process to bring change. It is in the family that children are socialized into basic community values. The family should teach boys and men that marrying uncircumcised women is not a bad omen and children from uncircumcised women are not a curse. Women who are involved in the practices are involved in socializing girls into the community should change their perception of this cultural practices.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The cultural practices and norms are a gross violation to human rights as they oppress, dehumanize and injure in the name of traditions. For example early marriage is one of the cruel hardship to befall girls and their mothers who have no say on what befalls them. Forced marriage to young girls before the age of 18 years sums the harm, the injustice and

stolen potential that afflict many girls. The practices are a form of discrimination that puts women in disempowering position. The prevalence of FGM, child marriage and polygamy were high in Narok county. The community was aware of the health risks associated with FGM and early marriages but choose to ignore. Education which is open to social change has not done much to eradicate GBV as the community has not transformed because it believes in powerful traditional institutions. The community is deeply rooted in their culture and even the educated embraced the practices silently.

Among the factors identified to be reinforcing GBV against females, culture played a crucial role in the persistence of the practices. Cultural beliefs, rigidity of the community and socialization process forces girls to accept the practices as normal and acceptable. Patriarchal nature of the Maasai community gives the male gender supremacy and the female gender subordination. Culture of the community has prescribed roles for both male and female and those prescribed roles put girls and women in disadvantaged position. Other factors that reinforced the practices were poverty, illiteracy among women, lack economic empowerment among women, and involvement of women in the practices with consultation with their husbands who organized all the ceremonies. The study concludes that men played a crucial role in enhancing the practices

The study recommends emphasis on use of alternative rite of passage and follow up on the graduates. Educating the community that they can pass their values that do not harm girls during the alternative rite of passage. More sensitization on the health effects of FGM and early marriage. The study recommends more emphasis on eliminating poverty and girl child education to improve women literacy and more focus on women empowerment socially, economically and politically so that they can be able to make decisions on issues affecting themselves and their children. Educating girls and women on their rights and laws that protect them. Supporting women to speak out on issues that violate their rights without fear.

It was also proposed that there was need for working with key actors like elders, laibons and political leaders to change the community sine they are respected. Undertaking a field analysis to help identify helping and hindering forces and then work with the helping force to help bring in the opposing forces on board. Further the study recommends emphasis on transforming the community through the use of family and society socialization process to bring change. Social and cultural patterns of conduct of men should be modified to eliminate prejudice and cultural practices that discriminate women. The study also recommends the need to identify critical issues of culture that are assumed to be normal yet they demean, degrade and put girls and women in disempowering position. Further the study recommends that law enforcer should bear in mind that lobbying for change of cultural practices which are so entrenched is difficult especially when what is seen as right in the community is trouble making and Law alone cannot change deeply rooted traditions so there is

need to change the strategy and use persuasion. The community should be encouraged to act on their values and be persuaded to change their beliefs gradually so as to abandon practices such as early marriages that terminate the young girls' education.

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