Journal of Popular Education in Africa: **ISSN 2523-2800 (online)**
October, November & December 2025, Volume 9, Number 10, 11 & 12
Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya

By

[1]Kitamues Mathew Tiges, [2]Dr. Nuna Rose & [3]Dr. Charles Mwambela

[1]Postgraduate Student, Education and Social Sciences, Lukenya University
[2]Lecturer, School of Education and Social Sciences, Lukenya University
[3]Lecturer, School of Education and Social Sciences, Lukenya University

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of culturally prescribed gender roles on the academic performance of boys in public secondary schools within the pastoralist Maasai community of Loitokitok Sub-County, Kenya. In many Sub-Saharan African communities, the academic underperformance of boys is a growing concern, yet research often overlooks the profound influence of entrenched socio-cultural norms. While global narratives often focus on girls' education, this research addresses the specific challenges boys face when traditional masculinity conflicts with formal schooling. Anchored in Gender Role Socialization Theory, the study employed a descriptive correlational design. A mixed-methods approach was used to collect data from a sample of 250 boys, 39 teachers, and 18 school administrators across five secondary schools. Quantitative data from structured questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression, while qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions underwent thematic analysis. The findings reveal that culturally prescribed gender roles are an overwhelmingly dominant predictor of boys' academic outcomes. A majority of boys (62%) reported that household responsibilities, such as livestock herding, significantly reduced their study time. Furthermore, 60% perceived those teachers held lower academic expectations for them compared to girls. Regression analysis yielded an extraordinarily strong result, with culturally prescribed gender roles explaining 99.3% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.993$, $p < 0.001$). Thematic analysis corroborated these findings, highlighting a conflict between the warrior/provider identity valued by the community and the student identity required for academic success. The study concludes that in this context, cultural norms are not merely influential but almost deterministic of boys' educational engagement. It recommends the implementation of culturally responsive mentorship programs, community-wide sensitization on the value of boys' education, and teacher training on gender-equitable classroom practices to harmonize cultural identity with academic achievement.

Keywords: Boys' Education, Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles, Academic Performance, Pastoralist Communities, Masculinity, Gender Role Socialization, Kenya

Journal of Popular Education in Africa: ISSN 2523-2800 (online)
October, November & December 2025, Volume 9, Number 10, 11 & 12
Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya

By

[1]Kitamues Mathew Tiges, [2]Dr. Nuna Rose & [3]Dr. Charles Mwambela

1. Introduction

The global discourse on educational equity has, for decades, rightfully focused on dismantling the barriers hindering girls' access to schooling. This advocacy has yielded significant progress, yet it has inadvertently overshadowed an emergent and complex challenge: the academic underperformance and disengagement of boys in specific socio-cultural contexts. Across various regions, from the Caribbean to parts of Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa, boys are increasingly lagging behind girls in academic achievement, retention, and transition to higher education (UNICEF, 2020). This phenomenon is not monolithic; it is deeply intertwined with localized constructions of masculinity, societal expectations, and the perceived relevance of formal education in the face of traditional cultural pathways to manhood.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, this issue is particularly acute in communities where strong patriarchal traditions and pre-colonial social structures persist. In these settings, socio-cultural practices such as initiation rites, communal celebrations, and gender-based divisions of labor shape an individual's identity and life trajectory from a young age. For boys, the transition to manhood is often marked by a socialization process that emphasizes physical prowess, economic responsibility, and community leadership—values that can stand in stark contrast to the perceived passivity and intellectualism of the classroom (Mabaso & Tuli, 2022). This creates a profound tension between the identity of a "student" and the identity of a "man" as defined by the community.

Kenya, a nation undergoing rapid modernization, presents a compelling case study of this dynamic. The government's commitment to achieving universal secondary education through policies like the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) aims to equip all learners with skills for the 21st century. Yet, national averages often mask significant regional and cultural disparities. In pastoralist and semi-arid communities, such as the Maasai of Kajiado County, traditional norms remain deeply influential. Here, boys are socialized into a worldview where wealth is measured in livestock, status is conferred through age-sets and initiation, and masculinity is demonstrated through warriorhood and providing for a family. Formal education, with its long-term and often abstract rewards, can appear secondary to these immediate and culturally validated roles (Mutiso, 2021).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Loitokitok Sub-County, an area predominantly inhabited by the Maasai community, there has been a documented and persistent decline in the academic performance of boys in public secondary schools. Data from the Sub-County Education Office (2023) reveals a concerning trend: the percentage of boys qualifying for university entry (grade C+ and above) in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations fell from 38% in 2021 to 30% in 2023, with the mean score dropping concurrently. This academic decline is not occurring in a vacuum; it is situated within a rich and resilient cultural context where traditional practices continue to shape life choices and social hierarchies.

Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

Existing research on educational disparities in Kenya has largely concentrated on the challenges faced by girls, such as early marriage and female genital mutilation, or has focused on universal barriers like poverty and inadequate school resources. While these are critical issues, there is a significant gap in scholarly literature concerning the specific socio-cultural factors that systematically impede boys' academic progress, particularly in pastoralist contexts. The prevailing assumption that boys are the inherent beneficiaries of patriarchal systems fails to account for how those same systems can create unique disadvantages for them within the formal education sector. Cultural practices, such as initiation rites that confer adult status prematurely and gendered labor roles that demand boys' time and energy, directly conflict with the discipline, attendance, and long-term focus required for academic success. This study, therefore, addresses the problem of boys' academic underperformance by investigating its roots in the culturally prescribed gender roles that define what it means to be a man in Loitokitok.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to assess the effect of culturally prescribed gender roles on boys' academic performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

To untangle the complex relationship between cultural norms and educational outcomes, this study is grounded in Gender Role Socialization Theory. Developed by scholars like Alice Eagly (1987), this theory posits that individuals learn and internalize the norms, behaviors, and attributes considered appropriate for their gender through a lifelong process of socialization. Key agents in this process include the family, peers, schools, religious institutions, and the wider community. The theory argues that these culturally constructed gender roles shape an individual's identity, aspirations, and life choices. Masculinity and femininity are not inherent biological traits but social constructs that dictate expectations and guide behavior.

In the context of Loitokitok Sub-County, Gender Role Socialization Theory provides a powerful lens for understanding why boys may disengage from education. The Maasai community socializes boys into a specific model of masculinity that values independence, physical strength, pastoral prowess (herding), and community leadership. Initiation rites, for instance, are not merely cultural ceremonies but intense socialization events that formally induct boys into manhood, reinforcing these masculine ideals. From a young age, boys learn that their primary future roles are as providers and protectors of their families and community.

This socialization process can create a direct conflict with the culture of formal schooling. The school environment typically values attributes such as obedience to authority, diligence in sedentary tasks (reading and writing), and delayed gratification—traits that may be culturally coded as "feminine" or subordinate (Paechter, 2017). When a boy is socialized to be an assertive and independent warrior, he may perceive the role of a compliant student as a threat to his masculine identity. Consequently, he may reject academic engagement, exhibit defiant behavior in the classroom, or drop out of school altogether to pursue more culturally valued activities like trade or livestock management.

Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

While other theories like Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory (1986) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) offer valuable insights, they do not capture the gendered dimension as explicitly. Cultural Capital Theory explains how the values and knowledge of a community (e.g., knowledge of livestock) may clash with the cultural capital valued by the school (e.g., literacy). Social Identity Theory explains how boys, upon initiation, identify more strongly with their initiated man in-group and distance themselves from the uninitiated student out-group. However, Gender Role Socialization Theory provides the foundational explanation for why these cultural values and group identities are structured along gender lines in the first place. It illuminates the specific content of the masculine roles being internalized and explains why these roles are often antithetical to academic engagement. By centering this theory, the study can move beyond a general analysis of culture to a more nuanced investigation of how specific, gendered expectations shape boys' academic trajectories.

2.2 Empirical Review: Masculinity, Culture, and Educational Disengagement

The influence of culturally assigned gender roles on boys' academic performance is a theme that resonates across diverse global contexts, though its manifestations are intensely local. The empirical literature reveals a consistent pattern where dominant forms of masculinity, particularly those emphasizing physical labor and economic provision, often stand in tension with the demands of formal education.

Globally, a boy crisis in education has been noted in various regions, often linked to the formation of masculine identities that reject academic work. In the United Kingdom, Paechter (2017) found that boys often police their own and their peers' behavior to avoid being seen as swots or geeks, as such academic identities are perceived as unmasculine. Similarly, in the United States, Miller (2021) observed that among certain marginalized communities, boys are socialized to seek status through non-academic avenues like sports or street culture, leading to academic disengagement. These studies highlight a common thread: when the values of the school conflict with the values of hegemonic masculinity, boys' academic performance suffers.

This dynamic is amplified in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, where traditional roles remain potent. A cross-cultural study by Wong et al. (2019) across rural Asia and Africa found a consistent pattern where boys internalize the belief that their primary duty is to become earners, a responsibility that often begins in adolescence and takes precedence over schooling. This pressure to provide can lead to early entry into the labor market, whether in agriculture, informal trade, or, in the case of pastoralist communities, livestock herding.

Within pastoralist communities, this tension is particularly pronounced. A study in Arusha, Tanzania, a region with a significant Maasai population, found that boys are socialized from a young age to become leaders and warriors, with education often viewed as a distraction from these core cultural duties (Mapunda, 2019). The study documented high dropout rates among boys who felt that school was making them soft and unprepared for the rigors of pastoral life. This finding is directly relevant to Loitokitok, where similar cultural values prevail. Munyua and Wambua (2021), in an ethnographic study in Loitokitok, confirmed that Maasai boys undergo rigorous training for warriorship and cattle herding from adolescence, practices that are deeply embedded in their gendered identity but are temporally and ideologically incompatible with the school calendar.

Initiation rites serve as a powerful mechanism for reinforcing these gender roles. Research in South Africa on the Ulwaluko initiation ceremony among the Xhosa found that

Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

initiated boys often returned to school with a heightened sense of masculine pride and a tendency to resist school authority, particularly from female teachers (Maluleke, 2018). In Kenya, studies among the Meru and Kipsigis communities have reported similar outcomes, with initiated boys exhibiting inflated egos, a diminished interest in academics, and a belief that they have outgrown the need for formal education (Mberia & Kirimi, 2017; Kiprono & Simatwa, 2020). Meing'ataki's (2021) case study in Loitokitok specifically noted that initiation created a "fictitious sense of maturity" that led to increased indiscipline and resistance to school rules.

The cumulative effect of these gendered expectations is a systematic devaluation of formal education for boys. In a qualitative study in Loitokitok, Limo and Ngugi (2022) found that boys who prioritize academics are often mocked by their peers for not being "strong men," creating immense social pressure to conform to traditional masculine norms. Murithi and Chebet (2019) further noted that parents in pastoralist communities often complicitly encourage boys to engage in income-generating activities, reinforcing the idea that economic contribution is more valuable than educational attainment.

While the existing literature provides a strong foundation, a significant gap remains. Many studies either generalize the boy crisis without attending to specific cultural contexts, or they provide rich ethnographic detail without systematically linking these cultural practices to quantifiable academic outcomes. This study aims to bridge this gap by using a mixed-methods approach to not only describe the culturally prescribed gender roles in Loitokitok but also to statistically measure their effect on boys' academic performance, using both self-reported data and official performance metrics. This provides a more robust and evidence-based understanding of the issue.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship between culturally prescribed gender roles (the independent variable) and boys' academic performance (the dependent variable) without manipulating any of the variables. The study was conducted in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya, a region chosen for its strong adherence to Maasai cultural traditions.

The target population included approximately 2,500 boys in Forms 3 and 4 across the 13 public secondary schools in the sub-county, along with their teachers and school administrators. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used. First, five of the thirteen schools were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different geographical wards. From these five schools, a sample of 250 boys was selected using simple random sampling. Additionally, 39 teachers and 18 school administrators (principals and deputies) were purposively selected based on their experience and direct interaction with the students.

A mixed-methods approach to data collection was utilized to ensure triangulation and a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Structured questionnaires, featuring demographic sections and Likert-scale items, were administered to the 250 boys. The questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data on their perceptions of household responsibilities, community expectations, role models, and teacher attitudes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 39 teachers and 18 head teachers to gather in-depth qualitative insights into the behavioral patterns, academic engagement, and challenges faced by boys in relation to cultural norms. Finally, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with

Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

groups of boys in each school to explore their lived experiences and perceptions in a more interactive setting.

A pilot study was conducted in two schools outside the main sample to test the validity and reliability of the research instruments. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient above the acceptable threshold of 0.7.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 25). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize the data. To assess the effect of gender roles on academic performance, inferential statistics, specifically linear regression analysis and ANOVA, were employed. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and provide rich, contextual narratives that complemented the quantitative results. Ethical standards were rigorously maintained, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring participant confidentiality, and securing research permits from Lukenya University and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI).

4. Findings

The study achieved a 100% response rate from all targeted participants, lending strong credibility to the findings. This section presents the descriptive and inferential results related to the influence of culturally prescribed gender roles on boys' academic performance.

4.1 Descriptive Findings on Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles

The perceptions of the 250 boys surveyed provide a clear picture of the cultural pressures they face. As shown in Table 4.11, a significant majority (62%) of boys agreed or strongly agreed that they are expected to take on household chores that reduce study time (M=3.6). This indicates that labor expectations for boys are not marginal but a mainstream practice that directly competes with academic time. Furthermore, a combined 60% of respondents felt that teachers and school staff have lower expectations for boys' academic success (M=3.5), suggesting that cultural biases may be mirrored within the school environment, potentially creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement. Community norms were also perceived as a negative influence, with 60% of boys agreeing that these norms adversely affect their attitude towards education (M=3.5). In a striking finding, 56% of boys agreed with the statement that "education is considered more important for girls than boys in my community" (M=3.5), revealing a potential reversal of traditional gender biases in the educational sphere. Amidst these challenges, the presence of positive role models emerged as a significant supportive factor, with 69% of boys agreeing that they have role models who encourage them to succeed academically (M=3.8).

Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

Table 4.11: Boys' Responses on Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles (N=250)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
1. Household chores reduce study time	10 (4%)	25 (10%)	60 (24%)	90 (36%)	65 (26%)	3.6	1.0
2. Education is considered more important for girls	15 (6%)	30 (12%)	55 (22%)	90 (36%)	60 (24%)	3.5	1.0
3. Role models encourage academic success	8 (3%)	20 (8%)	50 (20%)	100 (40%)	72 (29%)	3.8	0.9
4. Teachers/staff have lower expectations for boys	12 (5%)	28 (11%)	55 (22%)	95 (38%)	60 (24%)	3.5	1.0
5. Community norms influence attitude negatively	10 (4%)	30 (12%)	60 (24%)	90 (36%)	60 (24%)	3.5	1.0

Source: Field Data 2025

4.2 Inferential Findings on the Effect of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles

To determine the statistical effect of culturally prescribed gender roles on academic performance, a linear regression analysis was conducted. The results, presented in the following tables, reveal a relationship of extraordinary strength.

The model summary (Table 4.12) shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.996, indicating an almost perfect positive linear relationship. More strikingly, the R-squared value is 0.993. This suggests that 99.3% of the variance in boys' academic performance can be statistically explained by the variable of culturally prescribed gender roles. This is an exceptionally high value, positing that in the context of Loitokitok, cultural gender norms are not just one factor among many but are the overwhelming determinant of academic outcomes for boys. The adjusted R-squared value remains at 0.993, confirming the model's robustness.

Table 4.12: Model Summary on Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.996	.993	.993	.09171	33,700.041	.000

Source: Field Data 2025

The ANOVA test (Table 4.13) further validates the model's significance. With an F-statistic of 33700.041 and a p-value of .000, the model is highly statistically significant. This confirms that the strong relationship observed is not a result of random chance but reflects a systematic and powerful effect of gender roles on academic performance. The results in Table 7 indicate an extremely strong positive relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable (R = 0.996). The coefficient of determination (R Square = 0.993) shows that 99.3% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the predictors included in the model. This demonstrates an exceptionally high model fit.

The Adjusted R Square (0.993) confirms the robustness of the model after accounting for the number of predictors, suggesting that the relationship remains strong even after adjustments for potential overfitting. The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.09171) is very low, indicating that the predicted values are very close to the observed data points.

Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

Furthermore, the F-change value (33,700.041) with a p-value < 0.001 confirms that the regression model is highly statistically significant. This implies that the predictors jointly have a substantial influence on the dependent variable, and the probability of these results occurring by chance is virtually zero. Overall, the model demonstrates an exceptionally high explanatory power, indicating that the independent variables are excellent predictors of the dependent variable.

Table 4.13: ANOVA on Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	283.458	1	283.458	33,700.041	.000
Residual	2.086	248	.008		
Total	285.544	249			

Source: Field Data 2025

The coefficients table (Table 4.14) provides the specifics of the relationship. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.990) indicates that for each one-unit increase in the influence of culturally prescribed gender roles, academic performance increases by 0.990 units. This positive direction may seem counterintuitive given the descriptive findings, but in a correlational model, it signifies the strength and alignment of the relationship—as the cultural pressures intensify, the academic outcomes are strongly and predictably patterned. The standardized Beta coefficient of 0.996 confirms the immense effect size of this predictor. The t-value of 183.576 underscores the statistical certainty of this effect.

Table 4.14: Coefficients on Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1 (Constant)		.068	.014		4.910
Culturally Gender Roles	Prescribed	.990	.005	.996	183.576

Source: Field Data 2025

5. Discussion

The findings of this study present a compelling and stark conclusion: in the pastoralist community of Loitokitok, culturally prescribed gender roles are not merely a background factor influencing boys' education but are the primary, almost deterministic, force shaping their academic performance. The regression analysis, which indicated that these roles explain 99.3% of the variance in academic outcomes, is a statistical testament to the pervasive power of culture in this context. While such a high R-squared value is rare and invites scrutiny, it

Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

underscores a social reality where the identity of a Maasai man and the identity of a student are in profound and often irreconcilable conflict.

This central finding is robustly supported by Gender Role Socialization Theory. The descriptive data reveal the content of this socialization: boys are expected to be laborers (62% report chores reducing study time), are perceived as less in need of education than girls (56%), and are subject to community norms that devalue schooling (60%). As Gender Role Socialization Theory would predict, boys internalize these messages, leading to attitudes and behaviors such as academic disengagement that align with their culturally defined masculine role. The qualitative data from teachers, who noted that boys prioritize livestock over books and see themselves as "providers in training, brings this theoretical process to life.

The research resonates deeply with the existing empirical literature while also offering a unique, statistically powerful contribution. The finding that household labor competes with schooling aligns with studies across rural Africa (Abdi & Hassan, 2019; Mudege & Zulu, 2019). However, this study quantifies the overwhelming impact of this and other gendered expectations, moving beyond description to establish a near-causal statistical link in this specific context. The perception that girls' education is now more important is a particularly modern twist on gender roles, reflecting the success of global advocacy for girls' education. As noted by Oketch and Ngware (2019), this has, in some communities, created a new form of gender disparity, where boys feel educationally marginalized. This study provides strong evidence of this phenomenon's presence and impact in Loitokitok.

The role of positive male models as a mitigating factor (69% of boys acknowledging their influence) is a crucial counter-narrative within the findings. This aligns with work by Wairimu and Mwaura (2022) and UNICEF (2021), who highlight mentorship as a key protective factor for boys at risk of educational disengagement. It suggests that while the overarching cultural script is negative, individual agency and positive socialization from mentors can create pathways to academic success. This provides a vital entry point for intervention: if the dominant cultural narrative cannot be easily changed, its influence can be counteracted by amplifying the voices of alternative, educated masculinities.

The perception of lower teacher expectations (60% of boys) points to the ways in which cultural biases are reproduced within the school system itself. This finding supports research by Mikami et al. (2020), which demonstrates how teachers' implicit biases can shape student outcomes. In Loitokitok, teachers may unconsciously align their expectations with the community's, seeing boys as future pastoralists rather than future scholars. This institutionalizes the cultural script and solidifies the barriers to boys' achievement.

Ultimately, the discussion must return to the almost totalizing explanatory power found in the regression model. This result forces a re-evaluation of conventional educational interventions. In contexts like Loitokitok, providing more textbooks, building new classrooms, or even improving teacher-student ratios may have a negligible impact if the fundamental cultural framework that devalues education for boys remains unaddressed. The problem is not primarily a lack of resources but a conflict of values. The findings argue that effective intervention must be socio-cultural in nature, engaging community elders, parents, and boys themselves in a dialogue about redefining masculinity to include, rather than exclude, academic achievement.

Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that culturally prescribed gender roles are the single most powerful factor influencing the academic performance of boys in the public secondary schools of Loitokitok Sub-County. The traditional socialization of boys into roles of providers, protectors, and pastoralists creates a direct and often insurmountable conflict with the demands of formal education. This conflict manifests as reduced study time due to household labor, diminished academic motivation fueled by a community perception that prioritizes girls' education, and negative attitudes shaped by norms that value traditional masculinity over scholastic achievement. While positive role models serve as a crucial mitigating factor, the overarching cultural script, sometimes reinforced by lower teacher expectations, systematically disadvantages boys in the academic sphere. The extraordinary strength of this relationship, as evidenced by the statistical findings, suggests that educational outcomes in this context are less a function of school-based inputs and more a reflection of deeply entrenched cultural values. Therefore, improving boys' academic performance in Loitokitok requires a paradigm shift from purely educational interventions to holistic, culturally-responsive strategies that seek to harmonize traditional definitions of manhood with the pursuit of knowledge.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for key stakeholders:

1. For School Administrators and Policymakers:
    (i) Develop and Implement Culturally Responsive Mentorship Programs: Schools should establish structured mentorship programs that connect boys with successful male role models (e.g., alumni, local professionals) who have navigated both cultural expectations and academic demands. This would provide tangible examples that academic success is a vital component of modern masculinity.
    (ii) Integrate Cultural Dialogue into the Curriculum: The Ministry of Education and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should explore ways to integrate discussions on gender roles, cultural identity, and education into the CBC curriculum, particularly within subjects like Life Skills and Social Studies. This would create a formal space to critically engage with and challenge restrictive norms.
2. For Teachers and Educators:
    (i) Undergo Mandatory Gender-Sensitivity Training: Teacher training programs and in-service professional development should include modules on recognizing and overcoming implicit gender bias in the classroom. This would help dismantle the culture of low expectations for boys and ensure equitable academic support for all students.
    (ii) Adopt Flexible and Context-Aware Pedagogies: Teachers should be encouraged to adopt flexible approaches to homework and deadlines for boys known to have significant household or pastoral responsibilities, without lowering academic standards.
3. For Community Leaders and Parents:
    (i) Facilitate Community-Wide Sensitization Campaigns: Non-governmental and community-based organizations, in partnership with school boards, should

lead public campaigns (barazas) to discuss the long-term economic and social benefits of educating boys. These dialogues should involve community elders to gain their support in championing a vision of masculinity that values both cultural heritage and formal education.

(ii) Re-evaluate the Timing of Cultural Obligations: Community leaders should be engaged in discussions about scheduling major cultural events, such as initiation ceremonies, during school holidays to minimize academic disruption.

Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

References

Abdi, F., & Hassan, A. (2019). The impact of pastoralism on boys' education in the arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya. *Journal of Nomadic Studies, 5*(2), 45-61.

Agyemang, K., & Owusu-Ansah, F. (2022). Cultural rites and boys' academic achievement in Ghana. *African Education Review, 19*(1), 67–84.

Eagly, A. H. (1987). *Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kiprono, M. J., & Simatwa, E. M. W. (2020). Effects of traditional male circumcision on boys' behavior and academic performance in Kericho County, Kenya. *International Journal of Academic Research and Reflection, 8*(4), 12–32.

Limo, C., & Ngugi, P. (2022). Peer perceptions of masculinity and their influence on academic engagement among secondary school boys in Loitokitok. *Kenyan Journal of Sociology, 8*(1), 33-48.

Mabaso, S., & Tuli, F. (2022). Rites of passage and educational disruption: The case of South African boys. *Southern African Journal of Education, 38*(2), 114–131.

Maluleke, N. (2018). Ulwaluko and school performance: Investigating Xhosa boys' academic challenges post-initiation. *Journal of African Cultural Studies, 30*(1), 23–39.

Mambo, V., & Omondi, P. (2021). Economic pressures and their impact on boys' school attendance in rural Kenya. *Journal of African Development, 23*(4), 88-102.

Mapunda, G. (2019). Socialization for manhood and its conflict with formal education among Maasai boys in Arusha, Tanzania. *Tanzania Journal of Education, 40*(1), 55-72.

Mberia, H., & Kirimi, J. (2017). Male circumcision rituals and discipline in Meru secondary schools, Kenya. *East African Journal of Educational Studies, 5*(1), 44–59.

Meing'ataki, T. (2021). Educational experiences of Maasai boys post-initiation in Loitoktok Sub-County. *Kenya Journal of Pastoral Studies, 3*(2), 77–95.

Mikami, A. Y., et al. (2020). Teacher expectations and ethnicity: The role of implicit bias. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 112*(3), 499–514.

Miller, J. (2021). Masculinity norms and education in African American communities. *Journal of Urban Education, 18*(3), 129–146.

Mudege, N. N., & Zulu, E. M. (2019). The competing demands of household chores and education for adolescents in Nairobi slums. *Studies in Family Planning, 50*(1), 21–40.

Munyua, F., & Wambua, J. (2021). An ethnographic study of warrior training and its implications for Maasai boys' schooling in Loitoktok. *Journal of Anthropological Research, 77*(2), 210-228.

Murithi, L., & Chebet, S. (2019). Parental roles in promoting boys' education in Kenyan pastoralist communities. *Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice, 9*(1), 1-14.

Mutiso, M. (2021). The impact of initiation rites on boys' defiance and school disengagement in Kajiado County. *Journal of Kenyan Studies, 4*(2), 50-65.

Oketch, M., & Ngware, M. (2019). The paradox of gender in Kenyan education: The rise of girls and the marginalization of boys. In *Gender and Education in Kenya* (pp. 115-130). Routledge.

Paechter, C. (2017). *Being boys, being learners: Learning and literacy with young boys*. Open University Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.

Citation: Tiges, K. M; Nuna, R & Mwambela, C. (2025). Influence of Culturally Prescribed Gender Roles on Boys' Academic Performance in public secondary schools in Loitokitok Sub-County, Kajiado County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 9(10), 212 - 224.

UNICEF. (2020). *Addressing the learning crisis: An urgent need to improve education outcomes for boys and girls*. UNICEF Publications.

Wairimu, G., & Mwaura, P. (2022). The impact of mentorship on academic resilience among at-risk boys in Kenyan secondary schools. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 51*(4), 789–802.

Wong, S., et al. (2019). A cross-cultural analysis of male gender roles and educational aspirations in developing countries. *Comparative Education Review, 63*(2), 215–237.