



Cultural Barriers to Education of the Girl Child and Its Implication to Educational Attainment of the Oroko Children in Secondary Schools in the Kumba Municipality

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the cultural practices that pose a barrier to female educational attainment of the Oroko people. Looking at the cultural barrier to the education of the girl child and its implication on educational attainment, the researcher realized that culture has played a great part in the attainment of education of the girl child in the Oroko land. The population of this study was made up of three secondary schools in the Kumba municipality. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. Data was analyzed by the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that cultural barriers such as early marriages and the preference of the boy child's education over that of a girl child affect the girls' educational attainment in the Oroko land. Based on the finding the researcher recommended that the government should open schools in all villages so as to encourage the girls to go to school, the few girls who are already in school should try and impress their parents so that can change their mentality and conception that they have concerning female education.

Keywords: *Girl child education; cultural barriers; boy child education preference; Oroko.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the largest areas in which girls still face discrimination in the developing world is Education, and Cameroon is no exception. Even though it is believed that every child has a fundamental right to education and merits the opportunity to reach their full potential; this is not usually the case of young girls. Cultural barriers form a great portion of these barriers [1]. Thus, the research set out to investigate the extent to which cultural barriers have affected the educational attainment of the Oroko children in secondary schools in the Kumba municipality. Education is defined by [2] as all the experiences in which people learn incidental, accidental, formal, informal or non-formal. Education as defined by the [3] is a basic human need and process of acquiring a broad knowledge, attitude, values and skills. It further argued that education is very significant because it can be used as a means of meeting other basic needs like portable drinking water, adequate nutrition, shelter and good health through training.

It is also important to know that education does not only develop the lives of human beings but goes a long way to enhance development of the society socially, economically, culturally and politically. It is because of these reasons that the United Nations in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights [4], recognised the need for empowerment through education especially women. Observing that there is a great barrier in the education of the girl child in Africa, Cameroon of which Oroko is inclusive and due to the influence of culture and mindful of the advantages of an educated community, the researcher became interested in looking at some of these cultural barriers and its implication on educational attainment of the Oroko people and the girl child in particular.

1.1 Background of the Study

According to [5] the high gap in school enrolment level and the high illiteracy among women in many West Africa Countries results from the neglect of female education during the colonial era. During the colonial era, the colonial masters educated mostly men who served as clerks or teachers and women who successfully accompanied their husbands to urban areas were only allowed to cater for their families [6]. The Oroko in this effect came to the conclusion that education was only a man's affair and women were only seen as commodities for sale

in marriages. Reason why the girl child achieved little or no education in many rural areas, Oroko land inclusive.

The Oroko people are a group of people who are still trying to meet up to the standard of life and in the domain of education they are still backward. Oroko clan has a total of 227 villages scattered in two divisions (Meme and Ndian) in the South West Region of Cameroon, with the population of the Ndian division well over about 200,000 people. In 1975 the entire Ndian division had only two schools: Government Secondary School (GSS) Mundemba and SAR Mundemba. Nowhere else in Ndian division was any other Secondary school found that could educate the Oroko child and especially the female children. Thus many Oroko children were unable to receive any form of formal education as a result of the absence of schools. The next school that the government created in 1980 was GSS EkondoTiti. Even though there has been an influx of colleges and high schools and even teachers training colleges (three in total) in the division; the learning conditions are sub-standards. However, a few female children are now able to go to school and could attain a certain level of education [7].

Generally there is shortage of learning materials, out-dated form of classrooms across the division. It is for this reason that, the Oroko people must design their own destiny. Remember what the legend Bob Marley said: "we should emancipate ourselves from mental slavery and none but ourselves will free our minds". Thus the Oroko people need to strive for educational attainment of their people. Despite the fact that the girl child couldn't attain a certain level of education in the yesteryears due to cultural beliefs but to a greater extent they can now go to school. All thanks to civilization that has entered most villages and parents have now come to the realization that the girl child's education is as important as the boy child's. This is a great change that will go a long way to push the Oroko people forward [7].

1.2 Statement of Problem

Education is important for economic, social, cultural and political development of a country and it is also a basic human right. It is rather unfortunate that many girls in Cameroon in general and in the Oroko land in particular have not attained a certain level of education (university education). This more often than not

leads to premature pregnancies and marriages, sexual promiscuity etc [8,9,10,1]. The fact that most girls in the Oroko land do not reach a certain level of education is a big problem despite the government's effort in promoting free education. The researcher intends to find out factors that hinder the educational pursuit of the girl child in the Oroko land. Debates about schools in richer countries are often about the politics of priorities, what subjects should be given most importance, what need extra help and what needs more spending. South Sudan has been named as the worst place in the world for education for girls; but for families in many developing countries questions about education can be a lot more basic: Is there any access to school at all? That is the problem. Across developing countries, most of those without schools are fragile countries; here many families are at risk from poverty, ill health, poor nutrition and displacement from war and conflict. Many young girls are expected to work rather than go to school. And many marry young, ending any chance of an education [11]. UN figures indicate that girls are more than twice as likely to lose out on education in conflict zone.

It becomes unfortunate when some children cannot have access to education because of some archaic cultural practices. This is a peculiar problem in Cameroon and especially in the Oroko land where the Oroko people see female children as a liability and the male children as assets and can be the only one to hold the family together and carter for the wellbeing of the family. Such a situation calls for attention and a redress of this situation. Thus the researcher indulged in this investigation.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the cultural practices that pose as a barrier to female educational attainment of the Oroko people.

Specifically, this study seeks to;

1. Find out the extent to which preference to boys' education has affected the educational attainment of the girl child in the Oroko land.
2. Find out how preference for early marriages for girls has affected the educational attainment of the girl child in the Oroko land.

1.4 Specific Research Hypothesis

- H₀1:** The preference of boys' to girls' education has not significantly affected the educational attainment of the girl child in the Oroko land.
- H_a1:** The preference of boys' to girls' education has significantly affected the educational attainment of the girl child in the Oroko land.
- H₀2:** The preference for early marriages for girls has no significant effect on the educational attainment of the girl child in the Oroko land.
- H_a2:** The preference for early marriages for girls has a significant effect on the educational attainment of the girl child in the Oroko land.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review set out to identify how cultural barriers have affected the educational attainment of the girl child in national, international and local research related to this study.

2.1 Preference to Boy's Education

Wang [12] stated that due to son preference, boys are more likely to be enrolled in schools than girls and will receive longer years of education. Also according to Confucian culture, failing to have a son is regarded as one of the three grave unfilial acts because it cuts off the family lineage. Having sons is culturally important because only sons are allowed to perform last rites or ancestor worship for their parents. Given this social and cultural context, women through history have had low status within their families during their entire lives. When girls are young and live in their natal families, their brothers were more favoured by their parents and have more authority and higher priority in resources allocation [12,13]. This is the well-known son preference phenomenon which was common in the past and also prevails in the rural areas of contemporary China.

Son preference beliefs, combined with perceived financial returns, lead parents to have higher educational expectations for boys than for girls. Adolescent girls in rural china, in general, have lower education attainment and higher labour force participation rates compared with boys [14]. This phenomenon of boy education preference is

also very prevalent in Cameroon especially amongst the Oroko people.

Son preference to education value embedded in Asian countries such as Korea and china may explain girls' low access to healthy behaviours. Wang [12] reported that boys in a family were more likely to be highly educated than the girls based on the belief that boys provide financial benefits for their families. In this context, it is speculated that low educated girls may be less informed of and have fewer healthy lifestyle skills.

Dolphyne [15] argued that in the African societies, most women are provided to their husbands as Education and that becomes a means of entering highly paid job; into the formal sectors and boys had to be sent to school for formal education and not girls. These boys will eventually become the bread winners of their families.

This education discrimination against the girl child is also very present in Cameroon and the Oroko girls are no exception. A majority of the indigenous parents oroko parents inclusive prefer their male children to go to secondary school than their female children and this is solely because they believe the boy child will support them in the future. Moreover, boys will also carry the family name unlike the girls who will marry in another family and support her husband's family. Some parents who are even University educated remain steadfast to basic traditions which stipulate that only boys have the right for higher education [10,1]. Contrary to this notion of only the boy child being capable of taking care of their parents, nowadays boy and girl children alike take care of their parents' wellbeing.

In Cameroon, it is most likely that the main reason the girl child is missing out on education is based on cultural expectations. It is believed that the girl child should know how to do house chores and take care of the family. Thus they should be able to cook, clean, farm, and prepare for marriage meanwhile the men go out to fend for money. Thus when faced with limited resources for the schooling of the children, the girl child's education is sacrificed in favour of their male counterpart while the girls are prepared for marriage. Such cultural beliefs have to change to break the cycle of discrimination against the girl child's education [1].

2.2 Preference for Marriage

Holcamp [9] found out that in rural areas, girls' dropout rate is high because parents consider girls' schooling as of no benefit when they leave their family after getting married. Mansory [8] also found out that early marriage is the foremost cause of early school dropout of girls in Afghanistan. A lot of research has highlighted on girls' age and education and found out that when girls reach puberty, parents consider that it is time for them to be married and tend to arrange their marriage instead of their continued education.

Ward and Penny [16] found out that these competing demands on girls' time has translated into relatively poorer academic performance than their male counterparts, often leading to high repetition and ultimately, higher dropout rates. In addition, socio- cultural norms promulgating early marriage and child birth; distance from home to school gives rise to issues of special concern for security. Such challenges are prevalent amongst female students in South Sudan. South Sudan currently has one of the lowest globally ranked levels of gender equality in the world [17,18].

Two reasons that top the list for school drop out for ladies are early marriage and early pregnancy. The dowry associated to marriage can be a lucrative incentive for parents to marry their daughters off at an early age. This practice is especially common in rural areas. Prioritization of boy's education over girls leads to girls being removed from school earlier. If a family cannot afford to send all their children to school, the interest of boy's education will be favoured. Also, girls' domestic responsibilities within the household increase with age, which leaves less time for girls to attend school and study. The South Sudan customary law relegate women and girls to a lesser status and fail to respect their rights [17,18].

Marriage confines girls into a dependency system which is the most contested practice as highlighted by UNICEF (2008). Child marriage remains a challenge in Ghana. Over the years, the government and development partners have made various commitments and effects to curb the phenomenon of child marriage. A study by [19] revealed that two in ten (20.68%) girls in the sample married as children. Moreover, girls who had never attended school compared to those who had ever attended school were more likely to marry as children.

In the Chinese society, marriage is very important for women's status. Recognition and respect go hand in hand with marriage. Evidence suggests that early marriage brings some child brides respect and honour as both peers and adults in the community show them respect because they have "settled down" (married). Likewise their parents are seen as responsible parents who have married daughters [20,21]. This is in line with the Oroko people who believe marriage of their daughters is the highest respect that parents can receive. Moreover, the child who is married receives respect among her peers and community. In this light the Oroko man prefers to send their daughters to marriages than send them to school, and this has greatly affected their academic attainment because most often these girls are send off to marriages at just the finish of primary education or better still they do not even go to the primary school.

Brooks [22] argued that for women to survive in many African societies, they must marry and cultivate their husband's lands and most girls are pushed into early marriages as early as the age of 12years without any choice or consent and their off-springs are not supported to grow as responsible men and women. Parents in several Cameroonian homes, Oroko land inclusive prefer their female children to marry immediately after primary school than going to secondary schools. As soon as parents realize their daughter has attained puberty, she is obliged to accept a husband. These parents consider their daughter as source of income and would rather encourage her to marry from a rich family so that their bride price can be used to send their brothers to school [1].

Birchall [23] states that girls dropped out of schools due to early marriages because most parents think it is better for girls to get married than to go to school since their husbands can take care of their families and better the lives of their in-laws one way or the other. Parents in Oroko land are very happy to see their daughters pregnant because they desire grandchildren.

The issue of girls getting married instead of schooling is so much attached to the values and customs of the Oroko people and it is difficult to convince them to leave such customs. The Oroko people are incarnated to the "Dingwengi" and "Ngoua Wolowa" dance. The Dingwengi celebration comes as a result of happiness by parents of having a grandchild, while the "Ngoua Wolowa" dance is a secret female societal dance

which gains the individual a lot of respect among women. Mothers involve will always desire their daughters to succeed them. This obviously hinders such a female to go to school and thus her Educational attainment thus account for girl-child's misery in attaining higher education amongst the Oroko people. Also there is a custom in the Oroko land which says that if the mother of a child was not paid her dowry that said child will go back to the woman family "AtibaMbisa". Under Cameroon law, a girl must be 15years old to marry and a boy must be 18 years old to get married. However, forced and arranged marriages of girls and boys below these ages is common in northern and rural areas of Cameroon of which Oroko is part of it [10].

2.3 The Concept of Poverty

A close investigation of gender differences in child labour require investigation of the major socio- economic reasons why children work. The literature on the determinants of child labour points out poverty as the most common reason that influences the decision of parents to make their children work. Indeed according to the poverty hypothesis, if the family lives in poverty child labour may be viewed as a means to relax budget constraints in the short run. In this context, education is seen as a luxury that could only be afforded when income rises sufficiently. The family may invest in the Boy's education by sending the girls to work in order to supplement the family resources [24].

Nowadays, as the third largest oil producer in Sub Saharan Africa behind Nigeria and Angola, Sudan is one of the richest countries in Africa in terms of natural resources. However, it has failed to use its natural resources to reduce its high poverty level and to equally share its wealth among the population. Even though education is free and compulsory, a large number of children are not in school, undermining poverty reduction among the next generations. In South Sudan, the proportion of children out of school is even more important than in Sudan, representing about 1.3 million primary school-age children (UNESCO, 2011).

Gender inequality is prominent in South Sudan. School attendance is much lower for females than for their male counterparts, especially in the rural areas. When not attending school, children mainly work in the agricultural sector or stay home to perform domestic chores at the

disadvantage of girls. In South Sudan, huge poverty and regional gap reveal an imbalanced development process due to socio-economic and political marginalization promoted by successive governments and conflicts. The two civil wars seriously impacted South Sudanese's well-being and the chaos is still on, threatening the progress registered so far towards achieving social cohesion [11].

A similar scenario can be seen in the Cameroon with the ongoing Anglophone crisis which has brought unrest since 2016. Schools have been prime targets of arson and other attacks, while teachers and students have been victims of unpleasant mishaps. The targeting of school infrastructure, teachers and pupils/students has created an environment of fear and prevented many parents from sending their children to school. Some have sought alternatives to formal education; some have fled to neighbouring French-speaking regions or relatively safe urban areas of the restive regions, while others have defied the ban on schools and the environment of insecurity and risked tragic consequences. The result is that, as of January 2020, nearly 900,000 children in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon have been impacted by the crisis and do not have access to education, which is nearly double the original number reported in January 2019 (466,000). 40 Many of these students have not received formal education since the crisis began 4 years ago, and the number of impacted children continues to increase [25]. For many families, especially the poorest, the cost of sending a daughter to school seems like an extra burden especially when schools require even nominal direct and indirect fees. Most parents in Oroko land complain that they cannot send both of their children to school because of financial

constraints, so they prefer sending just the boys to school while the girls marry to bring income and bear forth grand children or better still go to the farm or do trade.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The target population of this study consisted of Oroko students of some selected secondary schools in the Kumba municipality of Meme Division, South West Region of Cameroon. Cameroon was chosen because the author is a Cameroonian so it will be easier for him to find his way around the terrain while collecting data. Moreover, the sample was gotten from schools in Kumba because Kumba is one of the safe areas in the midst of the Anglophone crisis where Oroko students could easily be sampled. The accessible population of this study was comprised of three schools all government schools within the Kumba municipality. This was selected through simple random sampling. The accessible population of the study is presented in Table 1.

The snowball sampling technique was used by the researcher in the selection of the sample in which students from the Oroko tribe were first identified and then they helped the researcher in identifying others. A sample of 100 oro ko students were then selected. A questionnaire was used to get data from the respondents. The questionnaire was made up of likert scale items. The instrument was administered directly to the respondents by the researcher after explaining the purpose of the research. This was done while they were in class under the supervision of the school principal of each school. Administering the questionnaire to the students while in class made it easier to get to several students at once.

Table 1. Distribution of the Accessible Population (Students) Per School

S/N	School	Students	
		Female	Male
1	Government Bilingual High School Up Station	80	150
2	Cameroon College of Arts and Science(CCAS)	150	250
3	Government High School KakeBakundu	60	25
Total		290	425

Source: Field survey 2021

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Analysis of Demographic Information

Table 2 gives a summary of the demographic information of the respondents.

Table 2 shows that 35% of the respondents were males while 65% of them were females. The proportion of males to females of Oroko decent in schools varied significantly. Even though the study targeted girls, boys were also involved. Regarding their ages, 71.0% of them were aged between 12 and 17 while 29.0% of them fell within the age range of 18 and 26. There were no respondents who were aged above 26 years. Furthermore, 68.0% of the respondents come from monogamous homes; 13.0% of them from single parent homes; 15.0% of them from polygamous homes and 4.0% of them from homes with deceased parents. There were no respondents from divorced homes.

4.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation from the Questionnaire

The data obtained from the main questionnaire was analyzed and interpreted according to the research questions followed by a test of the specific hypotheses.

4.2.1 Research question 1

The first research question was sought to investigate the extent to which the preference for boys' education by the Oroko people affects the academic attainment of the girl child in the Oroko clan. This question was investigated using seven questionnaire items whose frequencies and mean opinions were calculated and used to either agree or disagree with whether preference for the education of the boys affects the educational attainment of the girl child. The responses from the respondents are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Gender, and class enrolment of respondents

Gender	Male		Female			Total
Frequency (f)	35		65			100
Percentage (%)	(35.0%)		(65.0%)			100
Age Range	12-17	18-26	27-35		Total	
Frequency (f)	71	29	00		100	
Percentage (%)	(71.0%)	(29.0%)	00%		100	
Family Status	Single parent	Monogamous	Polygamous	Divorced	Diseased	Total
Frequency (f)	13	68	15	0	4	100
Percentage (%)	(13.0%)	(68.0%)	(15.0%)	(00%)	(4.0%)	100

Table 3. Distribution of responses on the extent to which the preference for boys education affect the academic attainment of the girl child (N=100)

School	Number of respondents	Number of items	Mean opinion	Percentage Agree (%)	Percentage disagree (%)
GBHS Kumba	30	7	3.03	75.12	24.88
CCAS Kumba	40	7	2.77	66.35	33.65
GHS Kake Kumba	30	7	2.81	62.24	37.76
All	100	7	2.90	69.90	32.10
Critical mean opinion			2.50		

The above results revealed that 69.90% of the respondents generally agreed (mean=2.90) that the preference for boys' education affects the educational attainment of girls while 32.10% of them disagreed. This agreement is most profound with respondents from GBHS Kumba (75.12%), fairly so with respondents CCAS Kumba (66.35%) and least in GHS Kake. The mean agreement responses which are respectively 3.03, 2.77 and 2.81 for GBHS Kumba, CCAS Kumba and GHS Kake are higher than the critical mean of 2.50. This is therefore a confirmation that parents in the Oroko clan prefer the scholarization of boys than girls. This finding is in line with that of [15,12,13]. Who all found out that boys' education is favoured over girls' education.

4.2.2 Hypothesis one

The preference of boys' to girls' education has not significantly affected the educational attainment of the girl child the Oroko land.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is parental preference for boys' education while the dependent variable is educational attainment of the girl child. The scores of the independent variable were obtained from the seven questionnaire items that sought to measure preference for boys' education while the scores of the dependent variable were obtained from the scores of the six items designed to reflect academic attainment. The statistical analysis technique used to test this hypothesis was the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis whose result is presented in Table 4.

The results of the analysis revealed that the calculated Γ_{xy} -value of 0.247 for preference to boys education is higher than the critical Γ_{xy} -value of 0.125 at .05 level of significance with 100 degrees of freedom. From the results of the analysis, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. This result

therefore shows that there is a significant influence of parental preference for the education of the boy child on the academic attainment of girls in the Oroko land.

A further exploration of the result revealed that the calculated Γ_{xy} -value of 0.247 for preference for girl education is high and positive. Therefore, the more inclined parents are to prefer sending boys to school in place of girls, girls academic attainment will remain low.

This finding is in tandem with [26] and [15] who argue that women and girls are largely affected by poverty and discrimination in Africa. They often end up in insecure with low wage job, have limited access to the educational resources and financial tools they need to succeed. And that their participation is limited in politics, leadership, civil society, and the private sector at the local, national and global levels. Most importantly, adolescent girls face challenges in traditional harmful practices and lower educational outcomes. However, it has become widely accepted that empowerment of women and promotion of gender equality is essential to achieving sustainable human development, poverty eradication and economic growth on the African continent.

Despite many international agreement women still lag behind men in education, employment, politics, health and access to public services. Even though gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligation in all spheres of life. This is only possible when both sexes are able to equally share power and influence, have same access to opportunities, to financial independence by employment or by setting up individual businesses and are able to enjoy independence by employment parity in accessing these opportunities and the ability to develop personal ambitions.

Table 4. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the preference for boys' education and the educational attainment of girls (N=142)

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	Γ_{xy}
Preference for boys Education (X)	2621	43651			79112	0.247*
Girls' Educational attainment (Y)			4839	147169		

$p^* < 0.05$; $df = 100$; critical $\Gamma_{xy} = 0.125$

Sudarshan [27] in his paper” educational status of girls and women: the emerging scenario” describe education in India from independence to the present, evaluates the status of the girls/ women, and analyzes quantitative data on a range of educational indicators within the context of an evolving educational policy. Strengths and weaknesses of the current system were examined along with school attendance/literacy and outcomes across states as variations in educational acces between men/ women as well as social groups/casts. Significant regional differences were found in terms of access, attendance and literacy. Though there was a positive correlation between literacy and income/ land ownership, there was roughly a 20% male/female deferential. The results of an evaluation of the validity of the resource constraint argument for the inadequate provision of basic education indicated that India has sufficient resources to improve educational performance. Examination of various points of intervention suggests that the most effective ones focus on a quality of schooling instead of access.

4.2.3 Research question two

The last research question was designed to find out how the preference for early marriages affects the academic attainment of girl children in secondary schools in the Kumba Municipality. This question was investigated using six questionnaire items whose frequencies and mean opinions were calculated and used to either agree or disagree with whether preference for early marriages affects the academic

attainment of girls. The opinions of the respondents are presented in Table 5.

The result in Table 5 revealed that more than four-fifths (81.69%) of the respondents generally agreed that early marriages within the Oroko clan affect the educational attainment of the girl children with a mean response of 3.14 meanwhile about one-fifth (18.31%) of them disagreed. This agreement is fairly the same in the three sampled schools respectively 81.48%, 82.57% and 81.02% for GBHS Kumba Station, CCAS Kumba and GHS Kake. The mean agreements are an indication that early marriages according to the respondents are a serious barrier to girl educational attainment in the Oroko land.

4.2.4 Hypothesis two

The preference for early marriages for girls has no significant effect on the educational attainment of the girl child in the Oroko land.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is early marriages while the dependent variable is educational attainment for girls in secondary schools in Kumba. The scores of the independent variable were obtained from the six questionnaire items that sought to measure early marriages while the scores of the dependent variable were obtained from the scores of the six items designed to measure educational attainment. The statistical analysis technique used to test this hypothesis was the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis whose result is presented in Table 6.

Table 5. Distribution of responses on the extent to which the preference for early marriages affect the educational attainment of girls in secondary schools in Kumba (N=100)

School	Number of respondents	Number of items	Mean Opinion	Percentage Agree (%)	Percentage disagree (%)
GBHS Kumba	30	6	3.17	81.48	18.52
CCAS Kumba	40	6	3.18	82.57	17.43
GHS KakeKumba	30	6	3.08	81.02	18.92
All	100	6	3.14	81.69	18.31
Critical mean opinion	2.50				

Table 6. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the influence of early marriages on the academic attainment of girls in secondary schools in Kumba

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	Γ_{xy}
Early Marriages (X)	2621	43651			79112	0.248*
Educational Attainment of Girls (Y)			4839	147169		

p < 0.05; df = 100; critical $\Gamma_{xy} = 0.125$*

The result of the analysis revealed that the calculated Γ_{xy} -value of 0.248 for preference for early marriages is higher than the critical Γ_{xy} -value of 0.125 at .05 level of significance with 100 degree of freedom. From the result of the analysis, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. This result therefore shows that there is a significant influence of early marriages on the academic attainment of girls from the Oroko land in secondary schools in Kumba.

A further analysis of the results reveals that the calculated Γ_{xy} -value of 0.248 is high and positive meaning if more girls are involved in early marriages, they will continue to witness very low academic attainment.

This finding is in line with [28] who observed that parents demand for education of their daughters is low. Reflecting the cultural norm which advocates for girls to work in and around the home. This is worsened by the cultural perceptions of the girls as child minders, marriage material and a burden to the family. Some parents decide in many cultures that education is not worthwhile for their daughters who will move to their husband's families when they marry and that the gains in productivity or income due to education will accrue to the families of the son's in-laws rather than to them. In other societies parents only educate their daughters with high bride price in mind because the more education the girl has, the higher the bride price payable. Literate and academically trained parents are more likely than illiterate and traditionally trained parents to enroll their daughters in school.

Akin [29] studied the link between educations, fertility rate, gender and level. The article focuses on the importance of education on fertility in terms of postponing weddings and aiming for a better life. The study showed that the family size of women with no schooling is significantly larger than those with any form of education.

5. CONCLUSION

From the findings presented and discussed, it is clear that there are significant barriers to the educational attainment of the girl child in the Oroko land. Among these are preferences for boys' education and early marriages which make it more or less as if girls are mere commodities. There are however trends observed in recent times that girls are getting more opportunities for

formal education than was the case in the past. The finding that stood out however was the issue of early marriages that had a more than 82% acceptance rate as being a major impediment to the educational attainment of girls.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, analysis and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

Parents should be given more sensitization on the need to give as much interests in the education of the girls as they do for the boys.

Cultural practices that disfavor the girls and women and retard the development of the community should be abolished.

7. STRATEGIES TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO GIRLS EDUCATION

In other to remove these barriers to girl's education, the following key parties should be involved. These are the girls themselves, parents, governments and the elites.

- What girls themselves can do: According to Law No 89/004 of Cameroon, education is a priority and a right to every citizen. Knowing that education is a right, girls should always strive hard rather than sitting with arms folded and waiting to get married. With some amount of schooling girls will make better house wives and also contribute to nation building in many ways. A few who are educated should organise campaigns in rural areas of the importance of educating the girl as instituted by the Ministry of Women Affairs (Gender Equality).
- What parents can do: Parents should be made to know that, irrespective of the sex of their children, they should assume full responsibility of educating their children. They have an important role to play as far as the education of their children is concerned. This particularly goes to the Oroko people who see the boys as real family and the girls as commodity.
- Give all equal education irrespective of sex :Parents should learn to give both the boy and the girl child equal educational opportunities.
- Parents should be willing to sacrifice to educate their children: Also parents should

learn to sacrifice financially in order to sponsor their children in school. The notion of sponsoring only boys as a result of limited income should be erased.

8. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Some suggestions for further research are:

The same study could be replicated in the other cultures within the Cameroon context using a larger sample.

An investigation of the Oroko peoples' perception of their cultural practices can be investigated so that concrete changes can be made.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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