

**THE EFFECTS OF FEMALE GENITAL CUT ON THE PARTICIPATION  
OF GIRLS IN EDUCATION: A CASE OF SABOTI DIVISION, TRANS  
NZOIA COUNTY, KENYA**

**BY**

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## **DEDICATION**

For my daughter Xanthy, who inspired me long before I conceived her, and my son Queller, who watched peacefully from my bosom as I typed on, as one who understood every paragraph. To my parents William and Lenah, who invested heavily in my education.

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## ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to investigate the effects of Female Genital Cut on the participation of girls in education in Saboti Division, Trans Nzoia County of Kenya.

The research questions sought to find out the prevalence of FGC in primary schools, to compare the school attendance, retention rate and academic performance of schoolgirls who underwent FGC with those who did not undergo the cut and to obtain suggestions on how FGC would be eradicated from the community.

The study adopted a causal-comparative research design to obtain data. The independent variable of the study was FGC status. Dependent variables were school attendance, retention rate and academic performance of schoolgirls in primary school. Five schools were selected using simple random sampling. From these, 683 schoolgirls in Standard five to eight were selected purposively and grouped into two groups. Ninety six who underwent FGC comprised one group while 587 who had not undergone the cut comprised another group. In addition, 20 teachers and 10 community leaders were selected as respondents using purposive sampling methods. Data were collected using questionnaires, focus group discussion guides and interview guides. Documentary analysis was also done on school records to obtain data relevant to the study. Data were classified, tabulated, and analyzed manually. Computation of percentages was done after which the findings were presented in graphs, pie charts and tables.

Analyzed data were interpreted and conclusions drawn. The study findings were as follows: The prevalence rate of FGC in primary schools in Saboti Division was found to be 14.05%. With regard to school attendance, it was found that 33.3% of schoolgirls who underwent FGC were more frequently absent from school as compared to 3.4% who did not undergo the cut. Concerning retention in school, 38.2% of schoolgirls who underwent FGC were retained in school as compared to 96.42% who did not undergo the cut. In addition, the academic performance of schoolgirls who did not undergo FGC was better than that of schoolgirls who underwent the cut. There were 87% respondents with the opinion that FGC had a negative effect on the participation of girls in primary school education in Saboti Division while 13% felt that FGC had a positive effect in that it imparted virtues like courage and provided themes for non-formal curriculum activities like drama and choir.

It was recommended that schoolgirls who underwent FGC should undergo intensive guidance and counseling to help them concentrate on their studies and pursue them to completion to avoid dropping out of school or performing poorly in their academics. In addition the community should be educated to desist from conducting FGC and take up alternative rites of passage. Finally, suggestions were made for further research related to this study.

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

EFA	Education for All
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Children
FPE	Free Primary Education
FGC	Female Genital Cut
GOK	Government of Kenya
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals
MOEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WCEFA	World Conference on Education for All
WEF	World Education Forum
WHO	World Health Organization

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter contains a brief definition of Female Genital Cut (FGC) as well as a presentation of the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations and limitations of the study, assumptions of the study, conceptual and theoretical frameworks and operational definition of terms.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Female genital cut (FGC) is defined as, “all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons,” (WHO 1997:2). According to Rahman and Toubia (2000), the procedure is commonly performed by a traditional practitioner in most communities, on girls between ages four and twelve as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. However, according to Gwako (1992), medical practitioners also perform the rite, probably for financial reasons.

According to the 2003 Encyclopedia Britannica, the practice of FGC dates back to ancient times. Toubia (1995) suggests that FGC dates back to 25 BC and is recorded in the Pharaonic kingdoms of ancient Egypt where it was referred to as “pharaonic excision”.

FGC is practiced worldwide. The 2003 Encyclopedia Britannica states that it is widely practiced in New Guinea, Australia, The Malay Archipelago, Ethiopia, Egypt, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Middle East, Western Asia, India, Nigeria, Sudan and Somalia. An estimated 130 million girls and women have undergone the rite and at least two million girls are at risk of undergoing FGC all over the world by the year 2015 (Rahman & Toubia, 2000)

African countries with the highest prevalence rate of FGC include Djibouti and Somalia at (98%), Egypt (97%), Eritrea (95%), Mali (94%), Sierra Leone (90%), Sudan (89%), Ethiopia (85%), Gambia (80%) and Burkina Faso (70%).

Kenya has a prevalence rate of 50% according to Rahman and Toubia (2000).

UNICEF (1998), reports that FGC is practiced in 59 districts in Kenya while Njeri, (2001) reports the prevalence rates in eight Kenyan communities as follows: Kisii (97%), Maasai (89%), Kalenjin (62%), Taita Taveta (59%), Meru (54%), Kikuyu (43%), Kamba (33%) and Miji Kenda (12%). According to Chebet (2005:75) the prevalence rate of FGC among the Kalenjin is 80%. This study was conducted among the Sabaot community, a sub group of the Kalenjin who are found in Saboti Division, Trans Nzoia County, Rift Valley Province of Kenya.

FGC is an aspect of culture. According to Oketch and Asiachi (1992) the word culture dominates the function of education. Taba (1962) summarizes the function of education as a process of preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. The Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies

(1976) recommended promotion of cultural practices that help in educational and technological development.

However, FGC as a cultural practice has been recognized internationally as a violation of human rights of girls and women. According to WHO (2010) FGC reflects deep rooted inequality between the sexes and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. In addition, since the cut is nearly always carried out on minors, it is a violation of the rights of children. Kenya has ratified various international treaties that are relevant to the fight against FGC. According to Rahman and Toubia (2000) the Women's convention was ratified in 1984 and the Children's Rights convention ratified in 1994. In addition, a national plan of action to eliminate FGC was launched in 1999.

Despite these efforts to eliminate FGC, the practice has continued to be conducted in various parts of the country where it is performed on schoolgirls and may affect their participation in primary school education. UNICEF (2008) poses the challenge that though educating a girl improves her prospects of being able to support herself and have a say in her own welfare and in society, many girls are still unable to complete school. Hence, there is need to ensure that schoolgirls go through the full cycle of primary school education without interference.

Primary education is quite significant in the development of a child. According to Oketch and Asiachi (1992), the role of primary schools is significant in view of the fact that the formative stage of life is most appropriate for laying a strong foundation for all the future behavior and attitudes of the child. Oluoch (2002)

defines education as the process of acquiring and developing desired knowledge, skills and attitudes through students engaging in learning activities. The same author defines school curriculum as all that is planned to enable students acquire and develop desired skills, knowledge and attitudes. Curriculum is identified in three dimensions as: formal, non-formal and informal. Oketch and Asiachi (1992) state that these three dimensions of curriculum interact to provide a programme of activities designed so that pupils will attain, as far as possible, certain educational objectives.

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education. This effect may be felt in any of the dimensions of curriculum defined here.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Members of the Sabaot community, who are a sub group of the Kalenjin, practise Female Genital Cut (FGC). The cut is performed on girls aged between 11 and 15 years, an age when most of the girls are in primary school. FGC is carried out concurrently with the circumcision of boys and the initiates are expected to choose mates during the circumcision rites and eventually get married once they come out of seclusion. If these initiates are still in school then there is a possibility that they may not be able to continue with their primary education. It is for this reason that the researcher sought to investigate the effects of FGC on the participation of girls in education in terms of school attendance, retention and



academic performance in primary schoolgirls in Saboti Division of Trans Nzoia County.

### **1.2.1 Purpose of the Study.**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The study sought to achieve the following research objectives:

- To find out the prevalence rate of FGC among schoolgirls in Saboti Division.
- To compare the school attendance of schoolgirls who had undergone FGC with that of those who had not undergone the cut.
- To compare the retention rate of schoolgirls who had undergone the cut with that of schoolgirls who had not undergone the cut.
- To compare the academic performance of schoolgirls who had undergone FGC with that of those who had not undergone the cut.

### **1.4 Research Questions.**

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How prevalent is FGC among primary school girls in Saboti Division?
2. How does the school attendance of schoolgirls who have undergone FGC compare with that of schoolgirls who have not undergone the cut?
3. How does the retention rate of schoolgirls who have undergone FGC compare with that of schoolgirls who have not undergone the cut?

4. How does the academic performance of schoolgirls who have undergone FGC compare with that of schoolgirls who have not undergone FGC?
5. What is the perception of teachers and schoolgirls on the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education?
6. What can be done to eradicate FGC from the Sabaot community?

### **1.5 Significance of the study.**

The findings of this study will give the Ministry of Education an insight into the negative effects of FGC and hence assist the policy makers to come up with policies to protect school girls from undergoing FGC. Guidance and counseling teachers will be able to encourage schoolgirls in Trans Nzoia County to make a decision to focus on their studies regardless of what they are taught during FGC rites.

Parents will be able to understand that education is of great value to their children and any practice that may negatively affect their daughters' education should be discouraged. Finally, with these findings members of the community will be able to guide their schoolgirls appropriately concerning the practice of FGC, and give them an opportunity to make informed decisions with regard to undergoing FGC.

### **1.6 Limitations and Delimitations of the study.**

#### **Limitations**

Saboti Division is located at the foot of Mount Elgon. The access road is rough and the terrain hilly. These made it difficult for the researcher to access primary schools in remote areas. However, the researcher worked closely with Ministry of

Education officials in the Division as they went about conducting their duties. This helped in accessing the schools and getting the cooperation of the teachers and learners. It also helped teachers know that the purpose of the study was in the best interest of their pupils.

### **Delimitations**

This study was carried out in Saboti Division, Trans Nzoia County, Rift Valley Province of Kenya. Research was conducted in five primary schools within Saboti Division. The respondents of this study were schoolgirls in standard 5-8, their class teachers and the community leaders in the school management committee.

Other factors may affect the participation of girls in education. However, this study focused only on FGC as a factor.

### **1.7 Assumptions of the Study.**

The study made the following assumptions:

- All respondents would be cooperative and provided reliable responses.
- FGC has an effect on participation of schoolgirls in primary school education.

### **1.8 Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework.**

#### **1.8.1 Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted Ruth Pearson's (1992) theory on gender relations. According to Pearson's theory, society views all activities to be based on social roles and interactions of men and women. This assumption of gender roles is dictated by

society, which tends to have an ultimate authority on what men and women actually do, (Pearson, 1992) as quoted in Orodho (2005)

Based on this theory, the socialization of children begins before they attain school-going age. This affects their attitude towards education and socio cultural practices taking place in their communities. Thus, it is these prescribed roles of the community that children may choose over the benefits of going through the full cycle of education.

Using Pearson's theory on gender relations, it can be argued that the Sabaoth community prescribes that girls must be circumcised and eventually trained to be good wives. This may affect their participation in education positively in that it may make them to work hard to support their families in future. The negative effect of it is that it may make them disregard their education and opt for early marriage, to gain acceptance from the community.

In addition to Pearson's theory, the study also adopted Dewey's (1996) theory which states that; ...There are two fundamental factors in education, the immature child on one hand and the accumulated knowledge and traditions of society embodied in the 'matured experience of the adult.' The educational experience consists in the due interaction between these two factors.

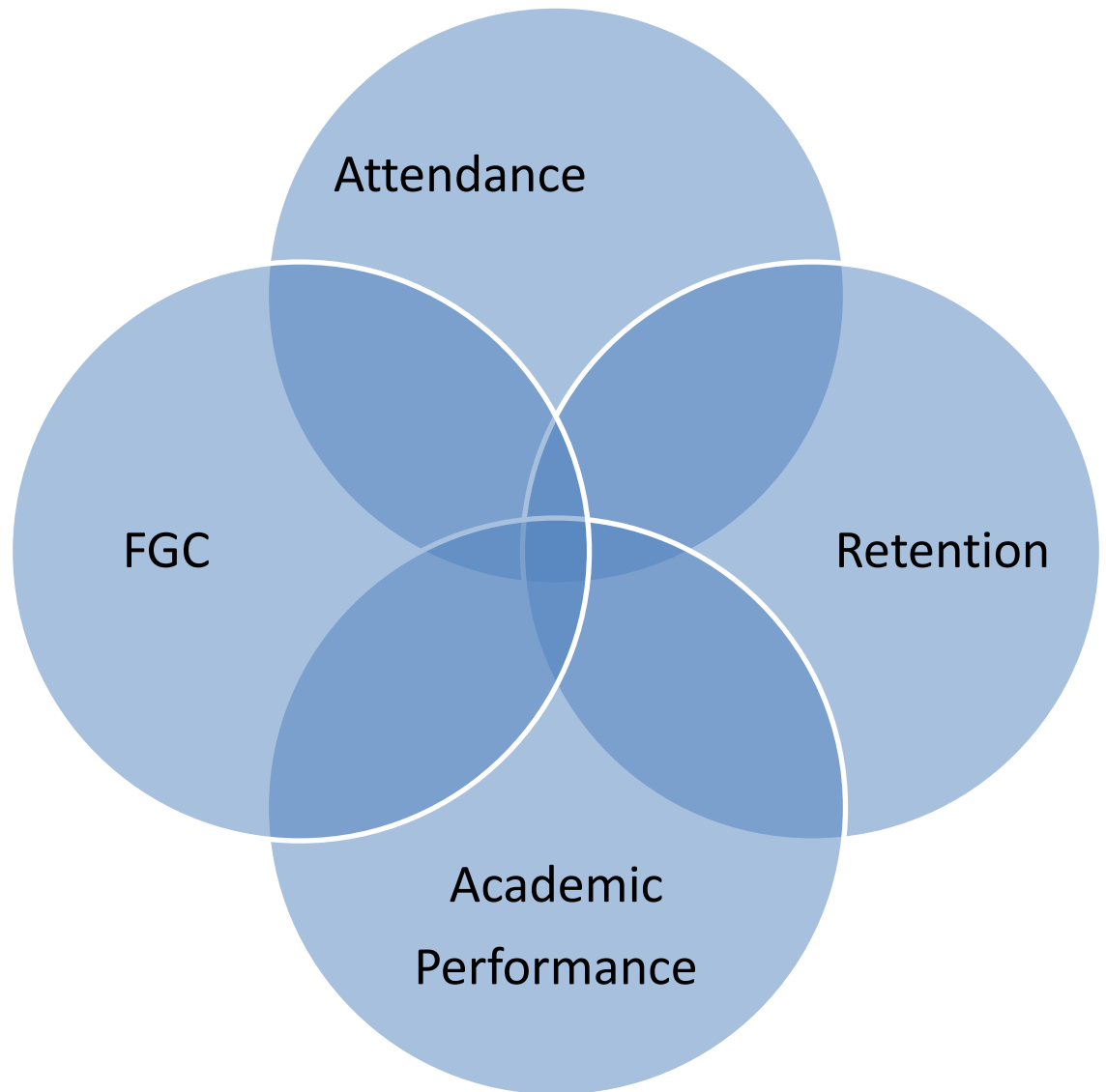
### **1.8.2 Conceptual Framework**

The decision whether to undergo FGC or not by schoolgirls is influenced by the society, what they learn in school and the values the individuals hold. Although these three are interactive, they are also independent and any one force may stand

out above the rest. At the same time, the effect of undergoing FGC on the participation of the schoolgirls in education may be influenced by the teachings imparted by society, the school or the values each schoolgirl holds. For example, in terms of school attendance, a school girl may choose to go to school rather than attend FGC rites. However, if the school rules are not strict or if the parents or society insist that the learner fail to attend school, then she will be absent from school. After undergoing the rites, a schoolgirl who is focused on her studies may choose to go back to school and complete her studies. On the other hand, parents of a particular schoolgirl may choose to marry her off arguing that she is now ready for marriage. Hence, it is important that the school administration, the society and the schoolgirl should all put in concerted effort to ensure that schoolgirls actively take part in their studies.

School attendance, retention and academic performance may be affected if a school girl undergoes FGC. On the other hand a schoolgirl who wants to be always present in school, and perform well academically may choose not to undergo FGC. Hence, the interrelationship between FGC and school attendance, retention and academic performance is depicted in the diagram below:

**Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship Between the FGC Status and its Effect on School Attendance, Retention and Academic Performance of Schoolgirls.**



**Source: Reseachers' 2011**

## **1.9 Operational Definitions of Terms.**

**Female Genital Cut:** All procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia. The terms female circumcision or female genital mutilation may be used when citing other authors. The researcher may also use the term rite, the cut and the abbreviation FGC to refer to the same.

**Socio cultural issues:** Issues that arise as a result of a people's way of life and which have an influence on their values, attitudes and behavior patterns.

**Gender roles:** Socially and culturally construed sets of behavior and personality characteristics expected of a person based on their sex.

## **1.10 Summary**

This chapter has given a brief introduction to the problem of the study which is an investigation into the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education. The following chapter will give a review of literature related to this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter contains a review of literature relevant to the subject of study. The contents of the chapter include classification of Female Genital Cut, reasons why FGC is practiced, effects of FGC, efforts to eradicate FGC, education for all, free primary education, education for the girl child, factors affecting access of girls to formal education and female genital cut as a factor affecting access of girls to education.

### **2.1 Classification of Female Genital Cut (FGC)**

The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies female genital cut into the following four types, with relevant definitions:

- Type I or clitoridiotomy refers to procedures involving the removal of all parts of the clitoris. Gwako (1992) reported that this type was practiced by the Gusii community.
- Type II or excision refers to partial or complete removal of the clitoris along with part or all of the labia minora. Chebet (2005) reported that this type was practiced by the Keiyo Community.
- Type III or infibulation refers to complete removal of the clitoris and labia minora as well as most or all of the labia majora and the restitching of the cut edges to cover the urethra and vagina leaving only a small opening. This opening serves as a passage for urine and menses. When a woman gets married, she has to undergo defibulation; the stitched wound is cut again to



make an opening large enough to allow for sexual intercourse and childbirth.

Toubia (1995) reported that this type was practiced by the Somali community.

- Type IV involves other variations such as pricking, piercing, cauterization or scrapping of the clitoris, labia or vagina.

## **2.2 Reasons Why FGC is Practiced**

Various reasons have been given to explain why FGC is practiced. According to the 2003 Encyclopedia Britannica, the rite was traditionally performed to guard virginity and reduce the sexual desire of young women. Rahman and Toubia (2000) state four major reasons given by communities to justify FGC as follows:

- To maintain community customs and preserve cultural identity,
- To control women's sexuality,
- As a religious practice and
- As a component of social conformity.

Writing about the Keiyo, a sub group of the Kalenjin community, Chebet (2005) cited the following reasons why the community practices FGC; to mark transition from childhood to womanhood, as a gateway to marriage, as a mark of identity with the tribe, to control sexual promiscuity, as a ceremony for social cohesion, for maintenance of traditions and culture and to gain acceptance and appreciation within the community.

Writing about the Pokot, who are also a sub group of the Kalenjin community, Katam (1996) gave the major reasons as control of women's sexuality and a measure to put women's procreative powers under social control, especially in

cases where infibulation is done and women have to undergo defibulation once they get married. Finally, writing about the Nandi community, Rono (2002) gave suppressing women's sexuality as the reason for performing FGC. Given that FGC is conducted on girls as young as 10 years old, the reasons given above are not enough to justify the perpetuation of the practice. The WHO (2010) website estimates that 140 million women worldwide are currently living with the consequences of FGC and in Africa an estimated 92 million girls 10 years and above have undergone FGC. It further adds that 3 million girls are at risk of FGC annually.

These statistics are shocking since the effects of FGC are many and known even among the communities that conduct the rite. Some of the effects will be discussed in the following subtopic.

### **2.3 Effects of FGC on the Girl Child**

FGC has been reported to have various physical, social and psychological effects on women. Rahman and Toubia (2000) classified the resulting complications as long term and short term. The short-term complications cited include severe pain and excessive bleeding. Long-term complications include repeated urinary tract infections, chronic pelvic infections, stones in the urethra, scar tissue at the site of the cutting and fistulae. Psychological effects include disturbances in sleep shortly after the procedure and feelings of anger, betrayal, poor self esteem and reduced sexuality in the end. Katam (1996), Rono (2002) and Chebet (2005) all concur with these authors' observations that FGC has both short and long term

complications. Given the fact that FGC is associated with cultural ideals of femininity and modesty, as cited by WHO (2010) or even the absurd reason that women must undergo FGC to get a husband within their communities, as cited on the FGM network website (2010) then it is surprising that those who undergo the rite should end up bitter and betrayed. This means there are other underlying effects of the practice which are yet to be studied. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education.

Katam (1996) studying the influence of circumcision of both boys and girls on academic achievement and self-concept among the Pokot community, found that the effect was more negative on girls than boys and concluded that there was a correlation between circumcision and education. Njau and Wamahiu (1994) as quoted by Chege and Sifuna (2006) state that; 'Initiation ceremonies affect school attendance and academic performance of learners'. This results in dropping out of school. Katam, (1996) concurred with the two authors that the initiates displayed signs of indiscipline, declined academic performance, truancy and dropped out of school since their next expectation was to get married. The author also pointed out that during the initiation process, learners are brainwashed to believe that education is not as important as the cultural practice of FGC.

However, apart from these, it can be argued that going through FGC may have a positive effect on the participation of schoolgirls in education. Most initiation ceremonies are meant to impart virtues like courage, persistence, longsuffering and responsibility which may be applied by schoolgirls in their schoolwork to

improve their participation in education. According to Mukhongo (2003), circumcision ceremonies impart virtues like discipline, cooperation, confidence, responsibility, respect, endurance and morality which contribute to education. In addition, the songs sung and the actual practice of FGC has for a long time provided themes which have been presented by schoolgirls in non formal curriculum in choir and drama festivals. These, apart from preserving culture help the learners to develop communication skills as well as building on their cognitive and organizational skills in terms of articulation, public speaking and application of knowledge.

From these arguments, the negative effects of FGC far outweigh the positive effects. Hence this study sought to find out the effects of FGC on the participation of girls in education.

#### **2.4 Efforts to Eradicate FGC**

Due to the negative effects of FGC, there have been efforts aimed at eradicating FGC all over the world. The UNFPA has declared February 9 International Day against FGC, stating that the practice violates the rights of women and children. According to Rahman and Toubia (2000), these efforts began in the early 1900s when colonial administrations and missionaries enacted laws and church rules against the practice in Kenya, Burkina Faso and Sudan. However, these laws provoked anger among the Africans against foreign intervention. In 1979, W.H.O. sponsored the first seminar on harmful traditional practices that affect the health of women and children in Khartoum, Sudan. Following the recommendations of

the seminar, the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children was formed in 1984 to educate national governments and the public about the harmful effects of FGC. This led to various governments setting up legislation to ban FGC. In 1993, the UN Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women included FGC as a violation of women's rights. According to the WHO (2010) website, WHO issued a joint statement with UNICEF and UNFPA against the practice of FGC in 1997. A new statement with wider UN support was issued in February 2008 to support increased advocacy for the abandonment of FGC. Progress made includes wider international involvement to stop FGC, development of international monitoring bodies and resolutions that condemn the practice, revised legal frameworks and growing political support to end FGC. Kenya has ratified various international treaties relevant to the fight against FGC. According to Rahman and Toubia (2000) these include the Women Rights Convention ratified in 1984 and the Children's Rights Convention ratified in 1990. In November 1999, Kenya launched a national plan of action to eliminate FGC. The plan emphasized education and outreach over criminal prosecution.

Despite these efforts aimed at the eradication of FGC, the practice has continued among various Kenyan communities. Writing about the Keiyo community, Chebet (2005:10), states that; "there seems to be a resurgence of the practice in recent times due to a feeling by uncircumcised women that they do not fit well in their social and personal relations with the circumcised women in society".

Gwako (1992) on studying about the Gusii community reported that the reason for resurgence in the practice was social pressure to conform to traditional norms where women who had not been circumcised were not recognized as members of the community. Amnesty International (2010) website reports that FGC is difficult to eliminate on the local level because of its cultural and sometimes political importance. It points out that despite the fact that missionaries in Kenya forbade their Christian adherents from practicing FGC, the rite became instrumental to ethnic independence movement among the Kikuyu and prohibition by the British of FGC significantly strengthened the tribe's resistance to colonial rule in the 1950. Furthermore, UNFPA (2010) website states that since FGC holds cultural and marital significance in the communities that practice it, efforts to eliminate it requires working closely with local communities to end it. In the same view, UNICEF announced in 1980 that its anti-FGC program is based on the belief that the best way to handle the problem is to trigger awareness through education of the public, members of the medical profession and practitioners of traditional healthcare with the help of local communities and their leaders.

According to the WHO (2010) website, progress in the fight against FGC includes wider international involvement to stop FGC, development of international monitoring bodies and resolutions that condemn the practice, revised legal frameworks and growing political support to end FGC, decreasing FGC and an increasing number of people who support an end to FGC. The website further

suggests that if participating communities decide to abandon the practice then FGC can be eliminated very rapidly. WHO efforts to eradicate FGC focus on the following:

- Advocacy – developing publications and advocacy tools for international, regional and local efforts to end FGC within a generation.
- Research – generating knowledge about the causes and consequences of the practice, how to eliminate it and how to care for those who have experienced FGC.
- Guidance for health systems- developing training materials and guidelines for health professionals to help them treat and counsel women who have undergone FGC.

However, a lot more has to be done to completely end the practice in Kenya. Girls from the Sabaot community of Trans Nzoia County still undergo FGC for fear of facing rejection by their parents and friends. This is a case of parental and peer pressure, which may affect young girls of school going age. Despite the fact that FGC was banned in Kenya by in 1982 by then president Moi, the rite has continued. The writers cited above have not studied why this is so and what the effect is on the participation of girls in education. Hence, there exists a major gap that calls for further research to find out the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education also recommended by Chebet (2005). This study was conducted therefore to investigate the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education.

## **2.5 Education for All**

The World Conference on Education For All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 set basic education in the context of the universal declaration for human rights (UDHR). According to UNESCO (2003), Education for All (EFA) conference named literacy and numeracy as essential for every person to be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. The conference also recommended the provision of free and compulsory primary education for all children in accordance with article 28 of the convention on the rights of the child, (CRC).

The Government of Kenya (2005) has stated it is committed to achieving universal primary education. Ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling is one of the millennium development goals (MDGs), as pledged by 189 United Nation member states and ratified by Kenya in 2003. In addition, UNICEF (2008) states that; “achieving universal education (MDG 2) and gender equality and empowering women (MDG 3) is vital to meeting the other goals.” It further states that; “the two goals are inextricably linked as universal education requires gender parity.” However this presents a challenge in communities that propagate FGC since their schoolgirls may not complete the full course of primary education. This study sought to establish the facts about the actual number of girls who are denied the chance to complete their education by being taken through the rites.



### **2.5.1 Free Primary Education**

The Ministry of Education launched free primary education in Kenya on January 6, 2003. This was in response to the recommendations of the World Conference on Education for All, (WCEFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and the World Education Forum, (WEF) held in Dakar, Senegal in 2003. According to Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2003), “the government of Kenya, having signed the recommendations of these two international meeting considers the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) as a development strategy”. It is therefore important to ensure that both boys and girls complete the full course of primary Education. However, there has been an increase in the number of girls dropping out of school before completing Primary School. According to a study by Chege and Sifuna (2006), the dropout rate for girls in 2002 was 4.8% in Kenya and 4.7% in Rift Valley Province. UNICEF (2008) global statistics show that in 2007, 101 million children of primary school age were out of school. Out of these, 46 million were from sub-Saharan Africa.

Studies that have been carried out provide a number of factors contributing to the high drop out rate of girls from school. Omuralo (1999) attributed high dropout rate of girls from school to adolescence pregnancy, early marriage, economic conditions, school personnel and learner attitude. On the other hand, Onyango (2000) grouped the factors into family, socio-cultural and school based factors. Among the socio-cultural factors, Female Genital Cut scored highest. Njoroge (2000) reported that high drop out rate of girls from schools was an indicator of

discrimination of girls in education and recommended that further research be conducted to find out the causes of high drop out rate and what happens to the dropouts. Chepkorir (2000) cited socio-cultural practices, especially female circumcision as a major cause of early marriage among girls of school going age resulting in high drop out rate. Thuo (2000) had the same sentiments with regard to FGC as her study revealed that 85% of her samples were opposed to the practice because it caused early marriages among young girls, resulting in high dropout rates from schools.

This study was carried out to establish the actual facts about school attendance and the retention rate of schoolgirls who had undergone FGC in primary schools in Saboti Division.

## **2.6 Education For the Girl Child**

Until the first UN conference on women in 1975, focus on the Education of the girl child had not been exclusively tabled in International meetings. Subsequently, the UN decade of women, (1975-1985) saw a lot of emphasis on the participation of women in development issues, with education for girls being encouraged all over the world. Kenya responded to this by setting up many schools for girls-only to ensure an environment that is conducive for girls to pursue education. At the same time, parents were advised to educate their girls. Between 1990 and 2002, the enrollment of girls in primary schools increased by 49.7% (Chege and Sifuna 2006).

### **2.6.1 Factors Affecting Access of Girls To Formal Education**

Despite the fact that the enrollment rate of girls increased, most did not complete primary school. Chege and Sifuna (2006) cited child labour, urbanization, parental influence and cultural practices resulting in early marriage as some of the major factors affecting the access of girls to formal education. Baguma and Muhairwe (1999) carried out a study in Uganda and grouped these factors into various levels:

- **Student Level**

Beliefs, attitudes and perceptions towards education can affect girls' participation in education. Girls who undergo FGC are indoctrinated with certain beliefs and attitudes that may affect their participation in education. For instance, they may be preoccupied with the desire to find suitors. Most learners end up getting married soon after undergoing FGC. This may make them view education as a waste of time or as being of no value to them.

- **Parental Level**

Different treatment of boys and girls is a major hindrance towards the education of girls. While most parents may educate their sons to the highest level, many will not bother to educate their daughters as they think they end up getting married eventually and benefiting their in-laws.

- **Community Level**

Among other factors, cultural beliefs and practices like Female Genital Cut may affect the participation of girls in education.

- School Level

Lack of guidance and counseling, administrative concern, sensitization and motivation programs may affect the participation of girls.

- Government Level

Inadequate inspection of schools and lack of supportive education policy were cited as major factors affecting the participation of girls in education.

The same factors may apply in a Kenyan situation and with regard to FGC in the sense that stakeholders at all these levels play an important role in encouraging the girl child to participate fully in education.

Ezel (1998) cited socio-cultural factors such as beliefs about women's role in marriage, parental attitudes and expectations as well as sex-role stereotypes as having an effect on the education of girls. All these authors recommended that extensive research should be conducted to identify individual factors that affect the participation of girls in education. Hence this study was carried out to investigate the effects of FGC on the participation of girls in education.

## **2.7 Female Genital Cut as a Factor Affecting Participation of Girls in Education.**

The effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education has been implied in various studies. Chepkorir (2000), on studying the causes of early marriage among girls aged 14 to 17 years pointed at socio-cultural practices such as Female Circumcision. At this tender age, young girls should be in school pursuing their studies. However, early marriage causes them to drop out of school.

Apart from dropping out of school, FGC ceremonies may cause irregular attendance and high rates of absenteeism. According to Katam (1996) the ceremonies take place during school days and involve singing and dancing festivities, which attract school children resulting in absenteeism. In addition, those who undergo the practice are usually secluded for a long period. According to Chebet (2005) and Rono (2002), the initiates are kept in seclusion and trained for a period of between one to six months. If such initiates are school children, they may end up missing important lessons, yet it is important for learners to participate actively in class lessons so that they do not miss out any topic or subtopic in any subject in the syllabus.

FGC may also affect the academic performance of learners. This may be caused by frequent absenteeism from schools by those learners who go to attend the ceremonies that go on during the practice. It may also affect the performance of learners who undergo FGC due to long absence from school during the seclusion period and because of the teachings, they get as initiates. According to Njau and Wamahiu (1994) the girls are taught that FGC prepares them for marriage and when they go back to school, they may be preoccupied with what they learnt in seclusion rather than with what is taught in class.

Despite these suggestions by various researchers, the researcher sought to confirm whether FGC as a singular factor had any effect on the education of girls, whether positive or negative. Katam (1996) compared the effect of circumcision on both boys and girls in the Pokot community and concluded that the effect is higher on

girls than on boys. Hence, the gap here is what the actual effect was on schoolgirls in communities that practice FGC. A study among the Sabaot community of Trans Nzoia West District on the effect of FGC on the participation of girls will therefore be timely

## **2.8 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed relevant literature and brought out the gap left by various authors that the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education has not been studied. Hence, this study sought to fill this gap. The following chapter will deal with the methodology used in the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology that was applied by the researcher to arrive at the findings of the study. These include the following: research design, research variables, location of the study, target population, sampling techniques, sample size, research instruments, pilot study, validity and reliability, data collection procedures and logistical and ethical considerations.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopted a causal-comparative research design to investigate the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999:161), “causal-comparative research is used to explore relationships among variables. Its main purpose is to determine the causes for the current status of the phenomenon under study.” To determine the prevalence of FGC among the schoolgirls of the Sabaot community and its effect on their attendance, academic performance and retention, a comparison was made between girls who had undergone FGC and those who had not undergone the rite. This type of design allowed for comparison of groups without manipulating the independent variable. Hence, it made provision for protection against bias and maximized reliability of the data collected. Three instruments were used to collect data. Questionnaires were administered to the class teachers, Focus Group Discussion Guides were used in sessions held with the schoolgirls and interviews conducted with community leaders. In addition to these instruments,

Documentary Analysis was done to obtain information about school attendance, retention and academic performance to support and emphasize the information obtained from the respondents. This was done as suggested by Chebet (2005).

### **3.1.1 Variables**

The independent variable was FGC. Those schoolgirls who had undergone FGC were compared with those who had not. The dependent variables were school attendance, retention and academic performance.

### **3.2 Location of the Study**

The study was carried out in five primary schools in Saboti Division, Trans Nzoia County, Rift Valley Province of Kenya. The Sabaot community, who constitute about 70% of the population in the division practice FGC. This makes the division have the highest number of those who practice FGC in the county, compared to other divisions with majority of communities that do not practice FGC

### **3.3 Target Population**

According to information obtained from the District Education Office (2009), there were about 10,000 schoolgirls in standard 5-8 who constituted the target population for the study. These were from primary schools in Saboti Division, Trans Nzoia County. Schoolgirls in standard 5-8 were selected because majority of them were between 11-15 years old, which was the age bracket during which FGC was conducted among the Sabaot community. Also targeted were about 300 primary school teachers and 300 school management committee members from the 30 public primary schools in the Division.



### **3.4 Sampling Techniques**

Five primary schools Saboti Division were sampled randomly for study from the 30 public primary schools in the division. The researcher applied simple random sampling in the following manner: the 30 names of the schools were written on thirty separate pieces of paper which were identical. The papers were folded and put in a basket which was shaken to mix them up. Five people were requested to pick one paper each from the basket at the same time. The five schools whose names were on the pieces of paper picked were selected for study.

From the five schools, schoolgirls in standard 5 to 8 who had undergone FGC were purposively sampled as one category while those who had not undergone FGC were purposively sampled to comprise another category for comparative study. The class teachers helped the researcher in identifying learners for each category.

Class teachers for Standard 5-8 were also sampled purposively from the five schools. This gave a total of 20 teachers for study. The school committee chairman and the treasurer were selected purposively to represent the community. This gave a total of 10 community leaders for study.

### **3.5 Sample Size [ $N = (z/e)^2 (p) (1-p)$ ]**

A sample size of 683 schoolgirls, who were in Standard 5 to 8 were selected for study from the 5 schools. 20 teachers and 10 community leaders were also sampled as respondents for the study. The schoolgirls were put in two categories; 96 who had undergone FGC were grouped as sample X. While 587 who had not

undergone FGC were grouped as sample Y. These would be representative of the schoolgirls, their teachers and the community leaders who are affected directly or indirectly by the practice of FGC and would therefore be well placed to provide accurate information about the practice. Data collected from the sample would be easy to analyze and the researcher would be able to carry the research according to her financial ability. Finally, the sample size would be reasonable to avoid producing skewed results.

### **3.6 Research Instruments**

Three instruments were used in this study- questionnaire, interview schedule and focus group discussion guide.

Questionnaires were used to collect data from the class teachers. Focus group discussion guides were used when conducting discussions with the schoolgirls. Interview schedules were used to collect data during interviews with the community leaders. In addition, documentary analysis of school records was done in consultation with the class teachers to obtain information about school attendance, retention and academic performance of the schoolgirls under study.

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire for class teachers had two parts; the introduction and the main body. The introduction explained the purpose of the study, gave an assurance of confidentiality and requested the respondents to provide truthful and accurate information. The main part contained questions to be answered by the respondents. The questions asked were related to the research questions. The first

question required the respondent to provide personal information while subsequent questions were relevant to the practice of FGC. The trend of the questions was to require basic information such as a definition of FGC and then to require specific information such as the prevalence rate of FGC and the effect it had on school attendance, retention and academic performance. Some questions were open ended while others had choice answers to be selected by the respondents.

### **3.6.2 Focus Group Discussion Guide**

The focus group discussion guide for schoolgirls had two parts. The first part was the introduction in which the purpose of the study was explained to them and a request made to them to provide truthful information. There was also an assurance that all responses would be treated as confidential by the researcher. The second part contained questions to be answered by the schoolgirls. The first three questions required the respondents to provide personal information while subsequent questions were related to the research questions. The trend followed by the guide was to begin with general knowledge questions about FGC such as the definition and then the more specific questions about the effect of FGC on school attendance, retention and academic performance of schoolgirls.

### **3.6.3 Interview Schedule**

The interview schedule for the community leaders had an introductory part in which the purpose of study was provided with an assurance of confidentiality and a request to provide truthful information. The second part had the questions. The

first question required the respondents to define the role they played in society. Subsequent questions were related to the research questions tending from general to specific questions about FGC and the effect it had on the school attendance, retention and academic performance of schoolgirls.

Documentary analysis was conducted in consultation with the class teachers. The relevant documents analyzed included class attendance registers, progress records and academic records for each examination.

### **3.7 Pilot Study**

A pilot study was carried out to test the usability of the research instruments. This was done in two primary schools in the division of study, as they would provide an environment with similar geographical and social factors as the sampled schools of study. These two pilot study schools were excluded from the main study. From this study, the validity and reliability of research instruments would also be determined.

#### **3.7.1 Validity**

Orodho (2005) defines validity as the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of data actually represents the phenomena under study. Validity therefore checks if the instruments are doing what they are intended. The questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussion guides were therefore examined to determine clarity of items in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure and question suitability. Expert advice was also sought from the supervisors who went through the instruments and advised the researcher on how to fine tune them. To

test validity of instruments, data were collected from a pilot sample of ten learners and five teachers. This helped the researcher to determine whether the instruments were able to provide both the qualitative and quantitative data required.

### **3.7.2 Reliability**

Test-retest technique was applied to determine the reliability of the research instruments. During the pilot study, the developed instruments were administered to ten students and five teachers in the two schools. Data were collected and recorded. This was repeated again using the same instruments and respondents after two weeks. The scores from both studies were compiled and analyzed manually. A correlation was done for both scores to obtain an estimate of reliability. The reliability coefficient was determined using Spearman's rank order correlation formula to determine the extent to which the instruments were consistent in eliciting the same response each time they were administered.

#### **Spearman's rank order correlation:**

$$\text{Rho (rs)} = 1 - \frac{6\sum d_i^2}{n(n^2-1)}$$

The instruments had a correlation coefficient of +0.9; hence the researcher deemed them reliable.

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedure**

A permit was obtained from the Ministry of Education to enable the researcher to carry out data collection. The Trans Nzoia West District Commissioner and the District Education Officer were also requested to provide introductory letters to the researcher. This enabled the researcher to conduct the study freely within the

District. The researcher also requested the selected respondents to give accurate and truthful information. They were assured that any information given would be treated as confidential. Data were collected as follows:

- **Administration of Questionnaires**

The class teachers were requested to fill a questionnaire to help obtain information related to the research questions. These questionnaires were administered by the researcher when visiting the schools. The researcher first introduced herself then outlined the purpose of the study to the teachers in a brief session. She then handed over the questionnaires and requested each respondent to fill them without discussing with another to avoid undue influence. The researcher gave them time to respond and then collected the questionnaires before leaving the school to ensure that none was lost.

- **Focus Group Discussions**

The researcher conducted focus group discussions with the schoolgirls. During the discussion sessions, the schoolgirls were requested to share their experiences with the researcher. Discussions were guided by focus group discussion guides which had questions related to the research questions. Each group's responses were recorded and tallied depending on the number of respondents that held the same view on the topic of discussion. The acknowledgements were recorded by the number of hands lifted up. Opinions and suggestions were recorded verbatim. The data collected were recorded and organized for further analysis.

- **Interviews**

The researcher interviewed the community leaders from the specific schools in which they were members of the school committee. The responses were recorded in the interview guides.

- **Documentary Analysis**

Records of learner enrollment per class, school attendance registers and academic performance records were analyzed and comparisons made for those learners who had undergone FGC with those who had not. For instance, from the school attendance register for each class, the researcher was able to find out the number of days in a month each schoolgirl under study had been present in school. This was recorded and later analyzed for each category of schoolgirls under study.

### **3.9 Logistical and Ethical Considerations**

FGC is a practice that is considered secretive by various communities that practice it. Most communities take an oath not to divulge any information about the rites. In one particular school, where the rites were performed on the school playground, the head teacher was requested to convene a parents meeting by the Area Education Officer.

The parents were addressed by the officer on the importance of education. The researcher was introduced to the parents and teachers who were informed of the purpose of study and requested to provide truthful information in the best interest of the schoolgirls. The researcher assured the respondents that confidentiality would be ensured and that no one would be victimized for providing information.

This helped the respondents to feel free to answer the questions asked by the researcher.

### **3.10 Summary**

The data collected were organized according to research questions. Quantitative data were analyzed manually and presented in tables, graphs and pie charts while qualitative data were summarized in narrative form. In the next chapter, the study findings will be presented and analyzed.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter contains a presentation of the findings of the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education in Saboti Division, Trans Nzoia County.

As discussed in the previous chapter, data were collected from 5 primary schools. The respondents were 20 class teachers, 10 community leaders and 683 schoolgirls who were in Standard 5 to 8. Most of these schoolgirls were aged between 10 and 18 years. There were 96 schoolgirls who had undergone FGC and were placed in one category while 587 who had not undergone FGC were placed in the second category.

The instruments used for collecting data were questionnaires, focus group discussion guides and interview schedules. All the instruments administered to the respondents were returned.

Data collected were organized and analyzed following the sequence of the research questions. The views from the respondents will be discussed and the findings interpreted in the following subtopics.

### **4.1 Background Information on FGC in Saboti Division**

The first task the researcher had was to assess the general understanding of FGC by the respondents. This was necessary as an introduction to make the respondents feel free to answer the more specific questions related to the research questions. It also helped to provide background information about the rite with reference to the area of study.

The introductory questions were: What is FGC? Who performs FGC? Where is FGC conducted? Why is FGC performed? And how often is FGC conducted?

When asked to define FGC, the schoolgirls, teachers and community leaders defined FGC simply as the circumcision of girls, and specifically selected type II as the one performed by the community.

When asked to state who performed FGC, the response by all was traditional practitioners.

When asked to state where FGC was conducted, community leaders and teachers responded that FGC was traditionally conducted in communal forests and the initiates secluded and given care in the homestead of one of the members of the community until they were healed. However, with the demarcation of land and depletion of forests, the rite is currently performed in the homesteads, and in one particular village the school playground was used as it was deemed to be communal land.

When they were asked to explain why FGC was done, all the respondents replied that it was a rite of passage from girlhood to womanhood. However, some community leaders also felt it was a means of income for the traditional practitioners as well as a family honour for the girl's family.

Finally, when asked how often FGC was conducted, the response by all was that it was performed every 2 years.

#### 4.2 Prevalence of FGC Among Primary Schoolgirls in Saboti Division, Trans Nzoia County.

The researcher went on to find out what the prevalence rate of FGC was. This was guided by the first research question which sought to find out the prevalence rate of FGC among primary schoolgirls in Saboti Division.

To answer this question, questionnaires were administered to class teachers asking what the percentage prevalence rate of FGC was while community leaders were interviewed on how widespread FGC was. Responses on the approximate percentages were marked on the questionnaires by the class teachers and on the interview schedules of community leaders.

Responses from the community leaders were tallied and recorded in the table below:

Table 4.1: Community Leaders` Responses on the Prevalence of FGC among Schoolgirls in Saboti Division.

(N=10)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Over 80%	0	0
60-80%	2	20
40-60%	1	10
20-40%	3	30
Below 20%	4	40
Total	10	100

From the responses given above, majority of community leaders put the prevalence of FGC in primary schools at below 20%.

Class teachers from the sampled five schools also provided the information in questionnaires. Their responses were tallied and recorded in the table below:

Table 4.2: Class Teachers` Responses on the Prevalence of FGC among Schoolgirls in Saboti Division.

(N=20)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Over 80%	1	5
60-80%	1	5
40-60%	4	20
20-40%	6	30
Below 20%	8	40
Total	20	100

From the class teachers' responses, majority put the prevalence rate at below 20% just like the community leaders did. However, in addition to the responses above which were general, the researcher sought to establish the actual number of schoolgirls in each class who had undergone FGC. In interviews with community leaders it was revealed that those who had undergone the rite would normally be clean shaven immediately they came from seclusion and also had a mark on their

left upper arms to identify their age sets. On this basis, class teachers were requested to identify those who had undergone the rite in December 2008 in each class. It had been noted from interviews with the class teachers that there were no girls in the five schools who had undergone FGC earlier than 2008 as all had dropped out. Hence, the number of schoolgirls who had been identified as having undergone the rite in 2008 and reported back to school in January 2009 was recorded out of the total number of girls in each class as shown in table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3 Showing the Number of Schoolgirls Who had Undergone FGC Out of the Total Number of Schoolgirls per School per Class in 2009

	SCH. A	SCH. B	SCH. C	SCH. D	SCH. E	TOTAL
STD 5	4/31	2/53	1/71	6/11	1/17	14/183
STD 6	2/29	4/59	3/62	5/17	3/31	17/198
STD 7	4/21	9/59	8/84	5/26	8/13	34/203
STD 8	8/25	10/22	5/32	3/12	5/8	31/99
TOTAL	18/106	25/193	17/249	19/66	17/69	96/683

From the data above, it was found that 96 schoolgirls out of 683 had undergone FGC in December 2008. The percentage prevalence of FGC in the five primary schools sampled in Saboti Division was calculated and found to be 14.05%. This figure was way below the prevalence rates for the Kalenjin community that were cited by Chebet (2005:75) and Njeri (2001) as 80% and 62% respectively. However, the percentage was in close range with that given by the majority (40%)

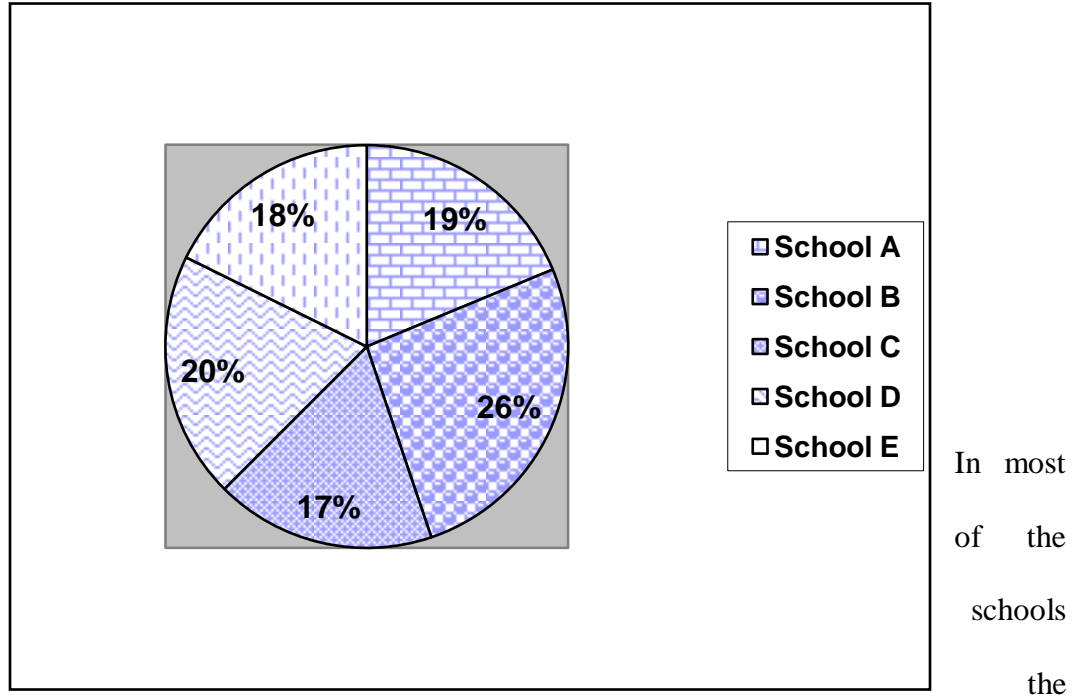
of class teachers and community leaders who put the prevalence rate as below 20% in their responses in the questionnaires.

The lower percentage prevalence recorded could be attributed to the fact that the study was only done in the schools and not within the entire community. It could also be due to the fact that a lot of sensitization has been done to help communities that practice FGC do away with the practice, as required by the WHO (2010) website.

To compare percentage prevalence rates for schools, the number of schoolgirls in each school was divided by the total number of girls who had undergone FGC converted into percentages using the formula  $(n/N \times 100\%)$  the results were recorded in the pie chart below:

Figure 4.1 Pie Chart Showing the Percentage Prevalence rate of FGC Calculated out of the Total Number of those who had Undergone FGC per School in 2009.

(N=96)

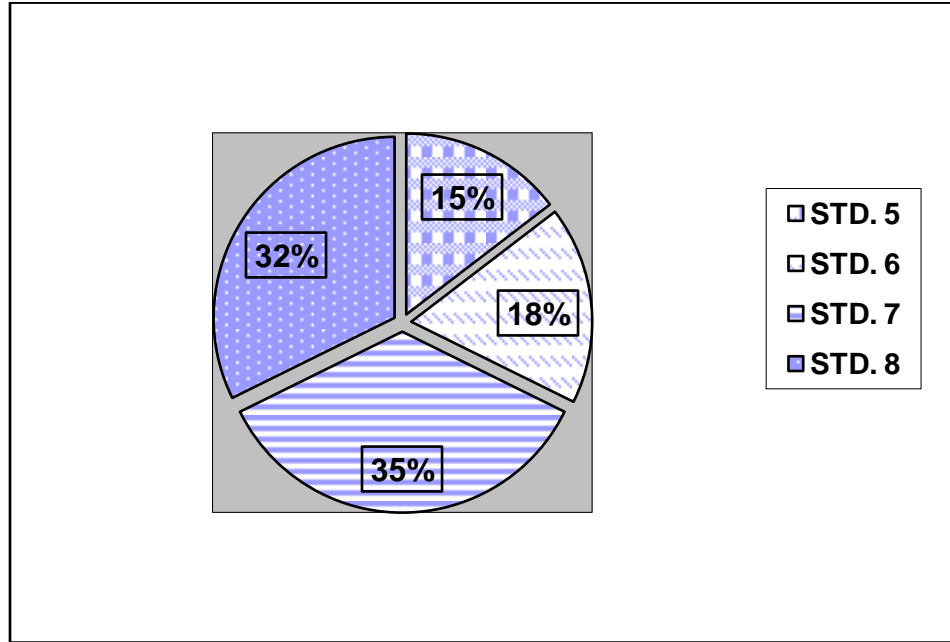


percentage prevalence rate of FGC was almost the same as it was in the close range of between 18% and 20%. However, it was noted from the focus group discussions with the schoolgirls and interviews with community leaders that FGC rites were conducted on the playground of one of the schools (B) which coincidentally happened to be the school that had the highest prevalence rate of 25%.

The percentage prevalence rate of FGC per class was as shown in the pie chart below:

Figure 4.2 Pie Chart Showing the Percentage Prevalence Rate of FGC Calculated out of the Total number of those Who had Undergone FGC per Class in the year 2009.

(N=96)



From the above data, the schoolgirls with the highest prevalence rate were those in std. 7 at 35% followed by those in std. 8 at 32%. This could be due to the fact that majority of the schoolgirls were between 15-18 years old. At this age, most parents would expect their daughters to be mature enough to undergo the rites. This was in agreement with the views of Katam (1996) who stipulated that the next expectation of the initiates would be marriage hence those in the upper classes were most affected.

#### 4.3 Comparison of the School Attendance of Schoolgirls Who Underwent FGC with Those Who did not Undergo the Rite

The second research question sought to find out how the school attendance of schoolgirls who had undergone FGC compared with that of schoolgirls who had



not undergone the cut. To answer this question, documentary analysis of attendance registers was done and responses from class teachers and schoolgirls compiled.

The researcher went through the school attendance registers for each class with an intention of establishing the school attendance patterns for the schoolgirls who had undergone FGC and those who had not undergone the cut. The number of schoolgirls who were absent from school for five days and more in the month of February 2009 was recorded. This month was selected as it was the second month in the first term of the year when most learners would be expected to have settled down for studies after the December holidays when FGC rites were conducted. It was also a time when most primary schools in the Division were preparing for mid-term exams. From the analysis, it was found that schoolgirls who had undergone FGC were absent from school more often than those who had not undergone the rite. This was shown in the table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4 Showing Number of Absent Schoolgirls Per Class for Five Days and More in the Month of February 2009.

	Those who Underwent FGC (N=96)	Those who did not Undergo FGC (N=587)
STANDARD 5	14 (100%)	10 (6%)

STANDARD 6	9	(53%)	3	(2%)
STANDARD 7	5	(15%)	5	(3%)
STANDARD 8	4	(13%)	2	(3%)
TOTAL	32	(33.3%)	20	(3.4%)

From the data given above, the percentage rate of absenteeism for girls who had undergone FGC was (33.3%) while that of girls who had not undergone FGC was (3.4%). This could be due to the fact that most of the schoolgirls who had undergone the rite were just healing and coming from seclusion unlike their counterparts who had not undergone the rite and were able to continue with their studies in good time. This concurred with the views of Njau and Wamahu (1994) as quoted by Chege and Sifuna (2006) that initiation ceremonies affected the school attendance of learners and resulted in dropping out of school.

Class teachers were also asked in the questionnaires whether they had observed frequent absenteeism during FGC ceremonies. An analysis of their responses showed that 18 (90%) class teachers said that they observed frequent absenteeism from school by the schoolgirls during FGC ceremonies.

When asked in the focus group discussion sessions how long those who had undergone FGC stayed in seclusion, majority of the schoolgirls in both categories; 78 (75%) in group X and 352 (60%) in group Y said the seclusion period was 2 months. Given that FGC was conducted in December then it meant that most schoolgirls would still be in seclusion when schools opened in January and hence

be absent from school. These findings concurred with the findings cited by Mukhongo (2003) that circumcision ceremonies took up time meant to be used by learners in school.

#### 4.4 Comparison of the Academic Performance of Schoolgirls who had Undergone FGC with that of those who had not Undergone the Rite

The third research question sought to find out how the academic performance of schoolgirls who had undergone FGC compared with that of schoolgirls who had not undergone FGC. To answer this question, documentary analysis was done on the records of academic performance of schoolgirls in both categories.

An analysis of the records of academic performance was done for those learners who had undergone and those who had not undergone FGC. The scores for four tests were selected as follows: end year examination results for 2008 were selected as they were done two months before the FGC rites which were conducted in December 2008. Scores for three subsequent examinations were also recorded as they were done at intervals of two months each after the rite. These were; midterm examination for first term 2009 which were conducted in February, end term examination for first term 2009 which were conducted in April and midterm examination for second term 2009 which were conducted in June. The examinations were administered in five study subjects and the total marks scored out of 500. Percentage mean scores were computed for each subject for schoolgirls in each category. Total marks were calculated and recorded out of

500. The scores were recorded for those who underwent FGC (group X) and those who did not undergo FGC (group Y).

For purposes of comparison, mean scores for schoolgirls in each category were recorded in the table 4.5 below:

Table 4.5: Mean Scores for Each Subject in Four Tests for Schoolgirls Who Underwent FGC (X) and Those Who Had Not Undergone the rite (Y)

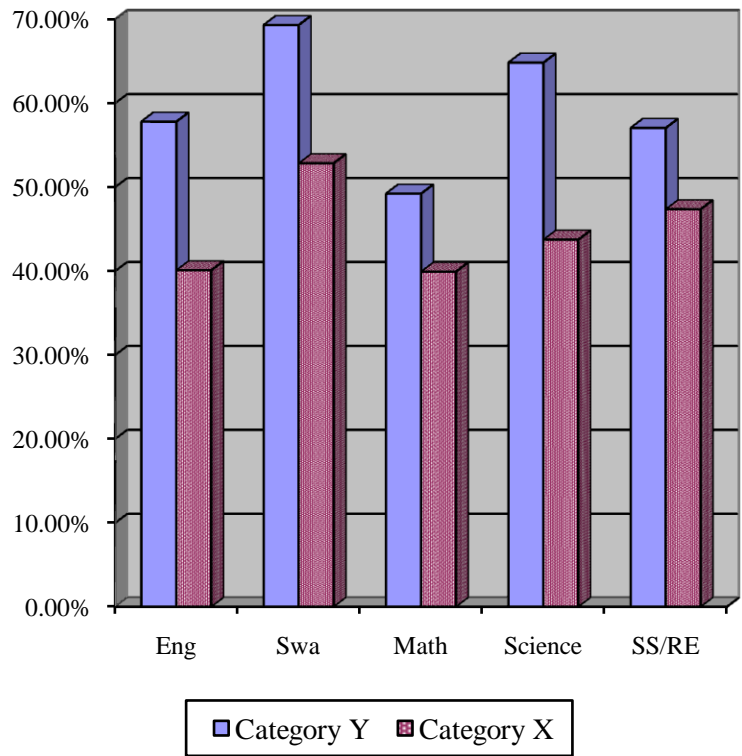
TEST	GROUP	ENG %	SWA %	MATH %	SCIE %	SS/RE %	TOTAL SCORE
1	X	60.81	59.05	64.64	65.14	60.39	310.03
1	Y	41.22	61.60	49.32	63.02	47.04	262.20
2	X	40.09	52.83	39.92	43.73	47.36	223.93
2	Y	57.79	69.30	49.21	64.82	57.04	298.16
3	X	42.87	56.93	39.05	47.15	42.00	228.00
3	Y	59.05	53.28	58.24	62.33	55.17	288.07
4	X	42.32	48.40	34.50	42.03	50.75	218.00
4	Y	62.26	59.49	66.84	58.62	63.24	310.45

A comparison of the scores shows that just before going through FGC, the schoolgirls who had undergone FGC (group X) had a higher mean score than those who had not undergone FGC (group Y). However, immediately after undergoing FGC the schoolgirls recorded a drop in their academic performance. Their academic performance did not improve in the subsequent examinations

either. Hence the researcher concluded that the practice of FGC had a negative effect on the academic performance of schoolgirls who went through the rite.

To further illustrate this point, results for the second examination which was conducted in February, two months after FGC rites were conducted were isolated and recorded in the bar graph below:

Figure 4.3 Bar Graph Showing a Comparison of Scores for Tests done in February 2009 for those who had Undergone FGC (X) and those who had not (Y)



A comparison of the results showed that the academic performance of the schoolgirls who had undergone FGC was found to be consistently lower than that of schoolgirls who had not undergone the rite in all subjects. This went on to emphasize the point that academic performance was negatively affected by undergoing FGC.

The total scores for each examination were compared and a mean for the four examinations calculated. This was recorded in the table below:

Table 4.6 Showing a Comparison of Aggregate Scores for All Tests for Those Who Underwent FGC (X) With those who had not Undergone the Rite (Y)

	SCORE (X)	SCORE (Y)

TEST 1	310.03	262.20
TEST 2	223.93	298.16
TEST 3	228.00	288.07
TEST 4	218.00	310.45
MEAN	245	289.5

From the results above, those who had undergone FGC had a lower mean score than those who had not undergone the rite. At the same time, if the first examination was to be considered as a control then those who had undergone FGC kept recording a drop in their academic performance while those who had not undergone the rite kept recording an improvement in their academic performance. This could be attributed to the fact that soon after the rites, the schoolgirls who had undergone FGC were secluded and had little or no time to revise their school work and may even have missed some classes. Secondly, the teachings they had received during the rites may have made them not to take their studies seriously.

During the focus group discussion session, the researcher was informed that FGC was done concurrently with the circumcision of boys and initiates from both groups were expected to choose suitors for marriage. Hence, the learners may have displayed poor concentration in their studies as their next expectation was to get married. This is a view shared by Chebet (2005), Rono (2002), Katam (1996) and Njau and Wamahu (1994).

To determine the t-test for the differences between the two means for both categories the researcher used the following t-test formula:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\frac{\sum X_1^2 - (\sum X_1)^2}{N_1} + \frac{\sum X_2^2 - (\sum X_2)^2}{N_2}}{(N_1 + N_2) - 2}}}$$

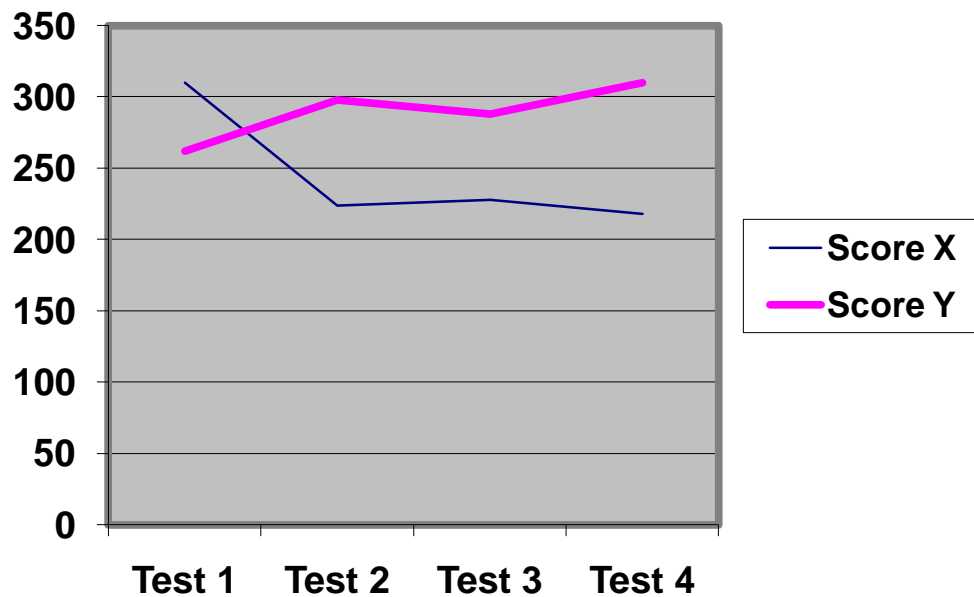
The t-test for the difference between the two means was then calculated at 0.5 level of significance and found to be t= 1.92. The hypothesis that schoolgirls who have undergone FGC have poor academic performance compared to those who have not undergone FGC was therefore accepted.

The scores for the four tests were also depicted in the line graph below for ease of comparison:

Figure 4.4: Line Graph Showing a Comparison of Test Mean Scores for those Schoolgirls who had Undergone FGC (X) with those who had not Undergone the Rite (Y)

Scores





The line graph above clearly shows that schoolgirls who had undergone FGC recorded better academic performance than those who had not undergone the rite in the first examination. However, this trend was reversed when the learners underwent the rite with those who had not undergone FGC recording an improvement in academic performance while those who had undergone the rite recorded a constant drop in academic performance in the subsequent examinations.

#### 4.5 Comparison of the Retention Rate of Schoolgirls who Underwent FGC with Those Who Did Not Undergo the Rite

The fourth research question sought to find out how the retention rate of schoolgirls who had undergone FGC compare with that of schoolgirls who had not undergone FGC. To answer this question, class teachers were asked in

questionnaires to provide the number of schoolgirls in each category who had dropped out of school.

School attendance registers were also analyzed to determine the number of schoolgirls who had dropped out of school by September 2009; nine months after the girls had undergone FGC. The findings were represented in table 4.7 below:

Table 4.7: The Number and Percentage per Class of Schoolgirls Who Had Dropped out of School by September 2009 From Each Category.

	Schoolgirls Who Underwent FGC (N=96)	Schoolgirls Who did not Undergo FGC (N=587)
	No %	No %
STD. 5	14 (100)	2 (1.2)
STD. 6	15 (88.2)	7 (3.9)
STD. 7	23 (67.6)	8 (4.7)
STD. 8	7 (22.6)	4 (5.9)
TOTAL	59 (61.5)	21 (3.6)

From the finding, 59 (61.5%) of schoolgirls who had undergone FGC in December 2008 had dropped out of school by September 2009 as compared to 21 (3.6%) who had not undergone FGC. The retention rate for schoolgirls who had undergone FGC was therefore 38.5% as compared to that for schoolgirls who had not undergone the cut which was 96.4%

A comparison of the drop out rates by class showed that the highest number of schoolgirls who had dropped out of school from both categories were those in Standard seven.

The researcher also found that all the schoolgirls in Standard 5 who had undergone FGC had dropped out of school by September 2009. However, few schoolgirls in Standard eight had dropped out probably because they had registered for KCSE examination and had to abide by the requirements of the Kenya National Examination Council that required candidates to have been present in school in order to be allowed to sit for the examinations.

The researcher sought to establish the reasons why the schoolgirls had dropped out of school. According to the class teachers and schoolgirls' responses, the high dropout rates of those who had undergone FGC could be attributed to early marriage or pregnancy. Responses from the community leaders revealed that after undergoing FGC, the girl initiates would be espoused to boys who had also undergone circumcision at the same time with the girls. The girls would be given beads to show that they were engaged for marriage. This would expose them to sexual relations resulting in early pregnancy and marriage.

Table 4.8: Number and Percentage of Schoolgirls Per School Who Dropped out of School by September 2009 by Category.

	Schoolgirls Who	Schoolgirls Who Did Not
	Underwent FGC	Undergo FGC
	No %	No %

School A	17 (94.4)	7 (7.9)
School B	19 (76.0)	5 (3.0)
School C	8 (47.1)	2 (0.9)
School D	5 (26.3)	3 (6.4)
School E	10 (58.8)	4 (7.7)
TOTAL	59 (61.5)	21 (3.6)

The findings above show that school B had the highest number of schoolgirls who had undergone FGC dropping out of school closely followed by school A. For those who had not undergone FGC, school A had the highest number of schoolgirls dropping out of school. The findings also show that only 1 (5.6%) schoolgirl who had undergone FGC remained in School A while 6 (24%) remained in School B, 7 (52.9%) remained in School C, 14 (73.7%) remained in School D and 7 (41.2%) remained in School E. The highest retention rate for schoolgirls who had undergone FGC attained by School D could be attributed to the fact that the schoolgirls went through intensive guidance and counseling and continuous follow up by their class teachers unlike those in School A, who received no counseling. This information came up during the focus group discussion sessions.

#### 4.6 Perception of Teachers and Schoolgirls on the Effect of FGC on the Participation of Schoolgirls in Education

The fifth research question sought to find out the perception of teachers and schoolgirls on the effect of FGC on the participation of schoolgirls in education. To answer this question, questionnaires were administered to the class teachers while the schoolgirls were engaged in focus group discussion sessions. From their responses, 18 (90%) class teachers and all the schoolgirls (100%) concurred that FGC had a negative effect on the participation of schoolgirls in education. They gave the following explanations to support their views:

- Most girls who had undergone FGC dropped out of school for early marriage.
- Most girls who had undergone FGC were constantly absent from school.

This viewpoint was shared by Chebet (2005) and Njau and Wamahiu (1995) who agreed that after undergoing FGC most learners dropped out of school and opted for early marriage. The community leaders interviewed also provided the information that they had observed from the Sabaot community a lot of teenage mothers who had dropped out of school soon after undergoing FGC rites. They said that these mothers were seen doing casual work on the village farms to fend for their families.

However, 2 (10%) class teachers felt that FGC had a positive effect on the participation of girls in education because FGC provided a theme in various non-formal curriculum activities such as debate, drama, cultural dance and music. These activities helped the schoolgirls to develop skills like self expression, courage, public speaking and articulation. In addition, 3 (30%) community leaders

felt that schoolgirls who had undergone FGC would work hard in school as they were taught the virtues of hard work and endurance which if well applied to their studies; there was a likelihood of improving their participation in education.

#### 4.7 Suggestions on how FGC can be eradicated from the Sabaot Community

The sixth research question sought to find out what could be done to eradicate FGC among the Sabaot community. To answer this question, class teachers were required to give suggestions in the questionnaires while the schoolgirls gave their suggestions in focus group discussion sessions. Community leaders were also asked to give suggestions in interviews.

The following suggestions on how to eradicate FGC scored highest from the teachers, schoolgirls and the community leaders:

- Use of alternative rites of passage which encourage girls to participate actively in their studies.
- Attitude change in which the community should be educated on the importance of education for the girls.
- Delaying tactics in which schoolgirls will be allowed to pursue their education up to tertiary level then they can choose whether to undergo the rite or not.
- Training elderly women who perform FGC on alternative means of income generation so that they can impart the same skills to the young girls in the community.
- Guidance and counseling of schoolgirls.

These findings concurred with the recommendations of Mukhongo (2003) that circumcision ceremonies should include counseling of girls on the importance of schooling as a form of education. They were also in concurrence with the suggestions by Chebet (2005) that traditional practitioners ought to be trained in other skills as a measure to help eradicate the practice of FGC.

#### 4.8 Summary

This chapter dealt with a presentation of the study findings, their analysis and discussion. In the following chapter, the summary, conclusions and recommendations will be discussed.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter contains a summary of the research findings, the conclusion and recommendations for further research.

### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The study was conducted to find out the effects of FGC on the participation of girls in education. The following statements give a summary of the findings of the study:

- The prevalence rate of FGC among primary schools in Saboti Division was about **14.05 %**.
- The percentage of absent schoolgirls who underwent FGC was **33.3 %** as compared to **3.4 %** of schoolgirls who had not undergone the cut.
- There were **38.2%** Schoolgirls who underwent FGC who were retained in school as compared to **96.42%** of schoolgirls who had not undergone the cut.
- Schoolgirls who underwent FGC recorded lower academic performance results after undergoing FGC as compared to those who had not undergone the cut.
- There were **90%** of class teachers, **100%** of schoolgirls and **70%** of community leaders who were of the opinion that the practice of FGC had a negative effect on the participation of girls in education.
- All the respondents suggested that alternative rites of passage which support participation of girls in education should replace FGC.

## **5.2 Implications of the Findings**

The findings of this study imply that despite the fact that FGC is illegal in Kenya, it is still practiced widely among the Sabaot community and has a negative effect on the participation of girls in education. They also imply that schoolgirls who



have undergone FGC may not be able to compete fairly in their studies with those who have not, unless they undergo intensive guidance and counseling and follow up from their class teachers and guidance and counseling teachers.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

It was therefore concluded that the practice of FGC has a negative effect on the participation of girls in education.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

In view of the above findings, the following recommendations were made to help schoolgirls in the Sabaot community.

- Schoolgirls who have undergone FGC should undergo intensive guidance and counseling to help them concentrate on their studies rather than opting for early marriage.
- Alternative rites of passage should be adopted whereby girls are only taught good morals but not forced to undergo FGC
- The alternative rites of passage should be conducted by female teachers and other professionals in the community who will be role models for the schoolgirls.
- The rites should be conducted during school holidays and last for only a week so as not to affect syllabus coverage by the learners.
- Girls should be allowed to choose whether to attend the alternative rites or not.

### **5.5 Further Research**

The researcher recommended that further research be conducted in the following areas:

- The effect of other socio cultural practices on the participation of schoolgirls in education.
- The role of guidance and counseling in ensuring active participation of schoolgirls in education.
- An investigation into the motivating factors that contributed to the success of professional ladies who had undergone FGC as schoolgirls but still pursued their studies and got careers.
- The success of alternative rites of passage in communities that initially practiced FGC in ensuring active participation of girls in education.

## **5.6 Summary**

This chapter contained the summary, conclusion and recommendations for further study.

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### *Appendix (i)*

## **QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CLASS TEACHERS**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help investigate the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education. All information you give will be treated confidentially. You are requested to provide truthful and accurate information to help achieve this purpose.

1. How long have you been in this school? 5 yrs & above \_\_\_ 3-4 yrs\_\_\_ 2-3 yrs \_\_\_ 1-2 yrs\_\_\_ 0-1 yr \_\_\_
2. What do you understand by the term Female Genital Cut (FGC)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How often is FGC performed among the Sabaot community? Yearly\_\_\_  
Every 2years\_\_\_ Every 5 years \_\_\_ Every 10 years \_\_\_

4. Who performs the rite? A traditional practitioner \_\_\_ A medical practitioner \_\_\_
5. On who is the cut performed? Women \_\_\_ Girls \_\_\_ at what age? 5-7 yrs \_\_\_ 8-10 yrs \_\_\_ 11-13 yrs \_\_\_ 14-16 yrs \_\_\_
6. Why is the FGC rite conducted? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How is FGC performed? Part of the female genitals removed \_\_\_ Whole of the external genitals removed \_\_\_ Genitals removed and the wound stitched leaving only a small opening \_\_\_ Genitals pricked or pierced just to cause a little pain and blood shed \_\_\_
8. Where is FGC conducted?
9. For how long do the initiates stay in seclusion? 1 month \_\_\_ 2 months \_\_\_ 3-6 months \_\_\_ 6 months –1 year \_\_\_ 1 year & above \_\_\_
10. Does undergoing the rite have any effect on the girls? (a) Positive effect \_\_\_ explain \_\_\_\_\_ (b) Negative effect \_\_\_ explain \_\_\_\_\_
11. Does undergoing FGC affect the participation of girls in education? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
12. What is the prevalence rate of FGC among primary school girls in Saboti Division? Below 20% \_\_\_ 20-40% \_\_\_ 40-60% \_\_\_ 60-80% \_\_\_ 80% & above \_\_\_
13. How many girls in each class have undergone FGC? STD 5 \_\_\_ STD 6 \_\_\_ STD 7 \_\_\_ STD 8 \_\_\_
14. From the school attendance register for each class, how many girls have been absent from school for 5 days and more in the month of February? \_\_\_ Out of these, how many have undergone FGC? \_\_\_
15. Out of the top 10 girls in each class, how many have undergone FGC? \_\_\_
16. Out of the bottom 10 girls in each class, how many have undergone FGC? \_\_\_
17. How many girls have dropped out of school in each class? \_\_\_ Out of these, how many have undergone FGC? \_\_\_ For what reasons have they dropped out? \_\_\_\_\_
18. For each of the girls in each class who have undergone FGC, what is their mean score before and after undergoing FGC? Please fill the details in the table below:

<b>Learner</b>	<b>Score before FGC Test 1</b>	<b>Score after FGC Test 2 ,3 and 4</b>
A		
B		
C		
D		
E		
F		

G		
H		
I		
J		
K		
L		
M		
N		

*Appendix (ii)*

**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR LEARNERS**

The purpose of this discussion is to help investigate the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education in Saboti Division. The information you give will be treated confidentially. Please be truthful in your response to help achieve this purpose.

1. Are you happy to be in school?
2. What would you like to become when you complete school? Engineer \_\_\_  
Lawyer \_\_\_ Doctor \_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_ Nurse \_\_\_ Housewife \_\_\_
3. Do you face any problem as a schoolgirl? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Explain  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. There are certain traditional practices in your community that may affect your participation in education; mention one that highly affects you? FGC \_\_\_ Early marriage \_\_\_



5. What is FGC?
6. Who performs FGC in your community? A medical practitioner \_\_\_ A traditional practitioner \_\_\_
7. Where is FGC conducted in your community?
8. How is FGC performed in your community? Part of the female genitals removed \_\_\_ Whole of the female genitals removed \_\_\_ Genitals removed and the wound stitched leaving only a small opening \_\_\_ Genitals pricked or pierced to cause a little pain and bloodshed \_\_\_
9. What motivates girls in your community to undergo FGC? To get a sense of belonging \_\_\_ Fear of rejection \_\_\_ Peer pressure \_\_\_ Adventure \_\_\_ To be heroines \_\_\_
10. For how long do the initiates stay in seclusion? 1 month \_\_\_ 2 months \_\_\_ 3-6 months \_\_\_ 6 months –1 year \_\_\_ 1 year & above \_\_\_
11. Does undergoing FGC have any effect on the girls? Positive effect \_\_\_ explain \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_ explain \_\_\_\_\_
12. Does undergoing the rite have any effect on the participation of girls in education? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ explain \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do girls who have undergone FGC attend school regularly as compared to those who haven't undergone the practice? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
14. How many girls do you know of who have dropped out of school as a result of undergoing FGC? \_\_\_ From which class? \_\_\_ Which year? \_\_\_ For what reasons? \_\_\_\_\_
15. How do the schoolgirls who have undergone FGC perform academically as compared to those who have not undergone the rite?
16. How does the Sabaot community view girls who have not undergone FGC?
17. How can FGC be eradicated from the Sabaot community?

**Appendix (iii)**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help investigate the effect of FGC on the participation of girls in education in Saboti Division. The information you give will be treated confidentially. Please be truthful in your response to help achieve this purpose.

1. What is your role in the community? Administrative officer \_\_\_ Church leader \_\_\_ Community Based organization leader \_\_\_ Elder \_\_\_ Parent \_\_\_
2. What is FGC?
3. Why is FGC conducted among the Sabaot community?
4. Do you think it is a retrogressive practice? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ explain \_\_\_\_\_
5. How widespread is FGC among schoolgirls in your community? Over 80% \_\_\_ 60-80% \_\_\_ 40-60% \_\_\_ 20-40% \_\_\_ below 20% \_\_\_

6. Who performs FGC?
  7. Where is FGC performed?
  8. What is your perception about the effect of FGC on the education of girls in the Sabaot community? Positive effect \_\_\_ Negative effect \_\_\_ explain
- 
9. Why do you think girls who have undergone FGC are regarded more highly in the community than those who have not undergone the rite?
  10. Dont you think such girls can be encouraged to work hard in school to become role models for others? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ explain\_\_\_\_\_
  11. How does FGC affect the school attendance of schoolgirls who have undergone the practice compared with those who have not?
  12. What is the effect of FGC on the retention of schoolgirls in school?
  13. Does FGC have an effect on the academic performance of schoolgirls? Explain how.
  14. Is the Sabaot community ready to do away with the practice of FGC?
  15. How can FGC be eradicated from the community?

