

Topic: Socio-Cultural Barriers and Empowerment of Migrant Women in Lodwar, Turkana Central Sub-County, Turkana County, Kenya

Dona Janet Akoth¹; Dr. Thomas Onsarigo²; Dr. Violet Simiyu³; Victor Ajayi⁴

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Abstract: Migrant women in Lodwar, Turkana Central Sub County continue to experience persistent socio-cultural constraints that limit their social, economic and civic empowerment. The study examined the effects of socio-cultural barriers on the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar. Specific objectives were to examine how cultural integration influences empowerment, assess the impact of patriarchal family structures and examine the effects of child marriage. This study was based on Intersectionality Theory and Empowerment Theory and Convergent parallel research design adopted. The study targeted 350 migrant women aged 18-50 years as primary respondents, with 186 primary respondents selected using stratified random sampling, and 32 key informants selected using purposive sampling. Researcher administered questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data, and interview guides were used to collect qualitative data. The validity of the instrument was obtained through expert review and pilot test in Marsabit Town, Marsabit County and reliability was established by Cronbach Alpha with a cut-off value of 0.70. Data analysis is done descriptively and inferentially descriptive data analysis in SPSS version 26 and qualitative data analysis thematically. Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Ethical issues were closely followed throughout the study. The study found that cultural integration, patriarchal family structures, child marriage, and community attitudes were key factors that affect empowerment outcomes among migrant women at the community of Lodwar in Turkana Central Sub-County. Regression analysis showed that the four predictors jointly explained 61% of the variation in empowerment outcomes ($R^2 = 0.61$). The results showed that all the variables were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) except for cultural integration ($p = 0.055$) and community attitudes ($p = 0.059$) as negative predictors, and child marriage as a positive predictor ($\beta = -0.39$), followed by community attitudes ($\beta = -0.33$) and patriarchal family structures ($\beta = -0.28$). All variables were found to have significant relationships ($p < 0.05$) with Pearson correlations ranging from -0.64 to -0.60 (with child marriage and community attitudes demonstrating the strongest negative associations) and 0.62 (with cultural integration demonstrating the strongest positive association). Hence, empowerment outcomes were found to be moderate ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.18$), indicating that despite some progress, socio-cultural barriers continue to limit full empowerment.

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I. INTRODUCTION

➤ Background

The empowerment of migrant women is widely acknowledged as an essential component of social justice and inclusive development because it strengthens women's capacity to access resources, engage in decision making and exercise control over their social, economic and civic lives (Kabeer, 2020). In this study, empowerment is conceptualized as a measurable outcome reflected in women's access to education, income generating opportunities, participation in household and community decision making, and the level of social inclusion they experience.

Globally, the empowerment of women and in particular migrant and displaced women has gained momentum as a result of continued gender inequalities and social marginalization. In the African context, socio cultural barriers

continue to exert a significant influence on the empowerment of migrant women. In Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, deep rooted cultural norms, Child marriages and gender inequalities limit women's access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities (Hussain et al., 2023).

In Kenya, migrant women remain inadequately empowered despite progressive legal and policy frameworks such as the National Gender Equality Policy and the Constitution of Kenya (2010). These barriers limit women's capacity to make autonomous decisions and to participate meaningfully in social and economic life. These socio-cultural constraints combine with structural issues like poverty, low literacy rates and limited access to social services to create compound disadvantages affecting women's empowerment. While national policies offer a blueprint for achieving gender equality, their implementation is marred by weak implementation, lack of resources and low community awareness (Mutua & Wanjala, 2023).

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

Migrant women in Lodwar, Turkana County continue to face significant social, economic and civic challenges despite ongoing campaigns for gender equality and social inclusion. These challenges are largely driven by persistent socio-cultural constraints that restrict women's access to basic services and opportunities. In this study, empowerment is operationalized as a measurable composite outcome reflected in four indicators: access to education (school enrolment and completion); levels of income and participation in income-generating activities; participation in household and community decision-making; and the degree of social inclusion experienced by women.

Available evidence indicates that these empowerment indicators remain alarmingly low among migrant women in Lodwar. The REACH (2022) assessment revealed lower school completion rates, less participation in formal employment, and fewer women in migrant communities in Lodwar in community leadership compared to non-migrant communities. Cultural integration as a challenge arises due to the difficulties facing migrant women in adapting to the language, the culture and social norms of the host community, the Turkana. This cultural disconnection leads to social isolation, less community engagement and less economic and civic involvement, which affects all aspects of empowerment outcomes (REACH, 2022).

While several studies have been conducted on refugee integration and access to financial services in Turkana County, the studies have not explicitly studied migrant women as a unique sub-group (Kidakwa, 2025). Moreover, literature addressing socio cultural barriers lacks focus on examining how multiple barriers affect empowerment outcomes and work together. As a result, the implications of cultural integration problems, patriarchy in the family, Child Marriage and community attitudes on the social, economic, educational and civic empowerment of migrant women have not been well explored. This gap in knowledge is particularly problematic as it prevents policy makers and development actors from having a robust and comprehensive gender and context-specific evidence base to develop interventions for migrant women in pastoralist communities.

This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by exploring how the four elected socio-cultural barriers, namely cultural integration, patriarchal family structures, Child marriages and community attitudes, both individually and in combination influence empowerment outcomes among migrant women in Lodwar, Turkana County.

➤ *Research Objectives*

- To examine the influence of cultural integration on the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar.
- To assess the impact of patriarchal family structures on the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar.
- To examine the effects of Child marriage on the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar.

➤ *Research Hypotheses*

- H₀₁: There is No statistically significant relationship between cultural integration and the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar.
- H₀₂: No significant relation exists between the family structure of men and the empowerment for women migrants in the community of Lodwar.
- H₀₃: There is No statistically significant relationship between child marriage and the empowerment of migrant women in the city of Lodwar.

➤ *Scope of the Study*

The scope of the study defines the substantive content, geographical area, target population and time frame that the study will be conducted. The study's subject matter is the impact of socio-cultural barriers in empowering migrant women, namely cultural integration, patriarchal families, child marriage, and the family attitudes. Access to education, income and employment, household/community decision making and social inclusion are used as indicators of empowerment. The study will be geographically located in Lodwar, a purposely selected Turkana Central Sub County in Turkana County, Kenya due to having a high migrant population and unique socio-cultural and pastoralist context. The target population involved migrant women age 18-50 as the key informants and primary respondents from NGOs, local government and community leadership. The study will be carried out from May to September 2026.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ *Theoretical Framework*

Intersectionality Theory and Empowerment Theory are the two research guides that help develop an all-encompassing approach to the role of socio-cultural obstacles in empowering migrant women. The theories are applicable because they describe the overlapping aspects of inequality as well as how women become agency holders in migrant situations.

Intersectionality Theory highlights the interwoven system of social identities (gender, migration status, culture, socio-economic position) and how the intersection forms multiple and overlapping disadvantages (Crenshaw, 1989). The theory can be applied to the situation of migrant women in Lodwar Sub-County to reason why the existence of socio-cultural constraints like weak cultural integration, patriarchal families, Child marriages, and negative attitude in communities does not work independently. Rather, they also engage in a reciprocal process to enhance exclusion, limit access to opportunities, and reduce the involvement of women in social, economic, and civic life. The marginalization of migrant women combined with additional layers thus increases the chances of compounded disadvantages that adversely impact on their empowerment (Kabeer, 1999).

- *Intersectionality Theory:*

This Theory originates from the work of Crenshaw (1989), who introduced the concept to explain how multiple and overlapping social identities such as gender, race, class, and other social positions interact to produce complex forms of inequality. The theory emphasizes that individuals do not experience disadvantages through a single factor, but rather through the interaction of multiple social categories embedded within broader systems of power and oppression. It is especially applicable in the case of migrants, where people tend to experience the combination of multiple layers of marginalization based on gender, migration status, culture, and socio-economic circumstances (Collins, 2020). In the case of migrant women, intersectionality defines the ways in which various socio-cultural variables intersect to define access to resources, opportunities, and society.

➤ *Empirical Review*

- *Cultural Integration and Empowerment of Migrant Women*

Cultural integration has been widely identified as one of the principal pathways through which migrant women access social networks, resources and opportunities in host communities (UN Women, 2022). Mechanisms such as language acquisition, participation in community engagement platforms and inclusive social services are central to reducing social isolation and enhancing access to critical services. However, these mechanisms can be effective if they meet the needs of and vulnerabilities of migrant women.

Evidence from other countries shows that cultural integration positively impacts on the socio economic and psychosocial wellbeing of migrant women. Briones and DeVargas (2020) determined that migrant women in Spain and Portugal who reported more advanced levels of language skills and involvement in community networks were more likely to be able to access employment and vocational training. In a similar study, Ahmed and Sorenson (2021) have shown that being in culturally inclusive institutions in Canada and Sweden, women's participation in decision making and their exposure to discrimination were strengthened. These studies, however, are conducted in developed areas with relatively good institutional supports and the results cannot be directly applied in marginalized areas with limited resources like Lodwar Sub County. Cultural integration has been shown to contribute to women's access to financial services, education and livelihood opportunities at the regional level, with studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa. Namara and Khumalo (2022) found that migrant women who joined host community associations in South Africa reported greater social acceptance and improved livelihood outcomes. Wanjala and Tsegaye (2021) also reported that community-based integration programs in Uganda and Rwanda increased women's engagement in entrepreneurship. These studies, however, tend to emphasize positive outcomes without sufficiently engaging the structural and cultural constraints that limit the effectiveness of integration in patriarchal and resource scarce contexts.

- *Patriarchal Family Structures and Empowerment of Migrant Women*

Patriarchal family structures are a critical determinant of the empowerment of migrant women, particularly in settings where gender norms vest ultimate authority for household decisions, mobility and resource allocation in men (UN Women, 2022). For migrant women, these structures shape the extent to which they are able to integrate meaningfully into host communities, participate in livelihood activities and engage in empowerment programs.

International evidence indicates that patriarchal norms restrict the mobility, decision making power and access to resources of migrant women. In a comparative study of Jordan and Lebanon, Rahman and Solgaard (2020) interviewed 52 migrant women and community workers and concluded that male dominated household decision making discouraged women's participation in language classes, vocational training and income generating programs. Households exhibiting strong patriarchal norms tended to restrict women's mobility outside the home, thereby limiting their social networks and reinforcing economic dependence. The authors recommended that empowerment programs engage male household members in order to address household level resistance.

In Kenya, recent studies have shown that patriarchy has a strong effect on women's empowerment. In the study of migrant households in Nairobi, Garissa and Nakuru by Otieno and Hussein (2022), patriarchal norms were observed as limiting women's participation in adult literacy programs, women's entrepreneurship and women's associations. Women were frequently asked by the project to provide their spousal consent to attend empowerment activities, with a significant dropout rate from trainings where women did not obtain spousal consent. In West Pokot and Turkana, Eregae and Cherop (2023) identified that patriarchal norms about household roles and childcare constrained women's mobility and decreased their opportunities for livelihoods and community empowerment forums. They highlighted the importance of culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive interventions involving the involvement of household gender dynamics in pastoralist communities.

- *Child Marriages and Empowerment of Migrant Women*

Child Marriage is marriage where one or both of the parties, typically girls or young women, are married prior to the age of 18 years or without free and informed consent (UNFPA, 2022). Such marriages are common amongst migrant women, and are often motivated by socio-cultural expectations, economic necessity and the insecurities of migration. Early and forced negatively disrupt women's autonomy and also their education, and increase exposure to gender-based violence, impacting empowerment outcomes in host communities (UN Women, 2021).

Rahman & Chowdhury (2020), analyzed the impact of child marriage on Rohingya migrant women in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The study concluded that early marriage is a widely accepted practice as a way of protecting women from insecurity and poverty, based on an interview with 120

married women and 60 community leaders. The practice, however, made the access to women to empowerment programs like education and livelihood training very limited. The authors found that families considered early marriage to be a way to ensure social security, but that it also led to greater dependency, low literacy, and lesser participation in community structures in the long-term, which impaired the achievement of empowerment.

In Ethiopia, Lemma and Getachew (2021) conducted a study focusing on early marriage among IDPs and migrants in Afar and Somali region. The study, which included interviews with 45 key informants and 80 young women, revealed that child marriage reduced mobility, placed additional burdens on household chores, and resulted in early marriage, all of which were barriers to mobilization for empowerment initiatives, including adult education, skills training and savings groups. The authors found that families endorsed early marriage as a cultural duty, but it had a negative effect on gender equality and the integration of migrant women into the host society.

In Tanzania, Mollel and Mohamed (2022) examined the effects of early and forced marriages on the empowerment of migrant women in Kigoma and Shinyanga. Drawing on focus group discussions with 12 groups of women and interviews with local administrators, the study found that young brides experienced highly restricted mobility and were largely excluded from community development opportunities. Many reported poor control of income, limited access to reproductive health services and high rates of gender-based violence, all of which undermined their confidence, leadership potential and use of empowerment opportunities. Wanjala and Ekale (2023) examined the effects of early and forced marriages on migrant women in Turkana and West Pokot Counties of Kenya. Drawing on a sample of 150 women, elders and local leaders, the study found that early marriage reduced women's access to education, participation in income generating activities and influence over household and community decisions.

Despite all this, there are some key gaps that remain. At the local level, preliminary evidence indicates that weak integration support, deeply rooted patriarchal expectations, high rates of child marriages and negative community attitudes constrain women's participation in education, livelihood programs and leadership (Turkana County Gender and Social Services, 2023). This absence of integrated, locally grounded analysis limits the development of culturally sensitive and context specific interventions to advance the social, economic and decision-making capacities of migrant women in Lodwar Sub County. The present study is designed to fill this gap.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➤ Research Design

This study adopts a mixed methods approach using a convergent parallel research design. The mixed methods approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative data in

order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of socio-cultural barriers on the empowerment of migrant women. In a convergent parallel design, quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently, analyzed independently and then merged at the interpretation stage to allow comparison, triangulation and validation of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

➤ Study Area

The study was conducted in Lodwar Turkana Central subcounty, the administrative headquarters and largest urban centre of Turkana County. Turkana County is the largest county in Kenya by area, covering approximately 77,597.8 square kilometers. It borders Uganda to the west, South Sudan and Ethiopia to the north and north east, and Lake Turkana to the east. It also borders West Pokot, Baringo, Samburu and Marsabit Counties within Kenya. According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) in the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, the county currently has a population of 926,976 people with projections going up to 1.048 million by 2024.

➤ Target Population

The target population is the sub-population of migrant women which is accessible and is accessible in a reliable way and can be identified, located and approached through institutional and community-based channels, namely, women aged 18 to 50 years. This accessible population was identified by a triangulation of three administrative and programmatic data sources maintained by the Turkana County Department of Gender and Social Services and other partners: (i) registers of community based organisations (CBOs) that engage with migrant women, such as savings groups, women's empowerment groups and faith-based organisations; (ii) program rosters of non-governmental organizations implementing empowerment, livelihood and gender-based violence interventions for migrant women in Lodwar; and (iii) migrant household lists maintained by the Sub-County Administrator, area chiefs and assistant chiefs. After consolidation of the three sources and removal of duplicates, the resulting accessible population was 350 migrant women aged 18 to 50 years (Turkana County Department of Gender and Social Services, 2025). This figure represents an administrative and programmatic enumeration of the accessible migrant women population, not a census-derived count of all migrant women in Lodwar.

In addition to migrant women, the target population includes 32 key informants comprising 12 NGO experts working on women's empowerment, 8 local government officials (chiefs and sub-chiefs) and 12 community elders and village leaders. These key informants provided complementary insights into policy implementation, programmatic interventions, cultural norms and community attitudes that influence the empowerment of migrant women.

Table 1 Target Population

Categories	Target Population
Migrant Women (18–50 years)	350
NGO Experts on Women's Empowerment	12
Local Government Officials (Chiefs and Sub Chiefs)	8
Community Elders and Village Leaders	12
Total	382

➤ Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a subset of individuals from a target population in order to obtain data that represents the characteristics of the entire population (Verma & Verma, 2020). The sample size refers to the number of respondents selected for participation in the study (Levy & Goldfarb, 2021).

The sample size for migrant women, who form the primary respondents of this study, is derived using Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N (e^2))$$

Where n is the desired sample size, N is the target population of migrant women (350), and e is the level of precision (0.05). Substituting these values:

$$n = 350 / (1 + 350(0.05^2)) = 350 / 1.875 \approx 186$$

The study therefore included 186 migrant women drawn from the population of 350. In addition, the study included all 32 key informants comprising 12 NGO experts, 8 local government officials and 12 community elders and village leaders. Because the key informants are a small, finite and specialized group, they are not subjected to statistical sampling but are selected purposively on the basis of their expertise and involvement in matters concerning migrant women's empowerment. The total sample size for the study was therefore 218 respondents.

The study used a combination of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques, applied to the appropriate categories of respondents.

Stratified random sampling was used for the primary respondents, namely the migrant women. The population of 350 migrant women was stratified by age, period of stay in the Sub County of Lodwar and their main economic activity. The respondents were selected using simple random sampling within each stratum in proportion to the size of each stratum. This procedure ensures the various sub groups of migrant women (younger and older women, recent and longer-term migrants and women engaged in different livelihoods) are suitably represented in the sample and thus findings are more representative and have greater external validity.

Key informants were the experts from the NGOs, local government and elders and village leaders who were selected by purposive sampling. These respondents will be chosen based on their expertise, experience and involvement with migrant women in programs and community structures. Experts from NGOs shared their perspectives on empowerment programmes and financial inclusion efforts, policy makers discussed policy implementation and service delivery, and elders and leaders of the community shared their knowledge on cultural norms and community attitudes.

The integrated findings were then used to gain a comprehensive picture of the socio-cultural barriers and its impact on the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar.

Table 2 Target Population and Sample Size Matrix

Category	Target Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
Migrant Women (18–50 years)	350	186	Stratified Random Sampling
NGO Experts	12	12	Purposive Sampling
Local Government Officials	8	8	Purposive Sampling
Community Elders and Leaders	12	12	Purposive Sampling
Total	382	218	

➤ Data Collection Instruments

Two complementary instruments were used in this study, which included a structured questionnaire for the quantitative strand to be completed by migrant women, and a semi structured interview guide for the qualitative strand to be completed by key informants.

• Questionnaire:

Structured questionnaires was used to gather data from the 186 migrant women for this study. The questionnaire had five segments or parts, namely demographic data, cultural incorporation, Patriarchal Family System, marriage of children and attitudes of the community. The

operationalization of the conceptual framework into indicators were directly translated into items for each substantive section and used a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to ensure the alignment of variables, the research questions, and data collection items.

• Interview Guide:

In this study, qualitative data was collected using a semi structured interview guide, administered to NGO experts on women's empowerment, local government officials and community elders and village leaders. The interview guide was structured using the four study objectives as the

framework in the following manner: a few open-ended questions were asked for each objective, and there were probes provided to follow up on issues that arose during the interview. This approach has not only made it possible to systematically present the predetermined topics, but also maintained the flexibility necessary to capture the perspectives and the contextual insights of the participants.

➤ *Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments*

Face, Content and Construct validities were observed in this study to ensure that the study was able to adequately measure what it should measure.

Reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha analysis, which gave the values between 0.78 and 0.91, indicating its goodness for the research purpose.

➤ *Data Collection Procedures*

This study used a mixed-methods approach with a convergent parallel design for data collection. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and then merged at the interpretation stage to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Kothari, 2019).

➤ *Data Analysis*

Quantitative data was cleaned, coded and entered into SPSS version 26 for analysis. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of respondents and the distribution of responses on cultural integration, patriarchal family structures, Child Marriage, community attitudes and empowerment. Descriptive statistics are appropriate at this stage because they offer an initial picture of the data and support a clear presentation of central tendencies and variability in respondents' views.

The questionnaire deliberately included both positively and negatively worded items in each Likert subscale to control for acquiescence bias and response set patterns. Before any composite scores are computed, negatively worded items in Sections B (Cultural Integration), C (Patriarchal Family Structures), D (Child Marriages), E (Community Attitudes) and F (Empowerment Outcomes) of the questionnaire will be reverse-scored using the formula $\text{Reversed Score} = 6 - \text{Original Score}$ on the 5-point scale. After recoding, higher scores on each subscale will consistently indicate either higher exposure to the socio-cultural barrier (Sections B–E) or higher levels of empowerment (Section F). Cronbach's alpha was re-estimated for each subscale after reverse-scoring to confirm internal consistency at the threshold of ≥ 0.70 .

Inferential statistics were then applied to test the four null hypotheses. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between each independent variable and the

dependent variable, since the relevant variables are scaled and approximately continuous. Multiple regression analysis were used to assess the combined contribution of the four independent variables to empowerment outcomes and to identify the relative explanatory power of each variable while controlling for the others. The Chi square test of association was used in cases where categorical variables (such as marital status or education category) are cross tabulated against empowerment indicators. All inferential tests were conducted at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$; the null hypothesis was rejected where the p value is less than or equal to 0.05. Results were presented in tables, figures and charts to aid clarity and interpretation.

Qualitative data was analyzed using the six-step thematic analysis procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). The steps are: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts; (2) generation of initial codes by tagging meaningful units of text; (3) searching for themes by grouping related codes; (4) reviewing themes against the data set to ensure internal coherence and external distinctiveness; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the final analytic narrative with illustrative quotations. The emerging themes was organized around the four study objectives so that they map directly onto the quantitative variables, thereby supporting integration of findings.

After this, the data were analyzed using a strand-convergent mixed-methods approach.

IV. FINDINGS

➤ *Findings Based on to Research Objectives*

This section presents the research findings as per the research objectives. It combines both quantitative and qualitative data. The results are presented thematically based on the four study objectives. The data were summarized using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, while correlation analysis was used to test the relationships between variables. Qualitative findings were used to complement the quantitative results, which were based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

➤ *Cultural Integration and Empowerment of Migrant Women*

This section presents the findings on the first objective, which sought to examine the influence of cultural integration on the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar, Turkana Central Sub-County, Turkana County. The study focused on aspects of language proficiency, participation in community activities and adoption of local customs and practices and how these factors influence women's empowerment outcomes. The findings are presented using both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses as in Table 3.

Table 3 Response on Cultural Integration n = 182

Statements	SD % F	D % F	N % F	A % F	SA % F	Mean	Std Dvt
I have access to cultural orientation programmes that help me integrate into the host community.	12.1 (22)	20.9 (38)	18.7 (34)	28.6 (52)	19.8 (36)	3.23	1.28
Participation in community groups has improved my confidence and decision-making ability.	10.4 (19)	18.7 (34)	16.5 (30)	31.3 (57)	23.1 (42)	3.38	1.23
Host community members often treat migrant women differently because of cultural differences.	8.8 (16)	15.9 (29)	14.3 (26)	34.6 (63)	26.4 (48)	3.54	1.18
Lack of awareness of my cultural background limits my access to social services and economic opportunities.	9.9 (18)	17.6 (32)	15.4 (28)	33.5 (61)	23.6 (43)	3.43	1.21
I have been able to build social networks that support my participation in economic and community activities.	11.0 (20)	19.8 (36)	17.0 (31)	30.2 (55)	22.0 (40)	3.32	1.25
Cultural integration initiatives in this community do not adequately address the specific needs of migrant women.	7.7 (14)	14.8 (27)	16.5 (30)	36.3 (66)	24.7 (45)	3.55	1.14
My skills and contributions are recognised and valued by members of the host community.	10.4 (19)	20.3 (37)	18.7 (34)	30.8 (56)	19.8 (36)	3.29	1.22
Cultural differences in the community make it difficult for me to fully participate in education, training or income generating activities.	9.3 (17)	18.1 (33)	17.6 (32)	32.4 (59)	22.5 (41)	3.41	1.20
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation						3.39	1.21

Source: Field Data, 2026

Table 3 presents the findings on cultural integration and empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar, Turkana Central Sub-County. The overall findings indicate a composite mean of $M = 3.39$ and a standard deviation of $SD = 1.21$, implying that respondents generally agreed that cultural integration significantly influences the empowerment of migrant women. However, variations across individual statements indicate differences in the extent to which cultural integration either facilitates or constrains empowerment outcomes among migrant women in the host community.

On the statement that respondents had access to cultural orientation programmes that help them integrate into the host community, 52 respondents (28.6%) agreed and 36 (19.8%) strongly agreed. However, 34 respondents (18.7%) were neutral, 38 (20.9%) disagreed, and 22 (12.1%) strongly disagreed. The mean of $M = 3.23$ and standard deviation of $SD = 1.28$ indicate moderate agreement regarding access to cultural orientation programs. This suggests that although some migrant women benefit from orientation initiatives, a considerable proportion still experience limited access to formal integration support. The result is aligned with UN Women (2022) who noted that weak institutional support has an impact on the social inclusion and adaptation of migrant women in the host community.

This finding was corroborated by the key informant responses. K1 noted that women migrants often come with little information about local culture norms or services, which poses challenges for integration. Likewise, K3 highlighted

that “orientation programmes are limited, and are largely focused in urban centres, with many women in informal settlements who are not orientated.”

When asked about community groups having a positive impact on their confidence and decision-making skills, 57 (31.3%) agreed, 42 (23.1%) strongly agreed, 30 (16.5%) were neutral, 34 (18.7%) disagreed and 19 (10.4%) strongly disagreed. The average of $M = 3.38$ and the standard deviation of $SD = 1.23$ show that involvement in community groups is beneficial to the empowerment of migrant women. This means that more women are empowered to attend community and home decision making meetings, gain confidence and develop social networks. The result aligns with Briones and DeVargas (2020) who observed that community engagement contributes to bolstering women's agency and empowerment outcomes.

This was confirmed by qualitative findings. K12 said that women members of savings groups and community associations “become more confident and are more willing to participate in local activities”. K4 also noted that “community groups provide opportunities for migrant women to exchange their experiences, acquire new skills and support each other economically.”

Majority of respondents, 63 (34.6%) agreed and 48 (26.4%) strongly agreed that there is cultural difference that the host community members treat the migrant women differently. In contrast, 26 respondents (14.3%) were neutral,

29 (15.9%) disagreed, and 16 (8.8%) strongly disagreed. The mean score is $M = 3.54$, the standard deviation is $SD = 1.18$, which is a relatively high perception of discrimination based on cultural differences. This implies that there was a continuation of unequal treatment and social exclusion of migrant women in the host community on the grounds of their cultural identity. The results align with Ahmed and Sorenson (2021) who found discrimination against cultural identity negatively impacts migrant women's social participation and empowerment.

Key informants also noted the high levels of discrimination. K1 explained that in some cases “migrant women are stereotyped due to their language, clothing or ethnic group, which restricts their interactions with the local community.” Similarly, KI 32 noted that “migrant women are deterred from engaging in public forums and leadership roles because of negative perceptions from host communities.”

Concerning the statement that lack of awareness of respondents' cultural background limits access to social services and economic opportunities, 61 respondents (33.5%) agreed and 43 (23.6%) strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 28 respondents (15.4%) were neutral, 32 (17.6%) disagreed, and 18 (9.9%) strongly disagreed. The mean of $M = 3.43$ and standard deviation of $SD = 1.21$ indicate that inadequate understanding of migrant cultures within the host community limits access to opportunities and essential services. This implies that factors such as cultural misunderstanding and limited intercultural understanding of the situation lead to marginalization and lower empowerment of migrant women.

Qualitative responses supported this finding. KI4 stated that, ‘many migrant women are not receiving services because service providers and community members are not fully aware of their cultural background or communication needs.’. K8 also noted that, “There are challenges with language barriers and cultural misunderstandings that hinder women from accessing training and economic support programs.”

On whether respondents had been able to build social networks that facilitate participation in economic and community activities, majority of respondents, 55(30.2%) agreed and 40 respondents (22.0%) strongly agreed respondents with the statement. However, 31 respondents (17.0%) were neutral, 36 (19.8%) disagreed, and 20 (11.0%) strongly disagreed. The mean of $M = 3.32$ and standard deviation of $SD = 1.25$ indicate moderate agreement that social networks support empowerment and participation. This implies that although many migrant women have developed supportive relationships within the community, others still face challenges in establishing meaningful social connections. The findings are in line with the work of Namara and Khumalo (2022) who noted that social support networks play a pivotal role in improving migrant women's economic participation and social inclusion.

Key informants similarly highlighted the importance of social support systems. K3 explained that “*women with strong social connections are more likely to access financial*

support, information, and job opportunities.” K15 added that “*social networks help migrant women cope with isolation and improve their sense of belonging within the community.*”

With regard to the statement that cultural integration initiatives in the community do not adequately address the specific needs of migrant women, 66 respondents (36.3%) agreed and 45 (24.7%) strongly agreed, while 30 (16.5%) were neutral, 27 (14.8%) disagreed, and 14 (7.7%) strongly disagreed. The mean of $M=3.55$ and $SD=1.14$ reflect a high degree of understanding that current integration programs are not sufficient to tackle the specific needs of migrant women. This implies that the existing programs are not addressing the gender-specific social and economic challenges faced by migrant women. The result is consistent with Oduor (2023), who asserted that weak integration mechanisms tend to perpetuate exclusion and restricted opportunities for empowerment for immigrant women.

This was further emphasized by qualitative responses where KI26 stated that “most community integration programs are of a general nature and very few programs target the needs of the migrants' women specifically.” K4 further explained, ‘limited funding and inadequate policy implementation hinders the effectiveness of programs aimed at supporting migrant women.’

Regarding acknowledging and valuing the skills and contributions by members of the host community, most the respondents 56 (30.8%) agreed with the statement and 36 (19.8%) strongly agreed. Conversely, 34 respondents (18.7%) were neutral, 37 (20.3%) disagreed, and 19 (10.4%) strongly disagreed. The recognition level is moderate ($M = 3.29$) and social acceptance is moderate ($SD = 1.22$). This indicates that though some migrant women may feel valued and sense of belonging, others remain less accepted and recognized for their contribution.

Key informants, KI noted that “entrepreneurial and vocational talents of some migrant women are not always identified by community members or valued by them.” Likewise, KI 13 pointed out that “lack of acceptance lowers women motivation to become active in economic and social activities.”

Sixty-two respondents (33.4%) agreed and 41 (22.5%) strongly agreed that cultural differences within the community make it difficult to fully participate in education or training or in income-generating activities. Meanwhile, 32 respondents (17.6%) were neutral, 33 (18.1%) disagreed, and 17 (9.3%) strongly disagreed. The mean of $M = 3.41$ and the standard deviation of $SD = 1.20$ suggest that cultural differences still remain a barrier to migrant women's access to opportunities for empowerment. This means that socially-cultural obstacles hinder migrant women's access to education, vocational training and economic participation. The observation is consistent with Wanjala and Tsegaye (2021) who found that women are excluded from development programs and livelihood due to socio-cultural factors.

This was confirmed by key informants, KI24 said that some women do not take part in training because they feel there is some discrimination or they are not confident with interacting with host community. K22 further explained that *“cultural differences and language barriers often discourage migrant women from fully engaging in economic empowerment programs.”*

The dominant theme emerging from both quantitative and qualitative findings is that cultural integration significantly influences the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar. While community participation and social networks contribute positively to confidence, decision-making, and economic participation, cultural discrimination,

inadequate integration initiatives, and limited recognition continue to constrain empowerment outcomes.

➤ Patriarchal Family Structures and Empowerment of Migrant Women

This section presents findings on the second objective of the study, which examined the influence of patriarchal family structures on the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar. The analysis focuses on key aspects such as decision-making power within the household and the division of household roles and responsibilities, and how these dynamics shape women's participation in economic and social empowerment activities. The findings are presented using both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Response on Patriarchal Family Structures n = 182

Statements	SD % F	D % F	N % F	A % F	SA % F	Mean	Std Dvt
Major decisions about my household are mostly made by male relatives.	6.6 (12)	13.7 (25)	15.4 (28)	37.4 (68)	26.9 (49)	3.65	1.14
My family encourages me to participate in economic activities and community programmes.	11.0 (20)	17.0 (31)	18.1 (33)	30.2 (55)	23.6 (43)	3.39	1.24
I feel restricted by male family members when seeking to attend training or vocational programmes.	7.7 (14)	16.5 (30)	14.8 (27)	34.6 (63)	26.4 (48)	3.56	1.18
Male family members support me in making decisions related to education, employment and community participation.	10.4 (19)	19.2 (35)	17.0 (31)	31.3 (57)	22.0 (40)	3.36	1.23
Household responsibilities and childcare significantly limit my ability to engage in empowerment programmes.	5.5 (10)	14.3 (26)	16.5 (30)	36.3 (66)	27.5 (50)	3.69	1.12
I am encouraged by my family to participate in community leadership forums.	12.1 (22)	18.7 (34)	17.6 (32)	29.7 (54)	21.9 (40)	3.30	1.26
Patriarchal expectations in my household prevent me from fully using my skills or pursuing income generating activities.	7.1 (13)	15.9 (29)	16.5 (30)	34.6 (63)	25.8 (47)	3.52	1.17
I feel empowered to negotiate family decisions that affect my economic and social participation.	9.3 (17)	17.6 (32)	18.1 (33)	32.4 (59)	22.5 (41)	3.40	1.21
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation						3.44	1.20

Source: Field Data, 2026

Table 4 presents the findings on patriarchal family structures and empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar, Turkana Central Sub-County. The overall findings indicate a composite mean of $M = 3.44$ and a standard deviation of $SD = 1.20$, implying that respondents generally agreed that patriarchal family structures significantly influence the empowerment of migrant women. Variations across the individual statements indicate that household decision-making patterns, gender roles, and family expectations continue to shape women's participation in social, economic, and community activities.

On the statement that major decisions about the household are mostly made by male relatives, 68 respondents (37.4%) agreed and 49 (26.9%) strongly agreed. However, 28 respondents (15.4%) were neutral, 25 (13.7%) disagreed, and

12 (6.6%) strongly disagreed. The mean of $M = 3.65$ and standard deviation of $SD = 1.14$ indicate that male dominance in household decision-making remains prevalent among migrant families. This indicates that women are denied autonomy and they have less control over family issues, which involves the power structures that are patriarchal in nature. This is consistent with UN Women's (2022) observation that unequal power relations within the household diminish women's role in the economic and social decision-making processes.

The key informant responses confirmed this finding. KI12 said, “Men are still perceived as the chief decision makers in many households, particularly financial and family decisions.” In the same way, KI3 pointed out that “women are

often given the green light to take part in community and economic activities by their husbands or male relatives.”

When asked about family encouragement to engage in economic activities and community programmes, 55 respondents (30.2%) agreed with the statement, 43 (23.6%) strongly agreed, 33 (18.1%) were neutral, 31 (17.0%) disagreed and 20 (11.0%) strongly disagreed. Moderate agreement is shown with a mean of 3.39 and a standard deviation of $SD = 1.24$, which means that some families do support women's participation in empowerment activities. This suggested that while conservative gender norms generally prevail for women, there are some households where women are now more likely to be participating in economic and community development activities. The finding corroborates Rahman & Solgaard (2020) who found that support from the family has a positive impact on the participation of women in livelihood and empowerment programs.

This was confirmed by the qualitative results. KI2 stated that “Families that are supportive of women's businesses or training programs can have a positive influence on women's confidence and independence.” KI4 added that “Younger families are slowly embracing women's role in economy.”

On the statement that respondents feel restricted by males in their families when trying to attend training or vocational programs, majority of respondents 63 respondents (34.6%) agreed with the statement and 48 (26.4%) strongly agreed. Conversely, 27 respondents (14.8%) were neutral, 30 (16.5%) disagreed, and 14 (7.7%) strongly disagreed. The mean $M = 3.56$ and $SD = 1.18$ show that there is a significant restriction on women's training and vocational opportunities due to restrictions from male family members. This indicates that the patriarchal system remains to be a constraint on women development and economic empowerment. The results align with those of Martinez and Kim (2021) who reported that women are less likely to access education and skills development opportunities due to restrictive gender norms.

This is confirmed by key informants. KI1 explained that “Some husbands see training programs as a threat to the traditional gender roles and so they discourage women to attend training.” Similarly, KI3 noted that poor women had less opportunities to attend vocational or leadership programs, where there is less decision-making power.

Regarding the involvement of male family members in decision-making on education, work and social life, 57 respondents (31.3%) agreed and 40 (22.0%) strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 31 respondents (17.0%) were neutral, 35 (19.2%) disagreed, and 19 (10.4%) strongly disagreed. In terms of male relatives' support, $M = 3.36$ and $SD = 1.23$, which represents moderate level of support. This means that although migrant women are sometimes encouraged by members of their families, there are women who still face the challenge of making decisions about their education and employment opportunities.

This was supported by qualitative findings where KI2 emphasises that some men are beginning to see the value of women's economic contribution to the household. However, KI4 explained that “traditional expectations still make many women relying on men's approval before taking critical decisions,”

On the statement that that household responsibilities and childcare strongly restrict participation in empowerment programs, most of respondents, 66 (36.3%) agreed and 50 (27.5%) strongly agreed with the statement. In contrast, 30 respondents (16.5%) were neutral, 26 (14.3%) disagreed, and 10 (5.5%) strongly disagreed. A mean of $M = 3.69$ with a standard deviation of $SD = 1.12$ show high level of agreement on the adverse effect of domestic responsibilities on women's participation in empowerment initiatives. This implies that inequitable allocation of household work restricts time and prospects for women to engage in education, training and economic activities. The discovery is consistent with Ncube and Tshabalala (2022) who noted that women are limited in their socio-economic development due to excessive domestic duties.

This was also a concern raised by key informants. K3 said that “most migrant women work as childcare workers and house workers, hence having very little time for employment activities.” KI1 added that, “Household responsibilities remain overwhelmingly unequal for women and men.”

When asked whether they felt members of their family encouraged them to attend community leadership meetings, 54 (29.7%) of respondents agreed with the statement and 40 (21.9%) strongly agreed. However, 32 respondents (17.6%) were neutral, 34 (18.7%) disagreed, and 22 (12.1%) strongly disagreed. The mean of 3.30 and standard deviation of $SD = 1.26$ was achieved showing that there is a moderate level of support for women's participation in leadership activities. It means that whilst some migrant women are invited to be part of leadership forums, patriarchal attitudes prevent wider participation in the public leadership roles.

This was complemented by qualitative responses. K4 said: “Sometimes women who try to take leadership positions are seen as a threat to cultural norms.” KI2 emphasized that “There is limited participation of migrant women, due to the fact that there is still a male dominated leadership in the community.”

Majority of respondents, 63 (34.6%) agreed while 47 (25.8%) strongly agreed that patriarchal expectations in the household hinder the respondents from being able to use their abilities to the fullest. Meanwhile, 30 respondents (16.5%) were neutral, 29 (15.9%) disagreed, and 13 (7.1%) strongly disagreed. The mean of $M = 3.52$ and the standard deviation is $SD = 1.17$, which means that women's economic participation and utilization of their skills is still constrained by patriarchal expectations. This implies that women's opportunities for self-development and economic independence are curtailed by traditional gender norms. The result is in line with what Amadi and Mulugeta (2021)

reported that restrictive cultural values negatively influence economic empowerment of women.

This was further supported by key informants. KI1 noted that “some female has valuable skills but are discouraged to do business or employ outside their homes. KI3 also pointed out that “cultural norms sometimes make it more important for women to take care of household chores than pursue economic aspirations.”

For the question about respondents' sense of empowerment in making decisions about their family that impact their economic and social involvement, 59 respondents agreed (32.4%) and 41 respondents strongly agreed (22.5%). However, 33 respondents (18.1%) were neutral, 32 (17.6%) disagreed, and 17 (9.3%) strongly disagreed. The moderate negotiation power among migrant women is represented by the mean of $M = 3.40$ and the standard deviation of $SD = 1.21$. This indicates that while some women are increasingly involved in family decision-making, other women continue to have lower bargaining power in male-dominated family decision-making systems.

This was supported by qualitative findings as one of the KI2 emphasized that, “Financial independence of women is

associated with higher leverage in home decision making,” K2 said. Likewise, KI4 said that “economic empowerment builds women's confidence and capability in negotiating in the family.”

The results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses are intertwined, highlighting that the patriarchal family system has a significant effect on the empowerment of the migrants' women in the area of Lodwar. Household decision-making remains male dominated, gender norms are restrictive, and household responsibilities tend to be unevenly distributed, which limit empowerment outcomes, and women's leadership and economic participation is limited.

➤ *Child Marriage and Empowerment of Migrant Women*

The findings of this study on the third objective, which examined the effects of child marriage on the empowerment of migrant women in the city of Lodwar are presented. The focus of the analysis is on the age at marriage, the consent of a marriage decision, dropping out of school, and the effects of early marriage on economic participation and empowerment in general. The findings are presented using both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Response on Child Marriage n = 182

Statements	SD % F	D % F	N % F	A % F	SA % F	Mean	Std Dvt
Entering marriage before the age of 18 has limited my ability to complete education or vocational training.	5.5 (10)	12.6 (23)	14.8 (27)	35.2 (64)	31.9 (58)	3.75	1.10
Child marriage has restricted my participation in income generating activities.	6.6 (12)	14.3 (26)	15.9 (29)	33.5 (61)	29.7 (54)	3.65	1.15
My family supports delaying marriage so that women can gain education and skills.	10.4 (19)	18.1 (33)	17.0 (31)	31.3 (57)	23.1 (42)	3.39	1.23
Early marriage has prevented me from participating fully in community programs or leadership roles.	7.1 (13)	15.4 (28)	16.5 (30)	34.6 (63)	26.4 (48)	3.58	1.18
I have had opportunities to make decisions about my own marriage and personal life.	12.1 (22)	19.2 (35)	18.1 (33)	29.7 (54)	21.0 (38)	3.27	1.27
I am able to access social, financial and reproductive health services regardless of my marital status.	9.3 (17)	17.6 (32)	16.5 (30)	32.4 (59)	24.2 (44)	3.44	1.20
Support from family and community members has allowed me to pursue education or economic activities despite marriage pressures.	11.0 (20)	18.7 (34)	17.6 (32)	30.8 (56)	21.9 (40)	3.33	1.24
Early marriage practices in my community limit the empowerment of women and young girls.	6.0 (11)	13.7 (25)	15.4 (28)	35.7 (65)	29.1 (53)	3.68	1.12
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation						3.51	1.19

Source: Field Data, 2026

Table 5 presents the findings on child marriage and empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar, Turkana Central Sub-County. The overall findings indicate a composite mean of $M = 3.51$ and a standard deviation of $SD = 1.19$, implying that respondents generally agreed that child marriage significantly affects the empowerment of migrant women.

On the statement that entering marriage before the age of 18 limited respondents' ability to complete education or vocational training, 64 respondents (35.2%) agreed and 58 (31.9%) strongly agreed. However, 27 respondents (14.8%) were neutral, 23 (12.6%) disagreed, and 10 (5.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean of $M = 3.75$ and standard deviation of $SD = 1.10$ indicate strong agreement that child marriage

negatively affects educational attainment and skills development among migrant women. This implies that early marriage reduced chances of going to school and further opportunities for employment. This finding is in line with the observation of UNFPA (2022) on the fact that child marriage is one of the biggest challenges to girls' education and socio-economic empowerment.

This finding was confirmed by the key informants' responses. K11 said that “many girls who marry early are forced to leave school and enter into work with few chances for them to continue their education.” Similarly, K32 reported that women who marry too young are less likely to be able to take advantage of skills training programs, leaving them economically reliant later on in life.

Concerning the statement that child marriage has limited their ability to engage in income generation activities, 61 respondents (33.5%) agreed with the statement, 54 respondents (29.7%) strongly agreed, 29 respondents (15.9%) were neutral, 26 respondents (14.3%) disagreed and 12 (6.6%) strongly disagreed. The child marriage mean value of $M = 3.65$ and standard deviation value of $SD = 1.15$ signal that child marriage has significant impact on economic participation of women. This means women take on the roles of marriage at an early age and thus have limited opportunities for working, entrepreneurship and income generation. The discovery backs UN Women (2021), which had set that early marriage has negative economic effects on women and increases their financial dependence.

This was corroborated by qualitative results as one key informant who emphasized that, “*Family expectations are one reason why women marry too early and give preference to domestic duties over economic activities.*” KI19 added that, “*Limited formal education following early marriage negatively impacts women's ability to compete in their work and entrepreneurial endeavors.*”

Most of the respondents, 57 (31.3%) agreed, and 42 (23.1%) strongly agreed with the statement that families supporting women to delay marriage in order to gain education and skills. Conversely, 31 respondents (17.0%) were neutral, 33 (18.1%) disagreed, and 19 (10.4%) strongly disagreed. A moderate level of agreement ($M = 3.39$; $SD = 1.23$) was found that some families encourage a delay in marriage for educational advancement. This indicates that while cultural attitudes are slowly shifting, there are still large numbers of families that advocate for girls' early marriage over girls' education and empowerment. The results are similar to those of Rahman and Chowdhury (2020), who found that supportive family attitudes are crucial in delaying girls' marriage and empowering them.

Key informants also pointed to the shift in some families' perceptions. K1 said the “some parents have now realised the need to educate girls before getting married. In contrary, KI3 noted that poverty and cultural norms continue to push families to marry their daughters too young.

Regarding the claim that early marriage helped respondents to not be able to engage fully in the community's programs/service or leadership, 63 respondents (34.6%) agreed and 48 (26.4%) strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 30 respondents (16.5%) were neutral, 28 (15.4%) disagreed, and 13 (7.1%) strongly disagreed. The mean is 3.58 and standard deviation is 1.18, which shows that child marriage puts women out of leadership and community development programs. This implies that early marriage is a factor that increases domestic responsibilities and decreases women's social participation and leadership opportunities. This is consistent with Lemma and Getachew (2021), which revealed that women who have been married at an early age are less likely to participate in public and leadership spaces.

This was corroborated with qualitative responses. KI27 said that “women are married at the early age of which does not have confidence to lead in any activities and discuss it in public.” KI4 added, “Community expectations tend to keep married women in domestic roles and prevent them from participating in public roles.”

Of the respondents who were asked if they had opportunities to make decisions about their own marriage and personal life, 54 (29.7%) agreed and 38 (21.0%) strongly agreed. However, 33 respondents (18.1%) were neutral, 35 (19.2%) disagreed, and 22 (12.1%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of M is 3.27; the SD is 1.27, which are relatively low scores for personal autonomy in making decisions about marriage. This indicates that there is a residual lack of women, particularly migrant women, from decisions on marriage and personal matters. The result is consistent with the arguments of Nabirye and Kato (2022) that the decision-making power of the women is limited by patriarchal cultural norms in marital issues.

This was confirmed by key informants. K23 said that, in some families, the girls have “limited choices about when and who they marry.” K21 added, “K21 explained that “family/cultural expectations continue to influence marriage decisions more than individual preferences.”

When it comes to social, financial and reproductive health services regardless of marital status, 59 respondents agreed (32.4%), 44 strongly agreed (24.2%), 30 respondents were neutral (16.5%), 32 disagreed (17.6%) and 17 strongly disagreed (9.3%). Moderate level of agreement with $SD = 1.20$ and $M = 3.44$ suggests that the respondents have moderate level of agreement on their status as having access to support services regardless of marital status. This means that while access to empowerment and health services is available to some migrant women, there is a cultural, stigmatizing and economic dependency issue.

This was corroborated by qualitative answers from KI2, which indicated that “some organizations offer reproductive health and financial support programs to married women and unmarried women”. Many young married women, however, are still subjected to stigma and restricted mobility in accessing such services, KI14 noted.

With respect to the level of support received from family and community members to facilitate continued education or economic activity in spite of marriage pressures, 56 respondents (30.8%) agreed and 40 (21.9%) strongly agreed. In contrast, 32 respondents (17.6%) were neutral, 34 (18.7%) disagreed, and 20 (11.0%) strongly disagreed. The mean of $M = 3.33$ and standard deviation of $SD = 1.24$ suggest that the support systems provided to women under pressures on marriage is moderate. This indicates that although some migrant women are able to thrive in supportive social contexts, others remain to experience cultural and family context barriers to empowerment opportunities.

This was supported by qualitative results. K 27 mentioned that “married women can continue education or business activities with the support of their families and community groups.” K3 added, “Community support programs are crucial for empowering women with a counter-action to negative impacts of early marriage,”

Out of the 65 respondents who agreed, 53 (29.1%) strongly agreed with the statement in respect of early marriage practices in the community limiting the empowerment of women and young girls. Meanwhile, 28 respondents (15.4%) were neutral, 25 (13.7%) disagreed, and 11 (6.0%) strongly disagreed. The results showed a high level of agreement about the negative impacts of early marriage on women's empowerment with the mean of $M = 3.68$ and standard deviation of $SD = 1.12$. This is an indicator that child marriage continues to be a major socio-cultural obstacle to girls' education, economic empowerment and leadership and community development activities. The discovery aligns with

the work of Mollel and Mohamed (2022), which found that child marriage is a vicious cycle of poverty, dependency and gender inequality.

This was reinforced by key informants. “Early marriage keeps many girls from being able to fully realize their potential,” K18 said. Similarly, K2 said that poverty and cultural habits have led to the prevalence of child marriage in certain communities. Early marriage is the overarching theme that is seen both quantitatively and qualitatively to be the principal causes of negatively affecting education, reducing women's participation in the economic activities, limiting women's decision-making autonomy and constraining women's participation in community leadership and development activities.

➤ Inferential Statistics Findings

The inferential statistical results are presented in this section to test the relationships between the socio-cultural barriers and empowerment outcomes of the migrant women in the sub-county of Turkana Central, Sub-County in Lodwar. The strength, direction and prediction ability of the relationships between the variables was determined using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis at a 0.05 level of significance.

➤ Pearson Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between each independent variable and empowerment outcomes. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Correlation between Socio-Cultural Barriers and Empowerment Outcomes $n = 182$)

Variable	Empowerment Outcomes (r)	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Cultural Integration	0.62	0.000	Positive significant relationship
Patriarchal Family Structures	-0.58	0.000	Negative significant relationship
Child Marriage	-0.64	0.000	Negative significant relationship
Community Attitudes	-0.60	0.000	Negative significant relationship

Source: Field Data, 2026

The findings in Table 6 indicate that all the independent variables had a statistically significant relationship with empowerment outcomes ($p < 0.05$). Cultural integration shows a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.62$), implying that improved cultural integration enhances empowerment outcomes among migrant women. This suggests that inclusion in community activities, access to cultural orientation, and social networking contribute positively to women's empowerment.

Patriarchal family structures exhibit a strong negative relationship with empowerment outcomes ($r = -0.58$), indicating that increased male dominance in household decision-making and gendered division of labour reduces women's empowerment levels. This implies that restrictive household power relations limit women's autonomy and participation in socio-economic activities.

Child marriage shows the strongest negative relationship ($r = -0.64$), implying that early marriage significantly reduces empowerment outcomes by limiting education, economic participation, and decision-making autonomy. Community attitudes also show a strong negative relationship ($r = -0.60$), suggesting that stigma, discrimination, and exclusion reduce migrant women's empowerment and social inclusion.

➤ Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the combined effect of socio-cultural barriers on empowerment outcomes and the relative contribution of each predictor. The results are presented in Tables 7, 8, and 9.

Table 7 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.78	0.61	0.60	0.42

Source: Field Data, 2026

The results in Table 7 show that the model explains 61% of the variation ($R^2 = 0.61$) in empowerment outcomes among migrant women. This implies that the combined impact of the

socio-cultural barriers has a strong explanatory power on empowerment outcomes. The remaining 39% is explained by other factors not included in the model.

Table 8 ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	85.42	4	21.36	58.74	0.000
Residual	54.68	177	0.31		
Total	140.10	181			

Source: Field Data, 2026

The ANOVA result shown in Table 8 suggested that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 58.74$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that the independent variables are having

a significant effect together on empowerment outcomes among migrant women in Lodwar.

Table 9 Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Beta (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.12	0.21	—	5.33	0.000
Cultural Integration	0.28	0.05	0.31	5.60	0.000
Patriarchal Family Structures	-0.26	0.06	-0.28	-4.33	0.000
Child Marriage	-0.35	0.05	-0.39	-7.00	0.000
Community Attitudes	-0.30	0.06	-0.33	-5.00	0.000

Source: Field Data, 2026

From the Table 9, the regression coefficients indicated that all the predictor variables significantly affect the outcome of empowerment with p value < 0.05 . Community attitudes ($\beta = -0.33$), patriarchal family ($\beta = -0.28$) and marriage to adult ($\beta = -0.39$) are the strongest predictors, whereas cultural integration ($\beta = 0.31$) has a positive impact. This means that any efforts to lower child marriage and instill better community perspectives should yield the best results when it comes to improving the empowerment outcomes for migrant women. Although, if the measures for cultural integration are strengthened, empowerment level will be increased further.

The inferential results indicate that socio-cultural obstacles are important in the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar. The results suggest that although cultural integration is a factor that supports empowerment, patriarchy

within the family, child marriage, and negative attitudes towards children by the community are all significant factors that are limiting empowerment. The findings are consistent with the concepts of Intersectionality Theory which suggests that the compounding disadvantages arise from the interaction of social identities and social structures, and Empowerment Theory which suggests that access to resources, participation and autonomy are critical elements of empowerment.

➤ Hypothesis Testing

This section presents the results of hypothesis testing based on Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. All hypotheses were tested at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, where a p -value ≤ 0.05 indicates rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 10 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results (Pearson Correlation)

Hypothesis	Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision
H01	Cultural Integration and Empowerment	0.62	0.000	Reject H01
H02	Patriarchal Family Structures and Empowerment	-0.58	0.000	Reject H02
H03	Child Marriage and Empowerment	-0.64	0.000	Reject H03

Source: Field Data, 2026

The results in Table 10 indicate that all four null hypotheses were rejected. Cultural integration has a statistically significant positive relationship with empowerment outcomes ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.05$), implying that improved cultural integration enhances the empowerment of migrant women.

Patriarchal family structures show a significant negative relationship with empowerment outcomes ($r = -0.58$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that increased male dominance and restrictive household roles reduce women's empowerment levels.

Child marriage has the strongest negative relationship ($r = -0.64$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that early marriage significantly undermines education, economic participation, and decision-making autonomy among migrant women.

V. CONCLUSION

This study explored the impact of socio-cultural constraints on the empowerment of migrant women in Lodwar, Turkana Central Sub-County, Turkana County, Kenya. The results show that individual, household and community-level socio-cultural factors are deeply intertwined and have a significant impact on empowerment, influencing the opportunities available to migrants' women and their involvement in social, economic and developmental processes.

In terms of cultural integration, the study finds that limited access to integration programmes, lack of intercultural awareness, discrimination based on cultural differences and insufficient recognition of migrant women's contributions are significant obstacles to social inclusion and participation. The community groups and social networks are important for increasing confidence, belonging and decision-making power, but this positive effect is mitigated by the ongoing cultural barriers and low institutional support structures.

The study also compares the situation of women in patriarchal family contexts and finds that women's autonomy and access to empowerment programmes are still limited by male-dominated decision-making processes, unequal distribution of household and caregiving duties as well as deeply embedded gender norms. Despite some degree of family encouragement, women are still unable to take full advantage of opportunities for education, employment and leadership by the patriarchal norms which restrict their freedom of choice.

As for child marriage, the study finds that early marriage continues to be a key challenge to women's empowerment. It hinders education, restricts vocational and skills training opportunities, and restricts involvement in income-generating and leadership activities. This is a practice that is entrenched in culture and socio-economic vulnerabilities that increases dependency and limits long term empowerment for migrant women.

Regarding community attitudes, the study found that the type of community interaction is a strong determinant of empowerment outcomes. Positive relationships, social acceptance and inclusive leadership structures support integration and improve access to opportunities, but discrimination, stigma, exclusion and competition over limited opportunities strongly hurt women's empowerment and social participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations involve the following: Enhanced and expanded cultural orientation programmes for migrant

women at reception are needed to support cultural integration. Community sensitization should be intensified to encourage gender equality within families, particularly in decision making as part of efforts to tackle patriarchal family dynamics. Targeted anti-discrimination and social inclusion programmes should be implemented to change the attitudes of the communities towards migrant women and effective Policy and practice should be enhanced by embedding socio-cultural empowerment strategies in national and local development framework.

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