

## ASSESSMENT OF CULTURE VALUES AND ASSOCIATION OF THE KIT-MIKAYI LANDSCAPE

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### **Abstract**

Community protected landscapes play significant but often silent role in providing cultural ecosystem services. Kit-Mikayi site serves as a sacred site for the local community and has recently shown great potential as a tourist destination in the Western Kenya tourist circuit. However there is little objective information about the unique character of the site and associated cultural values held by the community. The objective of this study was to determine symbolic meaning of ecological features and assess the linkage with cultural values of the community for landscape interpretation. This study employed survey research approach using questionnaires administered to cross-section of the residents and onsite observations. Different songs, dances and narration were identified, recorded and categorised according to their meaning and features represented on site. These were analysed as dependent variables against the characteristics of the respondents. The results showed that dominant songs of various types were those of ramogi 34% and dudu dances at 17%. Ecotourism rated high as at 33% as having good potential for economic venture by age group between 19 and 40. Social variables of the respondents like gender, age and education, determined how they perceived the site. Undergraduate level of education (88%), males (76%) and female (63%).

**Key words:** Cultural ecosystem services, indigenous knowledge, geomorphological features, conservation, ecotourism

### **1.0 Introduction**

Much of African heritage is vested in spirits, songs, dances and narrations rather than buildings and other tangible monuments. Natural cultural values receive little or no attention; however strategies in cultural landscape have also failed to convince the world that these values are of outstanding global significance (Layton *et al*, 1989). This has resulted into cultural value erosion in that young generation have little knowledge about their culture. Modern culture has undermined the cultural heritage of African peoples through colonization, imperialism and now globalization ( Akande, 2002). Today, cultural landscape sites have depreciated cultural presence in African lives, beliefs, culture, traditions and ceremonies of social life as vessels which stored codes, signs and symbols have structurally and functionally been transformed. Natural features of the environment are often associated with the identity of an individual, society or a community .They provide experience shared a cross generations as well as settings for communal interactions which are important to cultural ties (M.E.A, 2003). Cultural Landscapes have been defined as cultural properties representing the combined works of nature and of man significant for nature conservation (UNESCO, 2003). Cultural landscapes are vessels of cultural values and contribute to the identity of communities (Stephenso, 2008). Culture is not static and often is an important driver to ecosystem change (Van Velde and Antrop, 2009). From the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, many European artists painted landscapes in favor of people diminishing, in their paintings to figures subsumed within broader, regionally specific landscapes (Pannell, 2006). The whole of the world's surface, uses, ecologies, interactions, practices, beliefs, concepts and traditions of people living within cultural landscapes (Fowler, 2002). Nature conservation practioners have debated about the ways in which spiritual and religious values can be instrumental in promoting biodiversity conservation ((Posey *et al*, 1999; Sponsel, 2001). Cultural knowledge is embedded in words, in stories, and in artifacts learned from and shared with other humans (D'Andrade, 1996). Language expresses this cultural knowledge through expression of cultural ideas, beliefs, and values identified. Language is among the most powerful ways cultures map meanings through which the world is made more intelligible (Spiereberge, 2004). For instance variety of names for a single site points to shared histories in an increasing multicultural world (Stiebel, 2000; Moore, 2005) According to Keith 1990 language is a vehicle for accomplishing social interaction, an indispensable means of knowing the world and performing deeds within it.

For effective policy and decision making it is important to identify specific ecologically based landscape features that are associated with a particular cultural heritage values of stakeholders in a given cultural context and asses how changes within a given time will affect these values(Chan *et al* ,2009). The objective of the study was determination of the residents' knowledge on cultural value of components within Kit-Mikayi site by use of questionnaires, group interviews, video recording, photography and observation.

## 2.0 Description of the Study Site

Study site was in Kisumu District. It lies along 34° 32'27"E longitude and 0° 07'03"S latitude at a height of 2101 meters above sea level. This area consists of big rocks that appear as huge columns piled together and seems to defy gravity. The unique rock is 70 - 80 feet tall, is located 30 kilometers far East of Kisumu City and 1.0 km off Kisumu-Bondo road between Kaila, Lower Kadongo and Koker Kajulu sub locations. The cultural site covers an area of about 4.2 square kilometers.

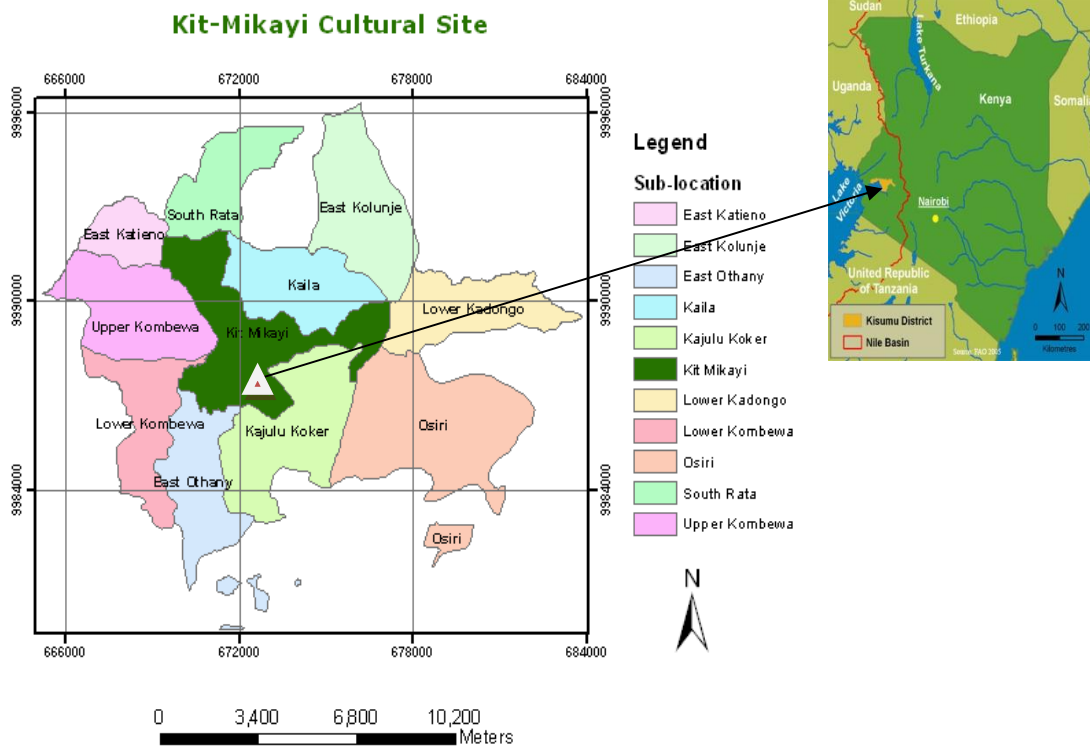


Figure 1: Map of Kenya showing location of study site of Kit-Mikayi cultural

The mean annual temperature ranges between 20-30°C while the mean annual rainfall range between 1,000 and 1,800mm. Rainfall is bio-modal with long rains in March to June and short rains from October to December. Morning humidity levels in Kisumu are between 80 percent and 90 percent, with evening humidity percentage levels dropping into the 40s and 50s. The dry weather allows for increased game and bird-watching (GOK, 2005).

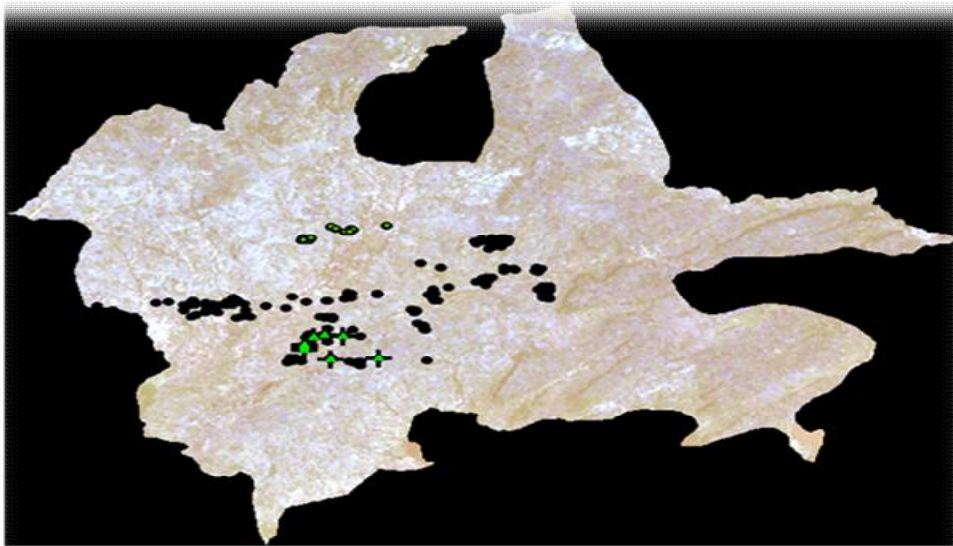


Figure 2: Study area of Kit-Mikayi cultural site with sampled households units

### 2.1 Research Design

The research designed was a survey of the predetermined population selected method was applied by use of interviews, questionnaires, video recording, narration and photography were used as instruments of data collection.

### 2.2 Sampling and Data Collection

In preparation for data collection, a written consent from JKUAT through the Department of Horticulture was prepared informing local administration of the researcher's presence and activities in his area of jurisdiction. The local administration assisted in accessing household and administering the questionnaire. Enumerators accompanied by the researcher conducted the interview and photo ranking exercise. The target population for the study were the local communities residing within the area, government representatives including chiefs and village elders and the visitors who visited the site. The total population of the sub location is 7,000 households (KNBS, 2009).

The population was stratified per village. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's formular (Cochrans, 1977) as shown below.

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1} + \frac{n_0}{\text{population}}, n_1 = \frac{384}{1} + \frac{384}{7000} = 364.$$

A sample size of 364 respondents was drawn based on Cochran's formulae (Cochrans, 1977). Later households were selected from each stratum to constitute a sample of 364. Through systemic random sampling within the given village. Purposive sampling was used to collect information from the government representatives like the chief and village elders of the cultural site management representative.

### 2.3 Data Collection and Instrumentation

The primary data was collected using questionnaires containing both closed and open-ended questions. Interviews, observations and photography used where necessary to gather in-depth information. However, secondary data was collected through the secondary desk reviews through the available theoretical and empirical literatures on the associative cultural values.

### 2.4 Questionnaire Design

The first section contained information on socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents. The second section recorded the cultural value of the site, knowledge and understanding of the site. The developed interview schedule included a five point likert-scale ranging from 4 = very important 3= Important 2= Moderate 1= Less important and 0= Not important for measuring the respondents perception, understanding and knowledge of the cultural site. Interview technique allowed for in-depth probing leading to more information and clear expression of feelings, opinions and attitudes towards response. Interview schedules were organized through the government structures within the sub locations and the villages headed by the

chiefs and the village elders respectively. The respondents were to fill-in the questionnaires and return. The structured questionnaires were administered to each village whereby major landmarks were used in selecting the households. A pretest was conducted to test the reliability of the instruments and the validity of the study.

## 2.5 Data Analysis and Presentation

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data and using spreadsheet (MS Excel) and frequency, means, A nova, percentage was analyzed using SPSS 16.0 software for descriptive statistics and cross tabulations. From the questionnaire item knowledge of people on the cultural value of the site were based on the level of peoples understanding and associative level was assessed and analyzed. The analyzed results were presented in tables, graphs, maps and pie charts that describe the distributions and differences. These were later converted into descriptive inferences about the relationships of respondents to the utilization of the cultural site.

## 3.0 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Respondents Perception and Cultural Interpretation of the Site

Out of three hundred and sixty four (364) respondents, three hundred and forty nine (349) respondents managed to complete the questionnaire and return. The results in Figure 3 and Table 1 show the socio economic characteristics of the respondents. The results show that males (76%) were more engaged in the cultural activities than females (24%). Most of the households within the Kit-Mikayi Community activities were carried out by women responsible for food, security and childcare (Kitakule, 1991). These women lacked access to physical and capital resources, decision-making and leadership, training and formal education. The age distribution of the respondents indicated that the majority of the respondents were above 41 years old (91%) and married (80%). Results also showed that 94% of the respondents had secondary level of education and below which indicated that respondents level of education was very low. The results showed that (71%) of the respondents came from East Othany, East Seme and South Central Seme location. The results revealed that farming was the main economic activity (>50%), however to supplement farming they also practiced basket weaving and herbalist (fig3). Highly educated community has always demonstrated better level of utilization, management and conservation of cultural landscape natural resource for the benefit of the community. Kit-Mikayi community respondents perception showed that 40% attained secondary education and above and 60% had primary education and below (Table 1). Most respondents were farmers but preferred the site to be an eco-tourism centre. In many developing countries, the rapid increase in population has put pressure on natural resource which has led to environmental degradation. High unemployment rate and poverty have not made things any better. Cultural landscape is the best option as it will reduce pressure on the natural resource, create employment, improve the living standard of the rural community and conserve the environment (Aloo and Ngugi, 2005).

Table 1: Personal Information of the Respondents

Personal information	Frequency(%)	Personal information	Frequency(%)
<b>Location</b>		<b>Marital status</b>	
Central Seme	1	Married	80
South East Othany	2	Single	16
West Kanyadwera	8	Widow	1
South Central Seme	21	Widower	3
East Othany	25	<b>Education level</b>	
East Seme	25	No formal education	16
<b>Age of respondents</b>		Primary education	44
<18	4	Secondary education	35
19-40	5	Tertiary education	5
41-70	57	<b>Gender</b>	
71 and above	34	Male	76
		Female	24

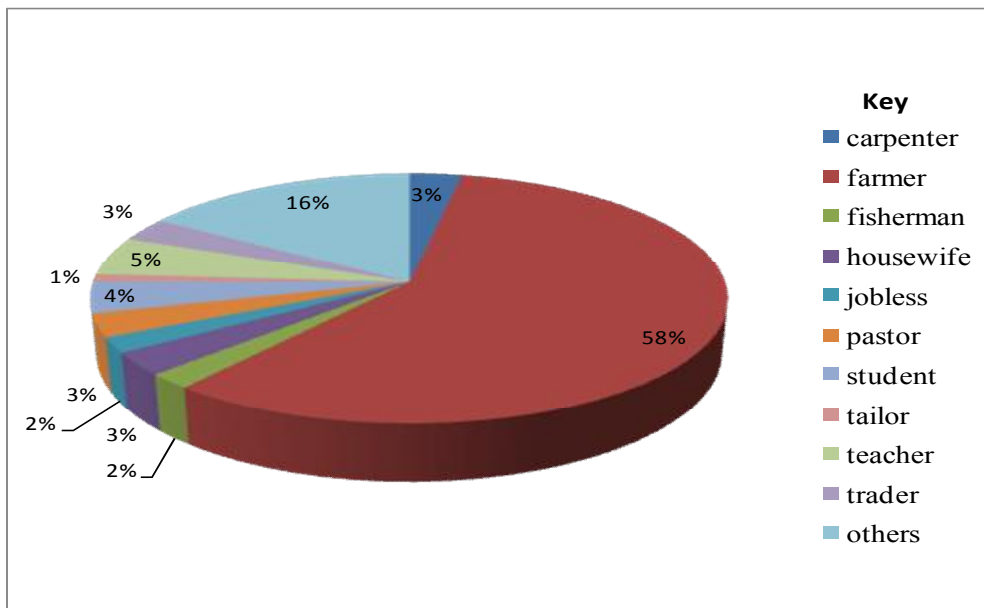


Figure 3: Occupations of the respondents sampled

### 3.2 Respondents Cultural Linkages and Knowledge on Kit-Mikayi

Data on the cultural landscape were derived from six knowledge sources, folklores, songs, dances special events, narrations, and interviews. From the results, the dominant folklore characteristic of the site were those related to traditional belief (Figure 4).

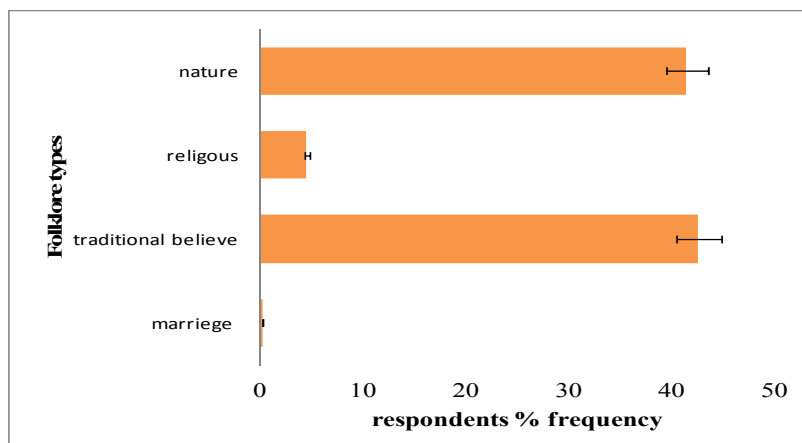


Figure 4: Percentage occurrence of the different folklore types by Kit-Mikayi community

From the respondents perception (Figure 5), those with undergraduate level of education classified most folklore types as associated with traditional belief (66.66%). Gender classification distinguished two main folklore types those related to nature and traditional belief. 53% females relate the folklore to nature higher than men. Age group classification brought out the aspect of religion more strongly than other classifications. Age category of above 61 years placed most categories as being associated with religion.

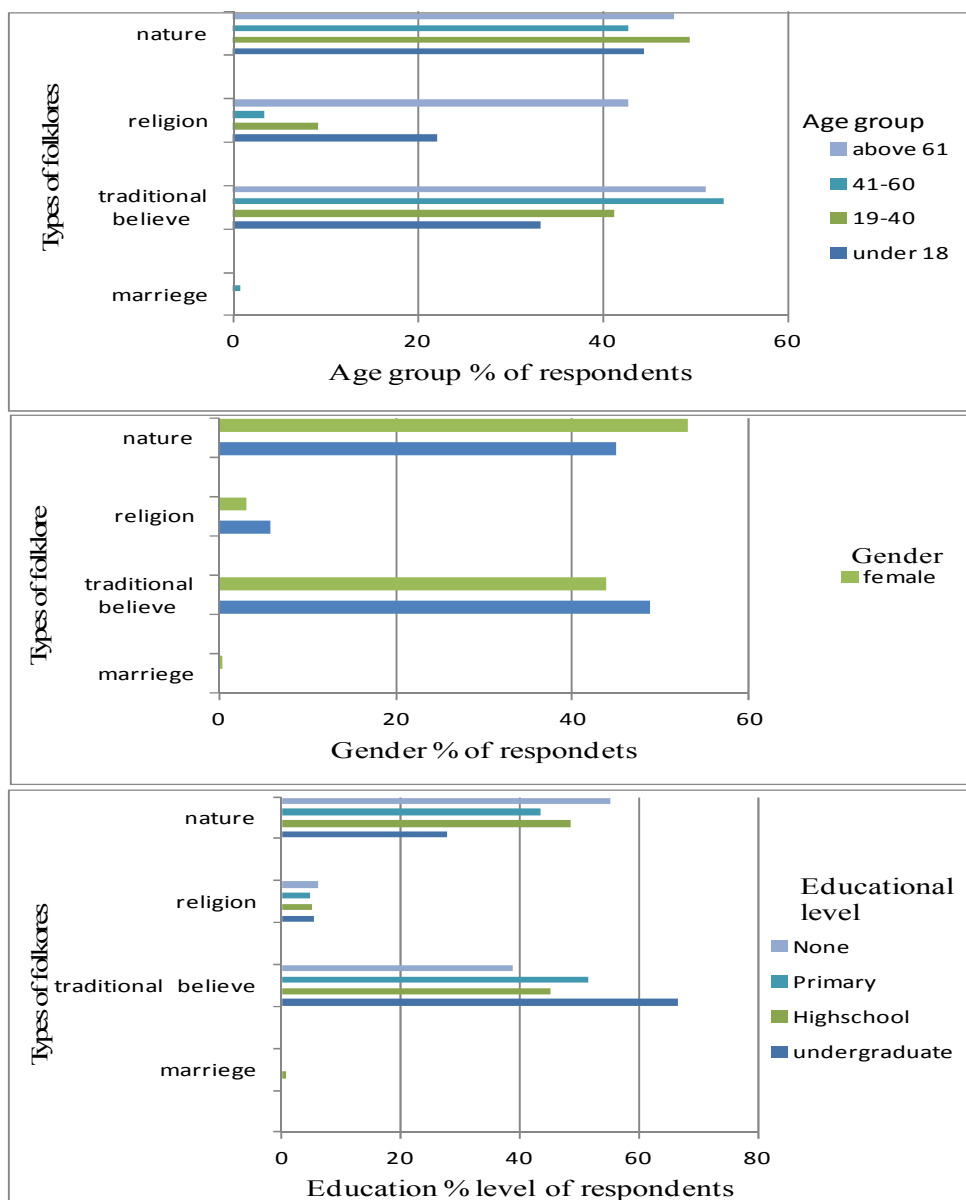


Figure 5: Distribution of different folklore types according to age group, gender and education among the Kit-Mikayi Community

### 3.3 Identity and Significance of the Cultural Knowledge

There were different types and name of folklores associated with the cultural site categorized into four main groups as marriage, traditional belief, religious and nature (Figure 4). There were twelve types of songs mentioned by the respondents. Four songs were associated with marriage namely: *bodi*, *dudu*, *mikayi* and *otenga*. However, *nyatiti*, *kambanane*, praise songs and *kwanina* were the religious songs. Nature as a folklore was associated with songs like *ramogi* in praise of a royal leader from the community, *orutu* appeased the spirits during sacrifice. It was believed that during burial ceremony songs such as *ohangla*, *siro* and *diewo* were sang to the dead during the send-off ceremony.

Dance was accompanied by songs such as *bodi* for marriage and *dudu* performed during bounty harvest in the land. *Ramogi* type of dance was performed during special events at the cultural site. The most frequently observed type of song was *ramogi* (34%) (Figure 6) and *dudu* (17%) (fig7). The most common special event was prayer at the rate of 58% (Figure 8).

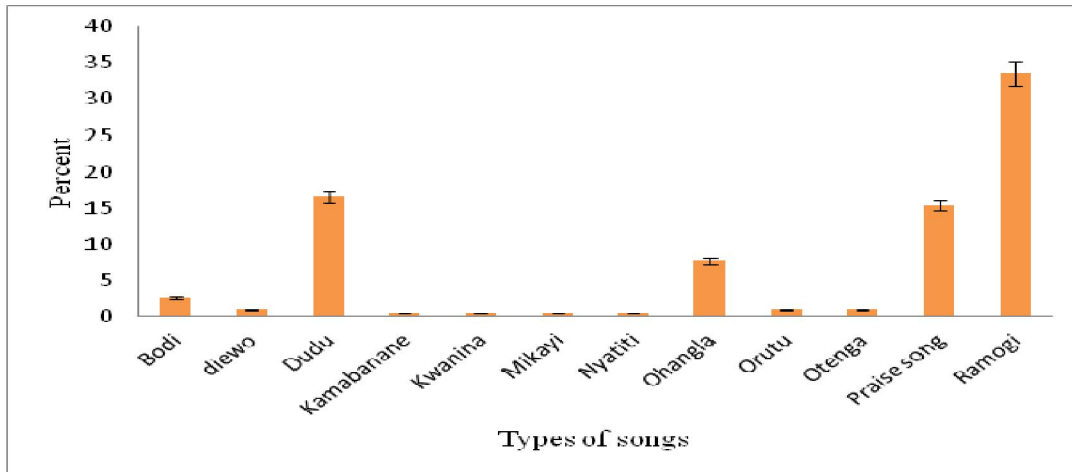


Figure 6: Percentage frequency types of cultural songs sang at the cultural site

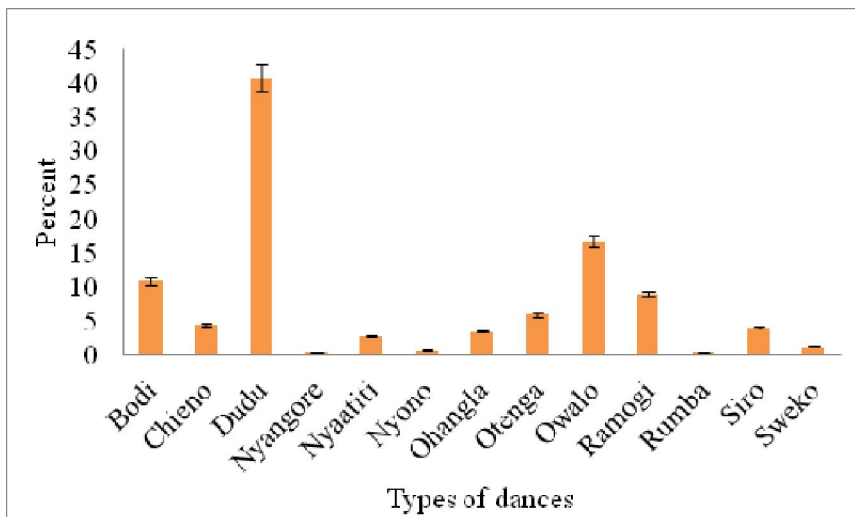


Figure 7: Types and frequency of cultural dances performed at the cultural site.

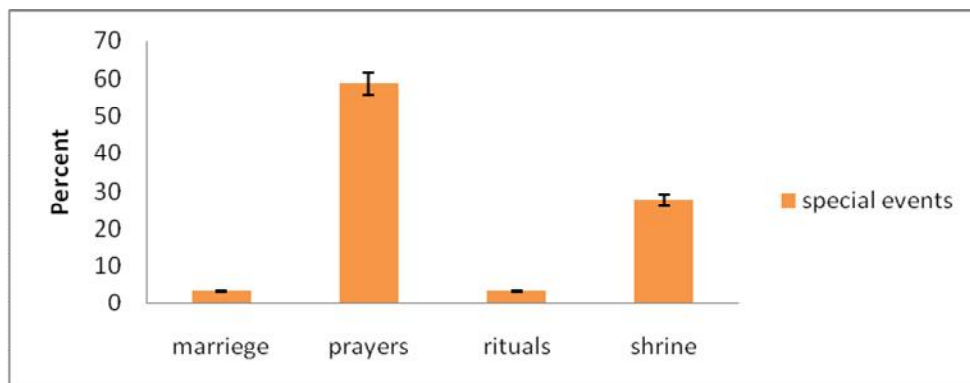


Figure 8: Frequency of special events conducted at the cultural site.



Figure 9: Cultural dance performed at the site during burial A. (sira) and B. bodi dance performed at Kit-Mikayi cultural site to enhance marriage ceremony

### 3.4 Types of Services Derived From the Site

Majority of the respondents revealed that the cultural site was utilized for relaxation followed by appreciating nature and picnic. Use for education and research was moderate as per the respondents' observation (fig.10). It means the visitors frequented the site to relax, commune with nature, enjoy the tranquility of the site and to some extent learned the valuable natural resource. About 90% of the respondents have knowledge on the existence of the cultural site but only few individuals from Ngeso's genealogy were able to narrate the historical background of Kit-Mikayi. The site was known to officiate sacrificial ritual mainly during morning hours (Fig.11). This was performed as a result of a calamity such as draught, divorce and separation cases amongst the community. However from respondents understanding and knowledge, after the sacrifices heavy rainfall would follow immediately and enhanced marriage vows.

Figure 10: Frequency of different cultural activities carried out at the cultural site by the community

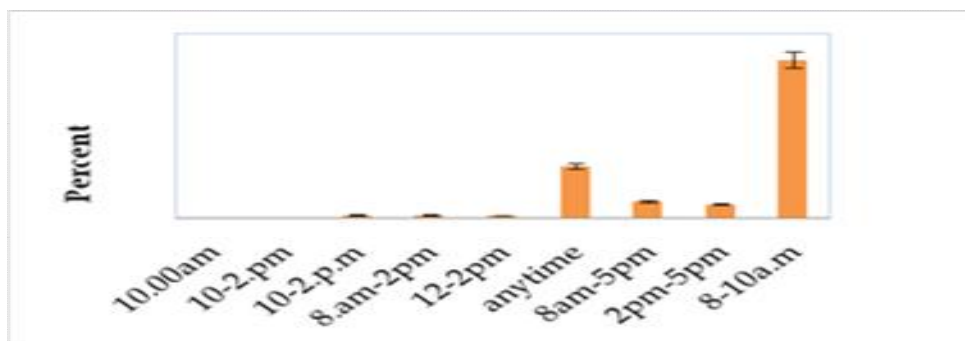
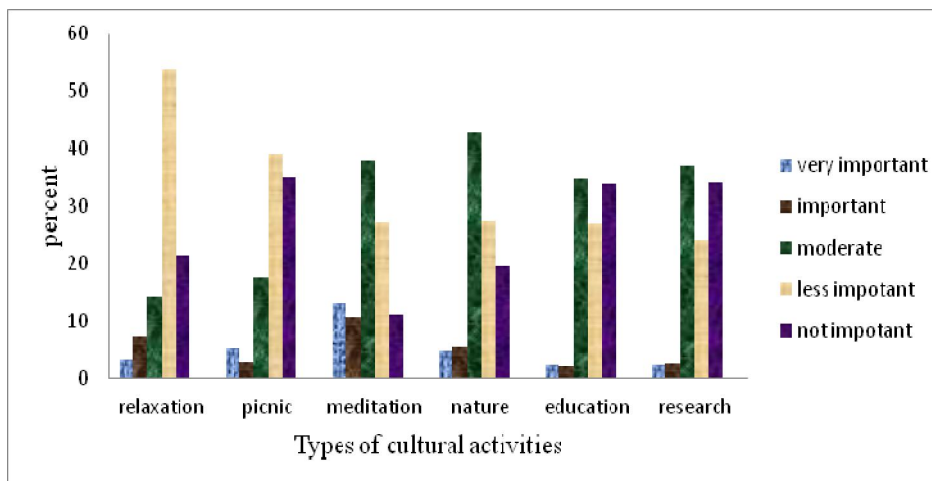


Figure 11: Frequency on knowledge about time of the day to perform sacrifice as a cultural functional use

### 3.5 Spiritual and Religious Significance of the Site

Spiritual and religious significance were expressed informations, and types of rituals conducted. Out of the 349 respondents three people narrated stories about Kit\_ Mikayi. Closest title existing held narrations. The narrations were recorded in video and audio.



For the men of Seme in Kisumu Rural constituency, the rock sustained their marriage vows. It was of great help to the community. While passing under the rock, the bridegroom sang a song and the bride ululated. This led to a long lasting marriage and as a special event. To the local community their vows were enhanced by rituals at the site but for the modern community these are performed in the law courts and evidenced by certificate of marriage issued by judges and magistrates. The rock acted as sanction to enhanced marriage security.

### **3.6 Spiritual and Religious Significance**

Religious people jam the shrine during the months of May and July when the rock releases water. The water healed. Religious leaders came to drink the water or to the sick in their churches and shrines. Historically the rock had a healing power. Notably, the Legio Maria sect considers the shrine as the place of its founder, the Late Melkiah Ondetto. There was a place reserved specifically for Ondetto in the shrine and Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. This was in keeping with the sect's tenets. The place was considered sacred and this gave the local residents the right and fully participated in those activities. The link between religion and the sacred site has considerably promoted environmental stewardship of the site. Such links have been recognized for enhancing environmental conservation (Dudley *et al*, 2005; Wild *et al*, 2008).

### **3.7 Sacrifice**

During times of catastrophe like hunger and famine, the Luo elders would conduct sacrifices here and the rain and bounty harvest would follow. The rock was presumed to send visions to people as far as Alego Usonga in Siaya on the need to conduct sacrifices to avert calamities. These people would meet *Kit-Mikayi* in their night dreams.

The ritual involved flinging a chicken on the rock before slaughtering it. It would then be roasted in full glare of the elders. Prayer to God and the Sun would follow before the elders partook of the meal. A cow would then be slaughtered, but by an aboriginal of the Seme clan of the Luo community. The cow to be slaughtered had to be striped into three just like the rock was subdivided into three. The man slaughtering the cow had to be blameless, failure to which the spirits would boycott. The rock knew everything. If the person failed the criteria, the sacrifice would not be successful. The man would then slap the cow severely until it urinated. If it did not urinate, it meant the gods were unhappy. The successful sacrifice resulted into rain and bounty harvest. The elders all dressed in Luo traditional attire came with their knives and ate the meat raw. They would then go home to plant, the result of which would be bounty harvest. This attachment of the community to the rock motivated them to conserve the site and provide protection.

### **3.8 Preference for Socio-Economic Cultural Practices at the Cultural Site**

Figure 12 shows range of socio-economic services and their preferred rating by the respondents. The results showed that the majority of the respondents preferred ecotourism (Table 5). The results also indicated that butterfly keeping was not preferred in the area possibly due to lack of knowledge on its utilization for ecotourism and livelihood.

The results also showed that the majority of the respondents who preferred the site to be used for ecotourism had attained undergraduate level of education. Above 80% of this category rated the site as very important (fig 13). About 61% of the age group between 19-40 years (middle age group) rated the site as very important for ecotourism compared to over 80% of those under 18 years of age (Figure 14). About 70% of men rated the site as very important (Figure 15).

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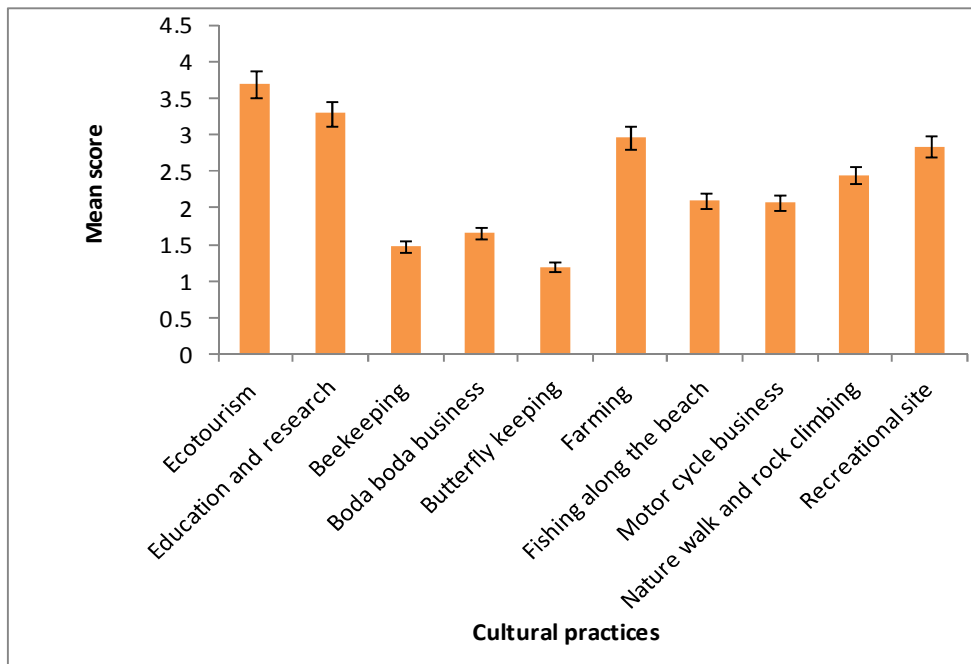


Figure 12: Cultural practices at the cultural site

From the results, ecotourism had the highest mean. Due to decrease in ecological connectivity it showed that there was rapid expansion of agriculture adjacent to the cultural site and throughout the rocky areas. Perceived decreases in wildlife and plants abundance and compositional change were evident throughout the area, with local communities attributing this primarily to illegal hunting/poaching activities.

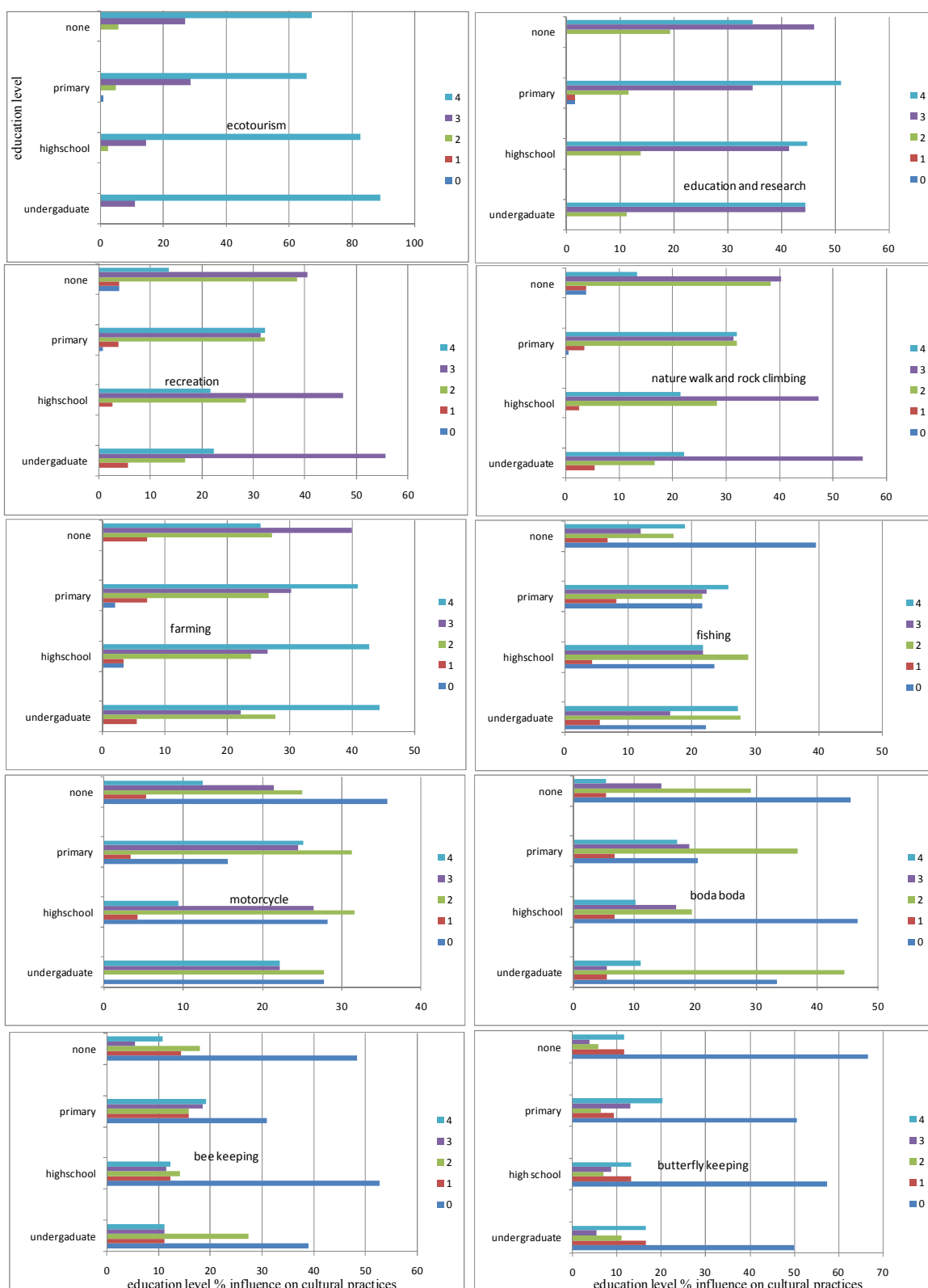


Figure 13: The influence of education level of respondents on cultural practices

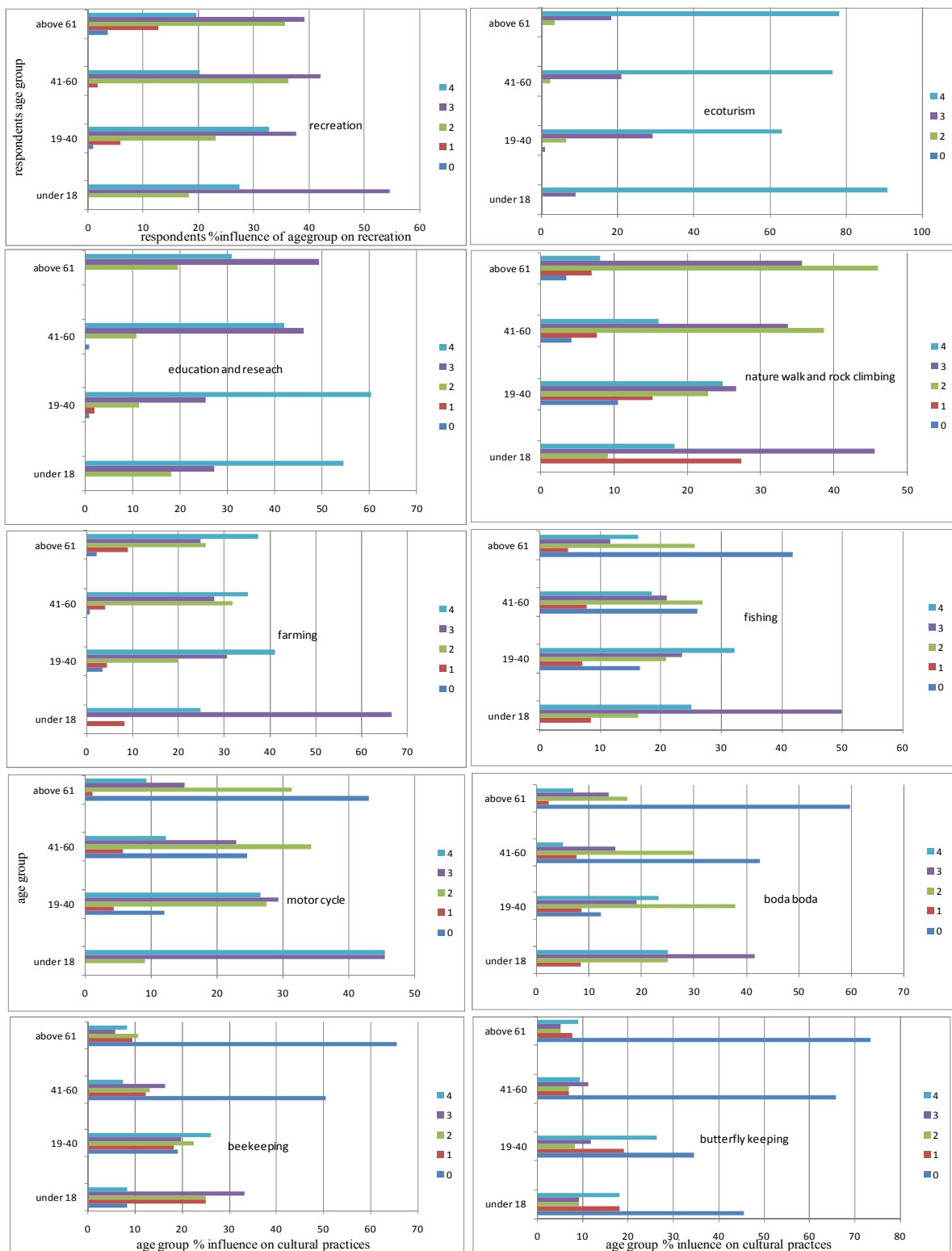


Figure 14: The influence of age group of respondents on cultural practices

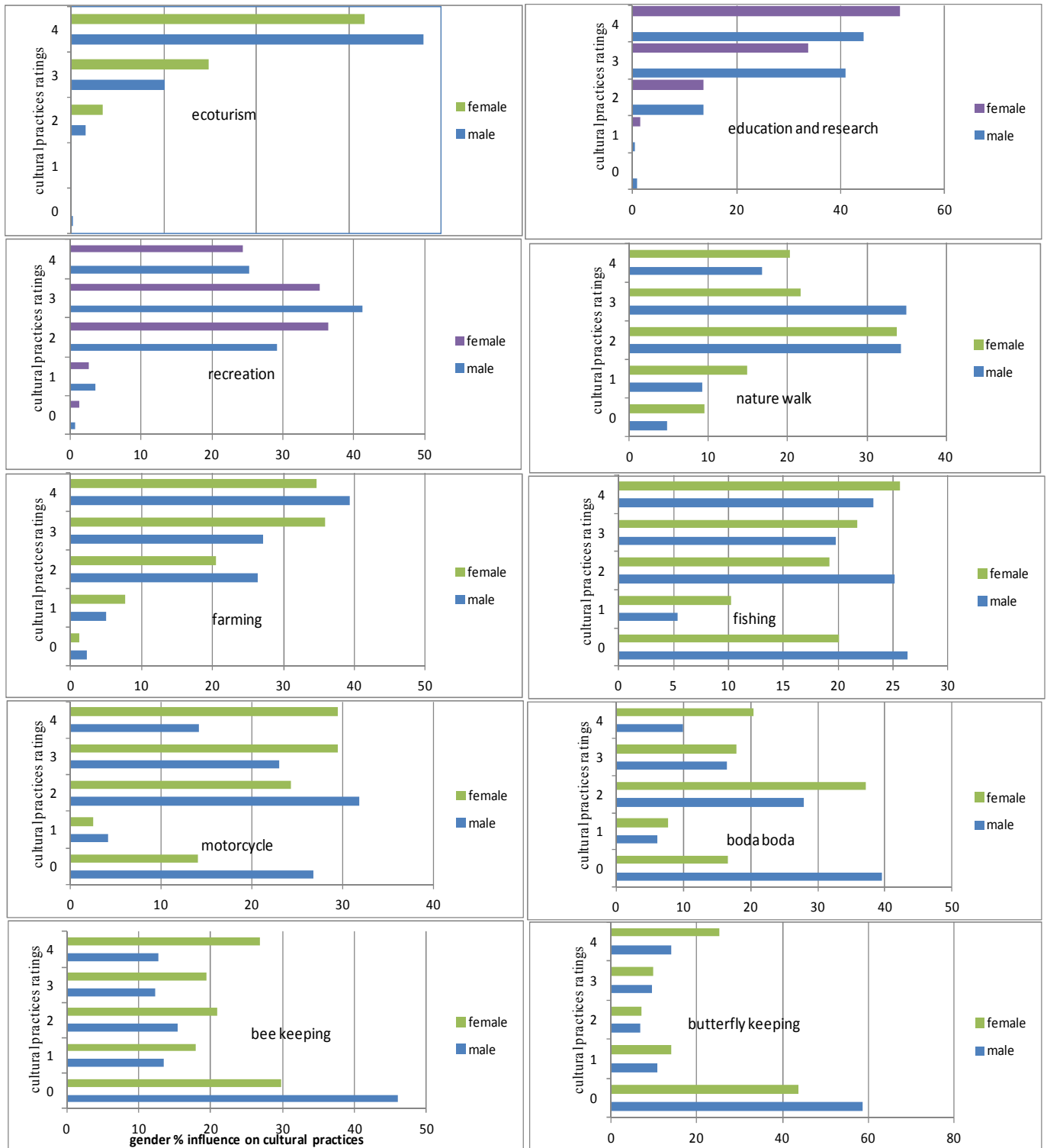


Figure 15: The influence of gender of respondents on cultural practices. 0-not important, 1-less important, 2-moderate, 3- important and 4- very important

#### 4.0 Conclusions

The Kit-Mikayi cultural landscape is multipurpose landscape area. It is composed of multi-faceted interpretations and demonstrating the need for both material culture and intangible data. It constitute thematic folklore types that depicts the cultural richness of the community. Ramogi song (34%) and Dudu dance (17%) dominated the language expression of the cultural site by age group above 61 years old. The *Kit-Mikayi* landscape acted as landmark within the area and this agrees with (Bernes *et al.*, 1993) research. The

majority of the respondents frequently visited the site for relaxation by 53%. The link between religion and kit mikayi sacred site can promote environmental stewardship. This can be recognized for enhancing environmental conservation at kit mikayi cultural site (Duddley *et al*, 2005; Wild *et al*, 2008). Cultural services like sacrifices have played an important role in motivating public support for the protection of ecosystem. Well-managed cultural landscape can lead the way to sustainable development in Kenya.

## **5.0 Acknowledgement**

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