Effects of Early Marriage on Girl-Child Education in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State Nigeria

[1]Dorcas Oluremi FAREO, [2]Josepeph KUTUNDA

[1]Ph.D, Department of Science Education, Adamawa State University, P. O. Box 411, Mubi Nigeria.

[2]Department of Science Education, Adamawa State University

[1]Corresponding Author E-mail: dorkyfareo@gmail.com

Abstract: **This study examined the effects of early marriage on girl-child education in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State. Three research questions were raised and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study employed descriptive survey research design. A sample of four hundred students was chosen from four senior secondary schools by stratified sampling technique using class, sex and locality as strata. The research instrument for this study was self-developed by the researcher titled "Effects of Early Marriage on Girl-Child Education (EEMGE)". The instrument was validated by an expert in Counselling Psychology, while t-test reliability method was used to carry out the reliability of the instrument and the reliability coefficient was 0.81. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages while t- test analysis used to tests the hypotheses. The results showed that the major causes of early marriage are emergencies and disasters, poverty and gender inequality. They girl-child suffer denial of education, unable to take personal decision and severe health problems. The concluded that emergencies and disasters, poverty, food security, gender inequality, protecting family honor and insecurity are the significant factors that encourage early marriage; and the major consequences of early marriage are premature death, complications during child birth and also severe health problems. It was recommended that the government, teachers and religious leaders should mount massive campaign for the awareness of the consequences of early marriage. Government and communities should be committed to getting girls to school on time and to keeping them in school through the secondary school level.**

Keywords: **Early marriage, girl-child, education, poverty and gender inequality.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an institution and is regarded as a moment of celebration and a milestone in the life of the adult. In practice, marriage is not restricted to the adult; the girl-child may be forced into early marriage without recourse to neither her consent nor the consequences of such forced union. The imposition of a marriage partner upon a child means that the childhood is lost and never regained. Bayisenge (2010) noted that young girls are robbed of their youth and required to take on roles for which they are not psychologically or physically prepared. Many have no choice about the timing of marriage or their partner. Some are coerced into marriage, while others are too young to make an informed decision. Early marriage impedes girls' education, psychological well-being and health. This practice inevitably denies young women of school age right to education necessary for personal development, preparation for adulthood, and effective contribution to future well-being of family and society.

In each year, around 70,000 girls die in labour since their bodies are not mature for child bearing. Further still, about 14 million teen and adolescent girls get married, and others are forced into marriage arrangement by parents yearly, WHO and UNICEF (2012). To revert this, education is crucial in mitigating incidences of early and forced marriage. Bayisenge (2010) noted that young girls are robbed of their youth and required to take on roles for which they are not

psychologically or physically prepared. Many have no choice about the timing of marriage or their partner. Some are coerced into marriage, while others are too young to make an informed decision. Premature marriage deprives them of the opportunity for personal development as well as their right to full reproductive health, and well-being & participation in Civic life.

Reports from IRIN Africa (2008) indicate that in Northern Nigeria, an estimated more than half of the girls are married before age 15. Among Nigerians predominantly Muslim northern states, only Jigawa state has passed a Law to enforce the UN Child Rights Act, which prohibits child marriage. The law itself does not specify an age, referring only to "puberty" to please the people. The law itself has never been enforced. In addition, a Nigerian Senator was reported by the news media to have married a 13-year-old Egyptian girl. The report generated opprobrium in various circles but soon died down. The lesson learnt is that implementation of relevant laws are still a far cry from expectations in Nigeria.

2.   CAUSES OF EARLY MARRIAGE

There are many causes which have been identified as responsible for the low participation of girls' education. Some of the causes includes: Conflicts, disasters and emergencies, poverty, gender inequality, weak legislature, traditional and religious practices.

i. Conflicts, Disasters and Emergencies

According to Simelton, (2012), food insecurity has resulted to the occurrence of hasty marriage, leading to captivity of girls who end up as wives against their will. Emergencies and disasters increase economic pressure on families escalating early marriages. For example flooding along river basins of Nozoia, Tana, Nyando, Galana and Yala as well as Tana River plains in coast provinces and north eastern. Additionally, drought and disagreements in Afghanistan have forced farmers to arrange and receive money for early matrimony of their daughters, Adamec, (2005).

ii. Poverty

According to Ackerly, (2009), in low income backgrounds, girls may be perceived as economic encumbrance. The impression of girls Panorama to earn income as comparatively disadvantaged pushes immature girls out of their home(s) to get married. On a global scale, girls from the needy 20% of households are more likely to be victims of early marriage. Poverty combined with the traditional practice of preference for boys influences parents to take sons to school rather than daughters in circumstances of economic constraints. When a community is faced with high poverty level, young woman's education is compromised, leading to early marriage pregnancy and forced marriage.

iii. Gender Inequality

Analysis by Cohoon, (2010) indicate that girls and women assume lower societal status emanating from cultural and traditional beliefs. Such belief suppress girls' capability to participate in equal roles in society. For instance 10 nations experiencing greatest incidences of early marriage, 5 contain regulations consenting girls to be married much earlier than boys. Once denied access to formal education, young girls develop into uneducated resources for further generation educated woman.

iv. Weak Legislature

Analysis of Vallilee, (2015), depict that early marriage in some countries are widespread, to an extent that prosecutions rarely brought. While nations have legalized right to marriage, including minimum age and consent, these law may be applied and few prosecutions brought against law breakers. Consequently marriage is not considered directly in the convention on the rights of the child. Practitioners regard other rights (e.g. health, education, life, development and survival) or the CRC general principles such as interests of the child. To this effect guidelines for periodic reports requiring that, government must indicate minimum marriage age for girls and boys should be effected.

v. Traditional and Religious Practices

According to Harensk, Antonenko, Shame and Kiehi (2010). It is a common belief in most nations that marriage safeguards against inappropriate and immoral behavior. Wilson, (1967), opined that cultural practices among Luos have led to boys and girls being married of at a tender age in area where people still follow traditional rules and regulations. The Luos also believe that a girl who has reached puberty and dies before she is married and is not deflowered will remain a malevolent ghost casing barrenness to all of her female kinsfolk. It is said that the dead will return to reproach

the living unmarried girls in visions and in dreams and ask them "why did our fathers and our brothers allow me to go into the grave without tasting the joy of man?" Ogutu, (2007). This culture has enhanced early and forced marriage. In the societies, where early marriage is prevalent, there is strong pressure on family to conform. The old notion of an ideal age for marriage the desire for submissive wives, and other customary requirement are all in enshrined in local customs or religious norms (Bayisenge, 2010).In the northern part of the country, religion plays major part in perpetuating early marriage. In the southern part of Nigeria, where the extended family is strong, the influence of relations in early marriage phenomenon cannot be over- emphasized.

vi. Notions of Morality and Honour

It has been suggested that the dominate notion of morality and honour are important factors encouraging the practice of child marriage. The importance of maintaining family honour and the high value placed on virginity, pregnancy, outside marriage is not welcome in many societies. Yet, giving the pre valence of teen pregnancy, many societies settle for early marriage for girls. Awake (2004) report that 31,857 children between 10 and 14 years of age give birth in Brazil in 1998, in Britain, 90% of teenage births in 1997 born outside marriage, while in the United States, 4 in 10 teenage girls get pregnant at least once before the reach the age of 20.

3. EFFECTS OF EARLY MARRIAGE ON GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

Early marriage is associated with certain consequences which includes; physical health, developmental, denial of education, psychological and social implications.

i. Physical Health Effects

Early marriage subjects the girl-child to an early sexual experience with her husband. At an age where the bride is not physically and sexual mature, this has severe health consequences. It is reported that the worldwide incidence of premature birth and low birth weight is higher among adolescent mothers.

Bayisenge (2010) stated that the young married girls are under tremendous pressure to prove their fertility in the first year of marriage. They therefore have children early. Bayisenge (2010) noted that young married girls are more likely to be beaten or threatened and more likely to believe that a husband might sometimes be justified in beating his wife. The International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) (2008) reports that in Egypt 29 percent of married adolescents were beaten by their husbands. Of these, 41 percent were beaten when they were pregnant.

ii. Denial of Education

Early marriage results to school drop-out and its chain effects. In Northern Nigeria, 12 million girls aged around 13-14 are married in the region (IRIN Africa, 2008). The denial education reduced such girls to that of dependence and subservice. Fairaa (2007) states that the gender inequality present in all aspects of society, including education leads to girls often lacking life skills and negotiating power.

iii. Psychological and Social Effects

Girls are not adequately prepared for the roles expected of them in the family. This therefore becomes a burden and has serious impact on their psychological welfare, their perception of themselves and also their relationship. Early marriage can lead to psychological disadvantage in and interaction with social environment. Early marriage can also leads to less of freedom and feeling of isolation for the girl-child as well as an unhappy marriage.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the strong tools and instruments of development in any given nation is education of her citizens, besides that all citizens are struggling towards the achievement of her educational objectives. Early marriage is a life changing reality for many girls, more so in developing countries. Hence, the researcher observed that young girls below the age of 15 in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria are forced into marriage which contributes to sexual health complications, violence, abuse, forced sexual relations, illiteracy as well as maternal and child mortality. This view is in line with UNICEF (2012) which indicates that more than 60 million girls worldwide had married before attaining the age of 18. In some communities, girls are being denied the right to receive western education which may lead to high level of illiteracy among girls compared to the level of illiteracy among boys. These problems have made the researchers to go

into investigation in an effort to identify the effects of early marriage on girls' education in Madagali Local Government Area.

Objectives of the Study

i. Determine the age level that girls get married in Madagali Local Government Area.

ii. Determine the factors that encourage early marriage

iii. Determine the consequences of early marriage on the girl child.

Research Questions

i. At what age levels do girls get married in Madagali Local Government Area?

ii. What are the factors that encourage early marriage?

iii. What are the consequences of early marriage on the girl child?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between rural and urban students' perceived factors encouraging early marriage

2. There is no significant difference between male and female students in their perceived consequences of girl marriage

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. This design was found to be appropriate because Jen (2002) defined survey design as a process of documenting the nature, scope, relationship, dimensions and directions of events, behaviour, attitudes and interest about a person or things.

Population and Sample:

The population of the study consists of all the sixteen senior secondary schools in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State which comprised eight thousand seven hundred and sixty five students. The sample size of four hundred was chosen from four senior secondary schools by stratified sampling technique using class, sex and locality as strata.

Research Instrument:

The research instrument for this study was self-developed by the researcher titled "Effects of Early Marriage on Girl's Education (EEMGE)". The instrument comprised of four sections. Section A contained the demographic characteristics of the respondents which consist of sex, name of school, class and Local Government Area. Section B to D contained nineteen (19) items. Section B contained four (4) items which concerned with the age level the girl get married. Section C contained eight (8) items which concerned with the causes of early marriage on girl child, while Section D contained seven (7) items on consequences of early marriage on the girl child.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument:

The face and content validity of the instrument was established by two experts in Counselling Psychology and Test and Measurement in the Department of Science Education, Adamawa State University Mubi. A pilot study of the instrument was undertaken in both urban and rural secondary schools in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State. The reliability of the instrument was carried out by a test-retest method. The first test was administered to thirty (30) senior secondary school students from Shuwari Secondary School, Mubi. The second test was administered to the same students with the interval of four weeks. The reliability value was calculated using Kudder Richardson formular (KR-21) which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81.

Data Collection and Analysis:

The researchers administered and collected data on the spot. Thus the retrieved data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency counts, percentages t and t-test analysis.

6. RESULTS

Research Question 1: At What Age Levels do Girls Get Married in Madagali Local Government Area?

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents on the Age Levels that Girls Get Married

S/N	Age level of marriage	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
1.	13-15 years of age	62 (15.5%)	76 (19%)	178 (44.5%)	84 (21%)	400 (100%)
2.	16-18 years of age	207 (51.75%)	117 (29.25%)	49 (12.25%)	27 (6.75%)	400 (100%)
3.	19-21 years of age	107 (26.75%)	192 (48%)	81 (20.25%)	20 (5%)	400 (100%)
4.	22-24 years of age	105 (26.25%)	54 (13.5%)	129 (32.25%)	112 (28%)	400 (100%)

Table 1 shows the age level do girls get married in Madagali Local Government Area. The Table revealed that the students strongly agreed to following age levels: 13-15 years of age 138(34.5%), 16-18 years of age 324(90%), 19-21 years of age 299(74.75%) and 22-24 years of age 159(39.30%). Based on the result from this table, it implies that the age level at which girls get married in Madagali Local Government Area are: 16-21 years.

Research Question 2: What are the Factors that Encourage Early Marriage in Madagali Local Government Area?

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Respondents on the Causes of Early Marriage

S/N	Causes of early marriage	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
1.	Poverty	184 (46%)	114 (28.5%)	60 (15%)	42 (10.5%)	400 (100%)
2.	Food security	175 (43.75%)	106 (26.5%)	64 (16%)	55 (13.75%)	400 (100%)
3.	Emergencies and disasters	204 (51%)	94 (23.5%)	60 (15%)	42 (10.5%)	400 (100%)
4.	Gender inequality	159 (39.75%)	151 (37.75%)	51 (12.75%)	39 (9.75%)	400 (100%)
5.	Control over sexuality	53 (13.25%)	31 (7.75%)	234 (58.5%)	82 (20.75%)	400 (100%)
6.	Protecting family honour	167 (41.75%)	115 (28.75%)	84 (21%)	30 (7.5%)	400 (100%)
7.	Insecurity	124 (31%)	176 (44%)	42 (10.5%)	58 (14.5%)	400 (100%)
8.	Settling disputes	48 (12%)	92 (23%)	101 (25.25%)	159 (39.75%)	400 (100%)

Table 2 shows the factors that encourage early marriage in Madagali Local Government Area are poverty 298(75%), food security 281(70%), emergencies and disasters 298(75%), gender inequality 310(78%), control over sexuality 84(21%), protecting family honour 282(71%), insecurity 300(75%) while setting disputes 140(35%) is not one of the factors

Research Question 3: What are the Consequences of Early Marriage on Girl Child?

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Respondents on the Consequences of Early Marriage

S/N	Consequences of early marriage	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
1.	Denial of education	234 (58.5%)	112 (28%)	29 (7.25%)	25 (6.25%)	400 (100%)
2.	Birth complication	174 (43.5%)	113 (28.25%)	67 (16.75%)	46 (11.5%)	400 (100%)
3.	Lack of opportunity for personal	186	103	57	54	400

	development	(46.5%)	(25.75%)	(14.25%)	(13.5%)	(100%)
4.	Unable to take personal decision	233 (58.25%)	72 (18%)	48 (12%)	47 (11.75%)	400 (100%)
5.	Severe health problem	224 (56%)	49 (12.25%)	49 (12.25%)	34 8.5%	400 (100%)
6.	Premature death during labour	220 (55%)	124 (31%)	26 (6.5%)	30 (7.5%)	400 (100%)
7.	The young woman may suffer pain as a result of constant beaten by husband	77 (19.25%)	54 (13.5%)	124 (31%)	145 (36.25%)	400 (100%)

Table 3 indicates the consequences of early marriage in Madagali Local Government Area are denial of education 346(87%), birth complication 287(72%), lack of opportunity for personal development 289(73%), unable to take personal decision 305(76%), severe health problem 273(68%), premature death during birth 344(86), the young may suffer pain as result of constant beaten by husband 77(1925%).

Research Hypotheses

HO$_1$: There is no significant difference between rural and urban students' perceived factors encouraging early marriage.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of Rural and Urban Students Perceived Factors Encouraging Early Marriage

Variables	N	$\overline{x}$	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Remark
Rural Students	160	2.96	0.97				
				398	0.03	1.962	Accepted
Urban Students	240	2.95	1.05				

Not Significant: (P > 0.05)

Table 4 above shows the causes of early marriage as perceived by rural and urban students. The analysis shows the t-value (0.03) is less than the p-value (1.962). Hence, the null hypothesis is upheld. This means that perception of causes of early marriage by rural students does not differs significantly from that of the students in the urban areas.

HO$_2$: There is no significant difference between male and female students in their perceived consequences of girl early marriage.

Table 5: t--test Analysis of Difference between Male and Female Students Perception of Consequences of Earl Marriage of Girls

Variables	N	$(\overline{x})$	SD	Df	t-value	p-value	Remark
Male Students	104	3.05	0.89				
				398	0.89	1.962	Accepted
Female Students	296	3.09	0.52				

Not Significant :(P > 0.05)

Table 5 above, shows the consequences of early marriage as perceived by male and female students. The analysis shows the t-value (0.89) is less than the p-value (1.962). Hence, the null hypothesis is upheld. This means the perception on consequences of early marriage by male students does not differ significantly from that of the male students.

7. DISCUSSION

The study revealed that the ages at which girls get married in Madagali Local Government Area are between 16 to 21 years. The result replicated the findings of the studies by UNICEF (2011), Jain and Kurz (2007) and International Centre for Research and Women (ICRW), (2007) found a strong association between higher age of marriage and information levels.

This study found that the emergencies and disasters, poverty, food security, gender inequality, protecting family honour and insecurity are the significant factors that encourage early marriage. These findings were similar to the studies of Simelton (2012), Ackerly, (2009) and Vallillee, (2015).

The study also revealed that denial of education, inability to take personal decision, severe health problem and premature death during labour are the major consequences of early marriage. This position was also affirmed by the finding of Bayisenge (2010), International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW, 2008), (IRIN Africa, 2008) and Fairaa (2007).

The finding of hypothesis one showed that there is no significance difference between rural and urban student perceived factors encouraging early marriage in Madagali Local Government Area.

The findings of hypothesis two also revealed that there is no significant differences between male and female students in their perceive consequences of girls early marriage which implies both the rural and urban, male and female student agreed on the factors encouraging early marriage and consequences of girl early marriage in the study area.

8. CONCLUSION

The age levels at which girls are married off in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State is generally between 16 to 21 years. Emergencies and disasters, poverty, food security, gender inequality, protecting family honor and insecurity are the significant factors that encourage early marriage; and the major consequences of early marriage; and the take personal decision, severe health problem and premature death during labour.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The study recommended that governments, teachers, and religious leaders should educate both the girls and parents towards the early marriage, and also government should impose laws and policies on the early and forced marriage in order to protect the rights of a girl child education.

- Government and non-governmental organization should intervene and provides foods and materials to the less privilege citizens in order to eliminate the levels of poverty and hunger in the society. And also government should provide security to the area of emergencies and disaster and educate the parents on the gender inequality that encourage early marriage.

- Government should mount massive campaign for the awareness of the consequences of early marriage. Government and communities should be committed to getting girls to school on time and to keeping them in school through the secondary level.

- Government should provide social and economic development programmes for the drop out of school girls, including non-formal education programmes.

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