



Underlying Factors Attracting Early Marriages Among Teenagers in Learning Institutions in the Three Sampled Day Public Secondary Schools in Mpulungu District of Northern Province of Zambia

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Abstract – Collective and concerted local and international efforts related to the addressing of irregular practices such as teenage pregnancies have been primarily constituted, but to no avail, marriage of girls below 18 years of age is common worldwide and affects masses of globe communities. Child marriage, defined as marriage of a child below 18 years of age is an ancient worldwide custom. Other terms applied to child marriage include "early marriage" and "child brides." Child marriage is a human rights violation that prevents girls from obtaining an education, enjoying optimal health, bonding with others of their own age, maturing, and ultimately choosing their own life partners. Child marriage is driven by poverty, religious beliefs, security of the child to mention just a few. This thesis therefore will clearly locate the drives of child marriages in Mpulungu district pointing out also the effects on girls' health: increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases, death during childbirth, and obstetric fistulas, school dropout, domestic violence, child sexual abuse and poverty. Critical issues are the high prevalence of chronic diseases among young people; childbearing by young girls, which can lead to obstetric fistulas and death of the mother; and child marriage Girls' offspring are at increased risk for premature birth and death as neonates, infants, or children. To stop child marriage, this study will try to point out possible strategies or policies and programs that must be implemented like educate communities, raise awareness through civil societies and relevant line government ministries, engage local and religious leaders, involve parents, and empower girls through education and employment. Awareness of reproductive health issues in most affected areas in developing nations is of paramount importance to combat the problem of child marriages. The related and relevant data will also be collected through individual interviews, checking of school records and questionnaires.

Keywords: Child Marriage, Early Marriage, Child Brides, Teenage Pregnancy, Girls' Education, Human Rights Violation, Reproductive Health.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a social institution that unites people in a special form of mutual dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. As a social practice entered into through a public act, religious or traditional ceremony, it reflects the purpose, character and customs of the society in which it is found. Many societies have norms that limit the age of young girls to enter into marriage but in some cases the age limit does not take into consideration their physiological readiness for child bearing. Marriage often takes place at ages much earlier than the legally ratified minimum age. Early marriage is the marriage of children and adolescents below the age of 18 years.

In several cultures girls are forced to be married at a very early age due to various reasons such as getting dowry, the fear of some parents that their daughters would get pregnant while at home.

Marriage before the age of 18 is a reality for many young people. Overwhelming majority of those affected by early marriages are girls most whom are in poor social economic situations. Parents encourage the marriage of their daughters while they are still young hoping that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially relieving the financial burdens to the family. The practice

of child early and forced marriages is wide spread and occurs in all regions of Zambia with the highest prevalence in rural areas. However, the consequences of early marriages are serious, which can violate the rights of adolescence. Both in this generation and the next, it affects the education and well being of millions of children especially in poverty communities.

Simply put, early marriages violate children's basic right to a childhood, to an education, to good health and to make decisions about their own lives. The right to "free and full consent to a marriage is recognized in the universal declaration of human rights.

However, despite the recognition that consent cannot be "free and full" when one of the parties involved is not sufficiently mature to make an informed decision about a life partner.

Therefore, young girls may endure misery as a result of early marriage and the number of those who would seek help, if they thought it existed is impossible to calculate. Until more is known about their situation there can be no reliable estimate of the scale of their predicament, or of the social damage that is carried forward in upbringing they give to their own children.



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One thing is clear: the impact of early marriages on girls and to a lesser extent on boys is wide ranging within a right perspective, three key concerns are the denial of childhood and adolescence, the curtailment of person freedom and the lack of opportunity to develop a full sense of selfhood as well as the denial of psychosocial and emotional wellbeing, reproductive health and educational opportunity. Early marriages also have implication for the well being of the family and for society as a whole. Where girls are uneducated and ill prepared for their roles as mothers and contributors to society, there costs to be born every level, from the individual household to the nation as a whole.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite being prevalent with profound impact, child marriage in Zambia attracts limited attention yet it has become a serious problem in most parts of the country particularly in rural areas. Many girls especially 14 and 15 years are forced into marriage by parents or guardians or relatives. So the researcher has decided to investigate more contributing factors to child marriages in rural areas especially in selected public day secondary schools: Mpulungu, Niamukolo, Makola and Makonga in Mpulungu district of Northern Province of Zambia.

The main purpose of this study was to critically study the major factors contributing to early marriages in Zambia. This study only concentrated on investigating the major challenges in rural areas where the problem of early marriages is common. The study also strived to establish ways and means of how this act can be minimized; the major contributors to early marriages were also in a nut shell unveiled.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the reviewed literature from other scholars and researchers related to this Study of the factor which contribute to early marriage among teenagers in rural areas.

According to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of [1989] defines a child as “every human being below the age of 18 years”. Also Article 2 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of [1990] states that “For the purpose of this Charter, a child means a human being below the age of 18 years” The actual meaning of the articles was that, the child should be protected at least up to the age of 18. Thus why the articles of the Conventions remained relatively open. Furthermore Article 24 of the ICCPR(1966) recognizes the right of every child, without any discrimination, to receive from his/her family, society and the state the protection required by his or her status as “a minor” So it is internationally recognized that children are those human beings below 18 years old.

For the purpose of this research this is the concept which is adopted for the meaning of early marriage. Basically early

marriage can also be regarded as forced marriage because it is conducted without a valid consent of one or both sides.

In communities where child marriage is prevalent, there is strong social pressure on families to conform. Failure to conform can often result in ridicule, disapproval or family shame. Invariably, local perceptions on the ideal age for marriage, the desire for submissive wives, extended family patterns and other customary requirements, are all enshrined in local customs or religious norms. In many contexts child marriage is legitimized by patriarchy, and related family structures, which ensure that marriage transfers a father’s role over his girl child to her future spouse. The marriage or betrothal of children in parts of Lunte is valued as a means of consolidating powerful relations between families, for sealing deals over land or other property, or even for settling disputes.

According to Adamson Social feminist, Recognized that the exploitation and oppression of women are rooted in the structure of patriarchal capitalism. They believed that Sexualism is so deeply ingrained in the social relationship of patriarchal Capitalism that a fundamental transformation is necessary to bring about social change. Thus, in this study early marriage eradication may be hindered by the system whereby policies, traditions and beliefs still oppressing young girls to be married.

According to the Priest argued that” these days with western ideas spread everywhere; girls stay unmarried as late as 30 years. It is very Scientific and modern, but in our church it is prohibited such girls are neither clean nor blessed “Thus this strong religious message enforce the view that marrying early is best as supported by the one of the priests representing Ethiopian’s Orthodox Church.

Girls are at risk of early marriage and those who are already married need greater policy and programmatic attention. Programs addressing Adolescent reproductive health and HIV prevention have focused primarily on unmarried youth. However the majority of recent unproductive sexual activities among adolescent girls in most developing countries occur within marriage.

Girls married before age of 18 have low education attainment, earning power and social mobility. In some settings married girls have been shown to have higher rates of HIV infection than their sexually active unmarried peers. All countries have regions with areas where early marriage is forbidden, but it is most pronounced in South and West Africa, this is according to available Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data. In certain regions of Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India and Nigeria at least 40 percent of those women were married before the age of 18 (considered the legal minimum age of marriage in most Countries) according to a population council analysis of United Nations Countries data early marriage among boys in much less common.



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Policy and program Manager are working in two primary ways to address the disadvantage faced by girls who marry early to support later age of marriage and to respond to the needs of young married girls. In this study “girls” refer to those under the age of 18.

When girls are married at a young age, it is often due to poverty, dowry pressures, parental concerns about pre marital sex and pregnancy, or other economic or cultural reasons. For many marriage marks the beginning of their sexual life and an increased social isolation, as girls typically leave their homes and natal villages losing contact with friends and peers. Existing data cannot definitively show the causal link between early marriage, poverty, low educational attainment and other social indicators, which are multidirectional.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The descriptive and multivariate analysis of data from the demographic and health surveys related to child marriage allow for a clearer picture of who is married as a child: girls married before they turn 18 are less educated, have more children and are married to men who are significantly older. Women who married as girls are more likely to experience domestic violence and believe that in some cases a man is justified in beating his wife. Significant percentages of women who were married before 18 are in polygamous unions, and their partners are likely to be significantly older, and more highly educated. In most countries, women use traditional or folkloric contraception when they are trying to avoid pregnancy. At the descriptive level, they are more likely to come from poor families and from rural areas.

Child marriage undermines nearly every millennium development goal (MDG), it is an obstacle to eradicating poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, improving maternal and child health, and reducing HIV and AIDS. Child marriage also infringes on the rights of women and children by denying them access to an education, good health and freedom. These rights are spelled out in international agreements such as the UN convention on the rights of the child (CRC).

The more education a girl receives, the less likely she is to marry as a child.

Mapping child marriage levels within countries may be a useful practice for programmatic purposes when determining where to launch new prevention campaigns. It can also be used to track future progress by comparing child marriage levels at different points in time. The demand and supply relationship of child marriage should be qualitatively explored to illuminate dynamics, such as the reasons why households marry their children and why men prefer younger brides, in order to inform programming strategies.

Recommendations

- Improving access to education for both girls and boys and eliminating gender gaps in education are important strategies in ending the practice of child marriage.
- More schools should be built in rural areas to reduce the distances that the girls cover in order to cater for children below the age of 6.
- Re – entry policy should be revisited as some girls repeat the same mistakes and do not finish school.
- Schools and communities should have recreation facilities which can offer opportunities to girls to spend their leisure time constructively.
- Chiefs, headmen, councilors and members of parliament (MP) must help the MOGE to sensitize girls to value education more than early marriage.
- Female teachers should be sent to rural areas and to be promoted to administrative positions so that they can serve as role models for girls.
- Parents and guardians should desist from giving girls messages that condition them to believe that they are only supposed to be in the kitchen.
- Increasing the level of compulsory education maybe one tactic to prolong the period of time when a girl is unavailable for marriage.
- Capitalize on the window of opportunity created by the increasing gap in time between the onset of puberty and the time of marriage by providing them with life skills enhancing programme and opportunities.
- There is a need to develop methods to protect girls at risk of child marriage and to address the concerns of girls and women who are already married by ensuring the fulfillment of their right to a full education and providing them with life skills based training to ensure that they can earn a livelihood.
- Efforts are also required to protect girls who are in union.
- Decreasing the pressure on young women to conceive through education and advocacy on the dangers of early motherhood should be considered.
- Consideration should be given to ways to improve access to effective contraceptive methods.
- Educate women who were married before age 18, to advocate against early marriages.
- Further data collection and research is required to explore the impact of child marriage on boys and men.
- Interventions to eliminate child marriage must span multiple sectors and include different approaches, such as increasing education and income, creating safe spaces for girls, increasing family planning and reproductive health knowledge and access to services, working with communities to change norms, and developing media messages. Such as supporting the most vulnerable adolescent girls by creating a place for them to interact and seek support from their peers, female mentors from the community should provide



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training sessions on reproductive health, life skills and savings and investment skill to younger girls.

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