
**EARLY MARRIAGE AND GIRL CHILD EDUCATION IN UGANDA A CASE STUDY OF RUBAGA
DIVISION, KAMPALA**

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at the impact of early marriages on girl child education in Uganda with a case study of Rubaga division, Kampala and it was guided by the following objectives; To investigate the causes of early marriages among girl child education in Rubaga division Kampala city, to find out the effects of early marriage on a girl child education, to find out solutions for early marriages on a girl child in Rubaga division, Kampala city and to investigate the relationship between early marriages and girl child education in Rubaga division. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research approaches the quantitative approach were to be adopted because the proposed study drew statistical inferences. This qualitative approach supplemented the quantitative approach by proving detailed information inform of statements from interviews for in depth analysis. The larger percentage (53%) of the participants in the research said that beliefs about fertility do not contribute to pregnancy amongst schoolgirls. This result indicated that there was a large number of adolescents who placed a higher value on education and future economic success, than to prove their fertility at a young age. These respondents were of the view that only older teenage girls, and not schoolgirls, may feel the need to prove that they are able to have children before marriage. Parents should counsel their daughters once they reach adolescent stage and equip them with necessary materials such as sanitary towels, books and little pocket money for lunch to protect them from the lures of businessmen and also teaching them on how to overcome teenage pregnancies.

Key words: early marriage and girl child education

Background of the study

Education is a basic human right that every child is entitled to (Anthony et al., 2023). It is enshrined in international treaties and conventions that are legally binding to signatory states such as Uganda (Sub-county et al., 2023). For example, Article 26 of the UN Declaration of human rights states that everyone has a right to education which should be free and compulsory at least in the elementary and fundamental stages (Victoria et al., 2023). The convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against women (Marsha et al., 2012)

Contain comprehensive sets of enforceable commitment on the right to education and gender equality. Millennium development goal 2 (MDGs, 2008) also stresses the need for gender equality in education (Mark et al., 2023). However as much as these conventions and treaties are being enforced early marriages is persistently being practiced especially in Uganda, and this is acting as a deterrent to girl child education. (Aisha et al., 2023), for example, states that in many developing counties, transition from adolescents is compromised by early

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marriage, a practice that has serious consequences for their health and development (Joventa et al., 2023). Early marriage is an appalling violation of human rights and robs girls of their education, health and long term prospects (Flavia et al., 2023). In accordance with article 1 of the convention on the right of the child, early marriage refers to any marriage of a child younger than 18 years old (Vincent & Peter, 2023b). Early marriage is defined as a formal marriage or informal union before the age of 18. Ango, (2013) defined early marriage as either marriage of an adolescent girl/boy or marriage of an adolescent girl to a matured man or vice versa and this happens at puberty when the individual is getting matured (Sub-county et al., 2023). The effect of early marriage on the girls that affects her wellbeing and that of the society include education, lack of economic empowerment and lack of knowledge on reproductive health services which enabled them take informed decisions, enhance their ability to leverage resources and participate in community decision making (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023a). Early marriage had been a common practice among many ethnic groups in the world including Uganda. However, it contributed to series of negative consequences both for young girl's rights in particular (Aisha et al., 2023). For both girls and boys, early marriage had profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts, cutting off education and employment opportunities and chances of personal growth (Victoria et al., 2023).

Statement of the problem

Early marriage was documented as the reason why girls were not in school in Uganda (UNICE, 2011). Since 2010, there had been a gradual increase in early marriage in Uganda, in 2013 Uganda was ranked 16th among 25 countries with the highest rates of early marriage with 46% of girls marrying before 18-year-old and 12% before they are 15 (WORLD VISION 2013). These were no single clear reason for early marriage of girl child in Uganda but instead it's a combination of various ranging from social to cultural and economic (Ninsiima et al., 2023). However political and religious leaders have come up to sensitive the masses about the negative impacts of early marriage, go back to school campaign that was launched in October 2013 by UNICEF to help girls dropouts to rejoin school and the Programme had so far registered success stories and also promoted the

national strategy for girls education (Vincent & Peter, 2023a). In Rubaga division, Kampala both primary and secondary schools had registered a decline in the girl child enrollment trends for the last five years (UNICEF 2016). Poverty in Rubaga, its one of the causes which impacts the lives of young girls. Their parents just "sell" them into marriage to cope with debts and escape their miserable state. Strategic purpose was also another big problem for early marriage in Rubaga village for example some parents get their children engaged in building strong relationships between clans or powerful families. Politicians had also contributed to cases of early marriage. The researcher was therefore compelled to analyze the impact of early marriages on the girl child education using Rubaga division as a case study (Joventa et al., 2023).

Specific objectives

1. To investigate the causes of early marriages among girl child education in Rubaga division Kampala city
2. To find out the effects of early marriage on a girl child education.
3. To find out solutions for early marriages on a girl child in Rubaga division, Kampala city
4. To investigate the relationship between early marriages and girl child education in Rubaga division

Methodology

Research design

The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research approaches the quantitative approach were to be adopted because the proposed study drew statistical inferences. This qualitative approach supplemented the quantitative approach by proving detailed information inform of statements from interviews for in depth analysis (Fassinga and Morrow 2013). Specifically, the study adopted a cross sectional survey design. The information collected based on what would be gone on at a particular point in regard to early marriage and girl child education.

Target Population

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The research study targeted the students, marriage couples, teachers and institutions and village leaders totaling to 50 respondents.

Sample size and selection

Sample size referred to the number of items to be selected from the universe to constitute sample (Kotihari, 2004). Technically the size of the sample depends on the type of research design being used, desired level of confidence in the result, the amount of accuracy wanted and the characteristics of the population of interest thus it is important to note that there was no single based way that could be used to determine sample size (Singh 2006) 30 students was interviewed from secondary schools, 40 married couples, 20 teachers and 10 village administrators making up a total of 100 respondents.

Sampling techniques

Sampling techniques refer to the procedure a researcher uses to select the needed study sample (Amin, 2005). This approach was preferred because it involved dividing the population into homogeneous sub groups and the taking a simple random sample in each group (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). The procedure of drawing a stratified random sample included all village respondents as unique identified according to the data given from administration system.

Data collection method

Data collected by use of questionnaire and interview surveyed.

Questionnaire survey

The study was largely a quantitative survey involving a large number of secondary school teachers as respondent's thus the data collection method adopted a survey which involved the use of self-administered questionnaires (SAQs). The method enabled the researcher to cover the respondents quickly and at a reasonable cost (Bordens and Abbot 2011).

The interview surveys

The interview survey also called a face-to-face research method is a research method that is utilized when a specific target population is involved. The purpose of conducting a personal interview survey is to explore the responses of the people to gather more and deeper information. Personal interview surveys will be used to probe the answers of the respondents. The method has been chosen because people were more likely to readily answer live questions about the subject. Open ended questions were more tolerated through interviews due to the fact that the respondents found it more convenient to give their long answers orally than in writing (Sincero 2012). The respondents gave detailed information. There were five interviews from the head teacher because five to eight respondents are a

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sufficient sample otherwise the Responses became repetitive. Above all interviews take a long time to conduct requiring staying longer in the field (Masion 2010). This thus helped in saving time.

Data collection instruments

The study employed a questionnaire and interviews guide.

The questionnaire

A self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) administered on respondents. The questionnaire chosen because it serves to collect appropriate data, makes comparable and amenable to analysis, minimizes bias in formulating and asking of questions and makes questions varied. The questionnaire had identical sets of items for all respondents. The questions in section A in background characteristics were nominal questions with appropriate questions given. Questions in section B were scaled using a five-point Likert from a minimum of 1 through 5. This instrument helped in collecting data that will be quantitative in nature.

Data analysis

The term analysis (processing for some researchers) involved a number of closely related operations, which are performed with the purpose of summarizing the data and organizing these in such a manner that they answer the research question(s) or hypotheses if they exist (Amin, 2005). Thus, in the process of analysis, relationships or differences supporting or conflicting with original or new hypotheses should be subjected to statistical tests of significance to determine if real differences exist.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 16.0) (Nelson et al., 2022). The data analysis done in different levels; namely invariant, bivariate and multi variant. At invariant level, the data analysis based on percentages from the frequency table and descriptive statistics particularly the mean. At bivariate level, the dependent variable, early marriage will be correlated with girl child education. Independent variables (IVs).

RESULTS

Employment Sector

The researcher sought to investigate the type of employment those who had been employed had engaged in whether formal or informal. This is also a possible cause of early marriages. Table 1 shows the type of employment of those employed. The findings indicate that very few women were in formal sector employment. This is probably due to the respondents' low levels of education.

Table 1: Respondents' employment sector**Type of employment Frequency Percentage**

	Frequency	Percentage
Formal	5	10.0
Informal	45	90.0
Total	50	100.0

The table 4.4 shows that 5 (10%) were in formal employment while 45 (90%) were in informal employment.

Age at Marriage

The researcher sought to find out at what age the women were married. The purpose will be to investigate the rate of early marriages by women in the sub-county. Table 2 shows the distribution of the age brackets of the respondents at marriage.

Table 2: Respondents' age at marriage**Age Frequency Percentage**

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 15 years	14	28.0
16-18	21	42.0

Above 18 years	15	30.0
Total	50	100.0

It is evident from Table 2 that a majority of the respondents were married at 16-18 years which is quite an early age for marriage.

Reasons for Marriage

The researcher also sought to know the leading reasons of marriages by the respondents. The reasons given were pregnancy, the right age and financial problems in the family. Summarizes the findings.

Table 3: Respondents reasons for getting married early Reason Frequency Percent

	Frequency	Percentage
I got pregnant	12	24.0
I will be of age	3	6.0
Financial issues in the family	35	70.0
Total	50	100.0

The table 3 indicates that 12 (24%) had gotten pregnant, 3 (6%) were of age, 35 (70%) had financial issues in the family.

Opinions on the Causes of Early Marriages

The study sought to investigate the possible causes which had contributed to women engaging in early marriages. The region is very poor and 92 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement. The study found that girls dropped out of school because their parents/guardians could not afford school fees for their education. As a result, they ended up marrying early since they had no other available options to venture into. This will be supported by discussants in one FGD: It is problems which lead to early marriage. You will not have food and dress, so a person goes to live with a man. You become readily available even at a mere joke. When one is still a live, a parent should

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ensure that a child goes to school. Someone should at least get married between ages 20 and 25 years. If you have a daughter in the house, you should try your level best to provide her with all the necessities so that she does not covet anything of anyone else.

Impacts of Early Marriage on the Girl-Child Education

Early marriage had profound effect on the girl-child in the village as explained by the area chief in a key informant interview: Early marriage is a distraction for the future of young girls-educationally, socially and economically. When a girl is married when young, she will not find time to socialize with other people or go to school. When a girl is married when she is still under-age, she will suffer from poverty and ignorance. Early marriage leads to maternal deaths because when a young girl conceives before reaching maturity, this leads to maternal deaths especially when she does not deliver in hospital. She may also suffer obstructed labour which leads to vesico-vaginal fistula. She may deliver underweight children because she does not know what to eat when pregnant and this may result in child illnesses and finally death of the child other than early marriage affecting the girl-child's education the researcher sought to find out other effects of early marriage. The suggested effects by the respondents are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Effects of early marriage

	Frequency	Percentage
One ends up marrying where one is not wanted	3	6.0%
It can result in divorce	4	8.0%
It can lead to various health issues	1	2.0%
It leads to lack of proper employment	3	6.0%
Girls can acquire HIV/AIDS	4	8.0%
One lacks experience to take care of children	2	4.0%
It leads to mistreatment	2	4.0%
It leads to maternal deaths	1	2.0%
It spoils a girl's future	3	6.0%
One ends up having many children when still young	3	6.0%
Unnecessary sufferings	4	8.0%

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It leads to fights with husband	3	6.0%
One does not complete one's education	3	6.0%
Leads to ignorance	4	8.0%
Lack of knowledge on child nutrition	1	2.0%
Leads to unhappy life	4	8.0%
Leads to lack of skills to do business	4	8.0%
Total	50	100.0%

The researcher also sought to investigate if there were any positive effects of early marriage. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or not if there were any positive effects. The findings are summarized in Table 4.

Table 5: Responses on whether there are any positive effects of early marriage

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	4	8.0
No	46	92.0
Total	50	100.0

The findings indicate that a vast majority of the respondents disagreed with the suggestion that early marriage had any positive effect on the girl-child. This will be also supported by one key informant. In her view; Early marriage has no positive effect on the girl-child in Rubaga division, Kampala city. Girls enter into marriage when they are still young and this may often lead them to divorce and enter into prostitution. Again, their illiteracy level goes up and they may not know what they are doing. By the time they were getting married the girl and husband may have been around 16 years old, and then they all of a sudden realize that there is a stage they passed. Then there is the issue of mobile phones (Damasus et al., 2023). The girls can talk to other boy-friends on phone, and at times this phone is put on loudspeaker and the girl gives the same phone to her husband to use. There is gender-based violence in these homes-husbands beat up these young girls because they are ignorant they do not report such cases because they do not know their rights. Even if they make money through business and make profits, it is the husband who will

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possess all these. There is high rate of mortality of children because their mothers prefer traditional birth attendants (30+years old lady, cultural officer).

Regrets of Engaging in Early Marriage

The study sought to investigate if the engagement in early marriage had led to any regrets. The respondents regretted to have engaged in early marriage because they said they were experiencing a lot of financial challenges and hardships in their married life. The responses are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Responses on the extent to which early marriage had led to regrets

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	47	94.0
No	3	6.0
Total	50	100.0

From the above results it can be pointed out that the majority **47 (94.0%)** of the respondents regretted the fact that they married at an early age. The study sought to find out the reasons for regrets. These reasons are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7 Respondents' reasons for regrets of early marriage

Response Frequency Percentage

Because I don't have proper planning for my family	1	2.0%
Because my parents had no money, now I am suffering	3	6.0%
Better life for others than myself	3	6.0%
If I compare self with classmates, I feel low	3	6.0%

Have problems	4	8.0%
I have no better life	3	6.0%
I wish I went to school, I would be happier	4	8.0%
I wish I went to school, I could be better placed	4	8.0%
If I compare myself with my age mates I feel bad	4	8.0%
If I had the chance, I would do better	4	8.0%
Lots of problem, no money to feed children	4	8.0%
My living standard is low	3	6.0%
People with education are doing better in life	4	8.0%
Poverty	3	6.0%
So many problems	3	6.0%
Total	50	100.0%

Reasons for schoolgirls' pregnancies

Table 8: Frequency distribution according to the reasons for schoolgirl pregnancy

Possible reasons for pregnancy	Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Total
Lack of knowledge about sexuality	65%	30%	5%	100%
Peer pressure	90%	7%	3%	100%

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To become independent	21%	64%	15%	100%
Examples of portrayed by the media	93%	6%	1%	100%
Early menarche	67%	23%	10%	100%
Beliefs about fertility	44%	53%	3%	100%
Contraceptive use	83%	14%	3%	100%
Low social economic status	86%	8%	6%	100%
Risk taking behavior	94%	2%	6%	100%
Role models	73%	25%	2%	100%

Knowledge about sexuality

Most of the respondents (65%) in the research sample agreed that because schoolgirls lack adequate knowledge about sexuality they fall pregnant. According to Bezuidenhout (2004) sexuality issues are the topics least discussed by members of a family. Schoolgirls in the adolescent stage who experience physiological and emotional changes, often find it difficult to discuss these experiences with their mothers or older sisters. In need of information, they turn to their peers for guidance or seek information from books, magazine articles, the internet and the like (Sapire, 1999). However, not all the information obtained from these sources is correct which may be a reason for unwanted pregnancies. The main problem identified concerning knowledge about sexuality in the study conducted by Makola (2004) will be sexuality education in schools. It will be found that sexuality education will be not compulsory during the training of educators which resulted in many educators not having the appropriate skills to effectively teach such a sensitive subject (Emmanuel et al., 2023). It will be also established that some educators are not comfortable or embarrassed to teach sexuality subjects.

Nearly a third (30%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement which means that they do not view ignorance as one of the reasons for pregnancy amongst schoolgirls. This might be an indication that the schoolgirls have

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acquired proper sexual knowledge from parents, health workers, teachers, priests or the mass media but had other reasons for falling pregnant (Kanku & Mash, 2010)).

Peer pressure

Ninety percent (80%) of the respondents that partook in the research believed that peer pressure plays a significant role in schoolgirl pregnancy. According to Kaplan (2004) during the adolescent years peer groups seem to control areas such as dress style, music taste, recreation activities, and dating customs and sexual practices. Channing-Peace and Saville (2006) confirms that peer group pressure can be very strong as well as the desire to conform to be accepted. Ayer (2000) maintains that the peer group influence can be direct when peers exert pressure on the schoolgirls' sexual activities or indirect when the teenagers need to imitate certain forms of behaviour for example that portrayed by the media (Kalikula, 2023).

Independence

More than sixty percent (64%) of the respondents in the research sample disagreed that in order to become independent the schoolgirl becomes pregnant. This result is contrary to most research that found that by falling pregnant the adolescent schoolgirl perceives herself as an adult and thus independent concerning physical and sexual aspects (Bolton, 2003). These respondents might see a pregnant schoolgirl as still dependent as she still needs financial support to complete her education and care for the baby as well as someone to look after the baby during school time. Jewkes (2007) sees the pregnant schoolgirl as becoming more dependent because she lacks adequate education to secure continues to rely on relatives in caring for the baby. The twenty one percent (21%) of the respondents that agreed with the statement possibly share the view of most researchers, namely, that the adolescent schoolgirl strives for independence in making her own decisions about her behaviour and actions and wants to judge for herself about her sexual activities (Cunningham & Boulton, 2007). By falling pregnant the teenage schoolgirl perceives herself as independent concerning physical and sexual aspects and that she has attained adult status.

Media

More than a ninety percent (93%) of the participants in the research said that the media plays an important role in schoolgirl's pregnancy (Kazaara et al., 2023). This high percentage of respondents that agreed confirm the findings of various researchers, namely, that film, internet websites, some periodicals and television programmes containing sexual activities without having the necessary level of physical and emotional and psychological maturation (Phionah et al., 2023). Bezuidenhout (2004) claims that "together peer pressure and the influence of mass media are powerful triggers in encouraging teenagers to indulge in illicit sexual activities". (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023b) says the media contributes to sexual acts amongst teenagers because of all the explicit sexual acts they view on television

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and movies. As a result of this exposure teenagers engage in sexual activities as it looks easy, funny and glamorous without thinking about the consequences (Shakilah & Kazaara, 2023).

Early menarche

More than two thirds (67%) of the respondents in the research sample agreed that early menarche can be a reason for schoolgirl pregnancy. Recent research by (Buga et al., 2006) indicates that the age of menarche is decreasing. The implication of this is that sexual activity is likely to begin at an earlier age, with the risk of pregnancy amongst schoolgirls still in primary school. In an article in the Mercury newspaper, Mkamba and Moolla (2012) refer to statistics from the KwaZulu-Natal department of education that revealed that in 2010-2011 the number of primary school girls that fell pregnant will be 508. The seven Grade 3 pregnant girls range in age from eight to 11 years, 19 girls were in Grade 4, 40 in Grade 5, 129 in Grade 6 and 313 in Grade 7. Bezuidenhout (2008) maintains that early menarche together with lack of knowledge about reproductive health plays a role in primary schoolgirl pregnancies.

More than a fifth (23%) of the respondents does not view early menarche as a risk of schoolgirl pregnancy. Oni et al. (2005) give the mean age for semenarche and menarche as 15 years and 14 years respectively. However, adequate knowledge of reproductive biology, early sexual relations and information on the access to contraceptive methods can prevent pregnancy amongst young teenagers (PNG, 2007). These respondents may lack knowledge about the onset of menarche and thus the ability to make an informed decision and the perception that girls are not sexually active at a young age, especially girls in primary school (Nash, 2002).

Beliefs about fertility

The larger percentage (53%) of the participants in the research said that beliefs about fertility do not contribute to pregnancy amongst schoolgirls. This result is in accordance with the finding of Bhana et al. (2008) that there are a large number of adolescents who place a higher value on education and future economic success, than to prove their fertility at a young age. These respondents might be of the view that only older teenage girls, and not schoolgirls, may feel the need to prove that they are able to have children before marriage (Jac & Kazaara, 2023).

In their research Preston-Whyte and Zondi (2002) found that most of their respondents (teenage mothers) are of the opinion that it will be important to them to prove their fertility by falling pregnant outside of marriage. More than forty percent (44%) of the respondents acknowledged that girls become pregnant before they marry to prove their fertility.

Contraceptive use

More than eighty percent (83%) of the respondents that partook in the research believed that the use of contraceptives is a reason for school girl pregnancy.

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The concept "contraceptive use includes inter alia, the following Availability and access to contraceptives, Lack of knowledge that result in ineffective or non-use of contraceptives, Negative perceptions about contraceptives, health workers, reluctant to provide young teenagers contraceptives.

Low socioeconomic status

The majority of respondents (86%) in the research sample agreed that a low socioeconomic status is a possible reason for schoolgirl pregnancy. Low socioeconomic status is characterized by poverty which means people living without or with the minimum basic daily needs such as proper housing, food and clothes (Hughes, 2002).

Role models

Nearly three quarters (73%) of the participants in the research agreed that role models play a role in schoolgirl pregnancy. Preston-Whyte and Allen (2002) maintain that teenagers are exposed to role models in the media and their immediate society who are respected, and are single mothers. This observation gives adolescents (teenagers) the perception that it is possible to achieve success in life even if one falls pregnant while young and still at school. However, a quarter (25%) of the respondents did not agree with the statement that role models play a role in schoolgirl pregnancy. To these respondents the following factors may play a more important role in school girl pregnancy (John et al., 2023): poor socio-economic conditions; the child support grant, to pleas a boyfriend, lack of understanding of reproductive health contraception and coercion to have sex.

Conclusions

On the basis of the above findings, it can be concluded that early marriage exists in Rubaga division and it is as a result of poverty and culture. Early marriage imposes fundamental challenges on the advancement of the girl-child's education. Poverty and culture are intertwined, and they are the cause of girls not being in school in Rubaga division. This, being an urban area, experiences more excitements among youth. Every child, whether male or female, needs equal treatment from parents in order to realize their dreams. Equal participation in education is of great importance whether financial resources are scarce in a home or not.

Recommendations

Parents should counsel their daughters once they reach adolescent stage and equip them with necessary materials such as sanitary towels, books and little pocket money for lunch to protect them from the lures of businessmen and also teaching them on how to overcome teenage pregnancies. Information on reproductive health problems such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV / AIDS and the health risks of teenage (learner) pregnancy. Advice about the different contraceptive methods that are

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available and knowledge about the correct use should be taught to young girls, this would help to reduce on school girl pregnancy. Intervention procedures that focus on the risky sexual behaviour of adolescent learners, the situations that lead to them and how to avoid them.

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