
**THE IMPACT OF EARLY MARRIAGES ON GIRL CHILD EDUCATION
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS; A CASE STUDY OF BWAMBARA
SECONDARY SCHOOL RUKUNGIRI DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at the impact of early marriages on girl child education in secondary schools with a case study of bwambara secondary school rukungiri district and it was guided by the following objectives; To identify the different causes of early marriages to the students of Bwambara Secondary School, to examine the educational effect of early marriage on Girl Child Education and to identify the different ways how early marriages eliminated in Secondary Schools. The target was on 200 Students, 70 Teachers and 50 Parents of Bwambara Secondary School using stratified sampling technique because it was the most effective when handling heterogeneous population's parameters to be obtained like this one, and enables separate estimates of the populations of the parameters to be obtained for each stratum without additional sampling. It was observed that 98 (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that poverty is the critical factor contributing to early marriage. Where poverty was acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden and her pregnancy to a much older man. 39 (20%) agreed, 29 (15%) were not sure and 8 (15%) disagreed. It therefore implied that Poverty was the critical factor contributing to early marriage. Where poverty was acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden and her pregnancy to a much older man. 122 (62%) strongly agreed to the assertion that traditional and cultural practices such as female genital cutting (FGC) contribute to the early marriage of girls, 65 (33%) agreed; while 10 (5%) were not sure. This therefore implies that Traditional and cultural practices such as female genital cutting (FGC) contribute to the early marriage of girls. The researcher recommends that girl child education should be prioritized by all stakeholders NGOs which support girl-child

education should be supported by government Free primary and secondary education should be extended to all areas and prioritized.

Key words: *early marriages, girl child education and secondary schools*

Background of the study

A marriage is a legally recognized union between a man and a woman in which they are united sexually, cooperate economically, and may have children through birth or adoption (Strong, DeVault, and Sayad, 2016). Therefore, Early Marriage is either one or both of the marriage couple being under the age of 18 years old or high school (Hutchinson and McNall, 2015). Uganda is one of the countries with the highest early and forced marriage. 10% of girls are married off before the age of 15 and 40% of girls re married off before their 18th birth day (UNICEF 2011). Around 46 per cent of all women are married by the age of 18, according to UNICEF 2011 figures despite the law setting 18 as the legal age of marriage (Joventa et al., 2023).

According to Uganda, Early marriage is defined as any marriage carried and below the age of 18 years before the girl or boy is physically, physiologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing (Sanyu,2017). She also defines it as the union of both parties younger than 18 years of age. The declaration of human rights recognizes the right to free and full consent to a marriage, acknowledging that consent cannot be "free and full" when one of the individuals involved is not sufficiently mature to make an informed decision about a life partner (Aisha et al., 2023).

Although, females constitute more than fifty percent (50%) of world's active population (UNESCO, 2010) and they make immense contribution to national development, yet, they still face a number of difficulties that limit their potentials in promoting personal and collective development. A key area of concern in this regard is that of their education which can only at best be described as dwindling as and less than equal to that of the male. (Obaya, 2013).

Finally in Uganda, Early marriage leads to early pregnancy and motherhood, which adversely affects the education of girls in schools. In spite of the recognition of

women education, there are many barriers in the way of women to get higher education and contribute their maximum impact to the betterment of the society (Vincent & Peter, 2023). The mindset of the society does not allow girls for higher education in that, it promotes gender inequality and ensures prioritization of economic resources for boy-child (ren). They get fewer opportunities not only in education, but also in all facets of life (Daraz, 2016). Studies conducted by Prof. Tusiime Aidah (2017) a social worker and researcher revealed that many young married women face many problems and leave their education uncompleted due to different social and cultural factors.

Problem Statement

The effect of early marriage on the girl child education at Bwambara Secondary School cannot be over emphasized. This is because currently children of 16 years old are nowadays in high school classes and this makes some parents to think that they are due for marriage without considering the psychological, emotional and academic effect on the adolescent Girl Child. More so the academic level of the student declines as they fail to balance both education and marital life effectively. In most cases, Girls who get involved in early marriages are those who get unwanted pregnancies and this makes them more vulnerable to going back to school and so they end up getting married (Joventa et al., 2023). Although it is the dream of every little girl to go to school and have a bright future, we have continued to see many girls getting pregnant and ending up eloped or married off so while they are still teens. Many stakeholders like politicians decry the effect of early marriages (Shamim et al., 2023). The researcher is therefore compelled to analyze the effect of early marriages on the Girl Child Education at Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District.

Specific Objectives

1. To identify the different causes of early marriages to the students of Bwambara Secondary School.

2. *To examine the educational effect of early marriage on Girl Child Education.*
3. *To identify the different ways how early marriages eliminated in Secondary Schools.*

Research Questions

1. *What are the different causes of early marriages in Bwambara Secondary School?*
2. *How does early marriage affect Girl Child education in Bwambara Secondary School?*
3. *What are some of the ways how early marriages abolished in secondary schools?*

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed the survey design. This is because it is targeting a big population and size of sample of respondents. According to Creswell, (2016), survey design is effective for collecting qualitative data within a big population. Survey design is also effective in studying relating to demographics of the population. The study also adopted a qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach provided detailed information in form of statements from interviews for in-depth analysis (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). The information collected was based on what was going on at a particular point in regard to early marriage and girl child education this design was particularly selected because it takes place at a single point in time, allowing analysis of non-numerical variables at once and help in looking at the prevalence of the research problem in the study population (Bordens & Abbott, 2011).

Study Population

Population was explained as a comprehensive group of individuals, institutions, objects and so forth with have a common characteristic that are the interest of a researcher (Creswel, 2013). The population from which the sample was taken

involves the students, Teachers and parents of Bwambara Secondary School. The respondents were got from various classes and different departments at the School.in order to come up with accurate data to help the researcher get all that is needed. This population was total to 320 participants.

Sampling Design

The target was on 200 Students, 70 Teachers and 50 Parents of Bwambara Secondary School using stratified sampling technique because it is the most effective when handling heterogeneous population's parameters to be obtained like this one, and enables separate estimates of the populations of the parameters to be obtained for each stratum without additional sampling. Respondents from different branches was then be selected using simple random sampling technique to make the results objective and inferences based on them.

Table 1: Sample Size

Respondents	Target Population	Sample Size	Percentage
<i>Students</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>190</i>	<i>95%</i>
<i>Teachers</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>90%</i>
<i>Parents</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>90%</i>
Total	320	290	

Source: primary data 2022

Research Instruments

The researcher was using primarily data. In collecting Primary Data, the researcher was using questionnaires as tools for collecting the data.

Questionnaires

This choice of tool was used due to the fact that the targeted population is literate and therefore capable of filling-in the questionnaires. It gives the respondents adequate time to give well thought out answers. Questionnaires was also be self-administered and provide a quick means of collecting data from a large population's sample.

Data Analysis

This involved tabulation of the collected data. A quantitative method was used in computation of percentages and totals using SPSS (Nelson et al., 2022). Tables was used to present and summarize data for easy interpretation and display of information.

RESULTS

The study targeted 196 respondents and managed to obtain responses from all of them thus representing a 100% response rate as shown in table 1. This response rate has been achieved because the researcher gave the respondents enough time to fill the questionnaires. Babbie (2003) explains that a 50% response rate is adequate, 60% good and above, while 70% rated very well. This collaborates with Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommendation of a response rate of 50% based on the rule of thumb. Therefore, this study considered the response rate adequate for analysis and generalization since it exceeded the minimum recommended.

Table 1 Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Returned</i>	<i>196</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Not returned</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Total	196	100

Source: Primary data 2022

Gender characteristic of respondents

Table 2: Gender characteristic of respondents

<i>Sex of respondents</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Male</i>	114	58
<i>Female</i>	82	42
<i>Total</i>	196	100

Source: Primary Data 2022

From table 2 above, response indicated that the majority of respondents were male who accounted for 114 (58%) and female respondents accounted for 82 (42%). This implies there is a marginal majority of males over the females among the residents of Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District.

Age of the Respondents

Respondents were asked to choose their age brackets and the findings are presented in the table below:

Table 3. Showing the age brackets of the respondents

Age bracket (years)	Frequency	Percentage
12 - 17	165	84
18-30	12	6
Above 30	20	10
Total	196	100

Source: Primary data 2022

The findings in the Table 3 above show that 74 (84%) of the sample were in the age bracket of 12 - 17 years and they were mainly students in the school, 12 (6%) in the age bracket of 18 - 30 and 20 (10%) in the age bracket of 30 years and above and they were mainly teachers. This implies that most of the respondents were in the age bracket of 12 - 17 years. This category of students was in the position to clearly respond to the questions of the study. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were in the upper primary age group and not toddlers, and therefore had the ability to respond appropriately to the questionnaire. This implies that valid and reliable information was got.

Time Spent in Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District

Respondents were asked how long they had been in Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District and the findings are presented in the table below:

Table 5: Respondents' Period of engagement in Nansana

Period of employment	Frequency	Percentage
Over 10 yrs.	20	10%
6 - 10 yrs.	146	75%

3 - 5 yrs.	20	10%
Less than 2 yrs.	10	5%
Total	196	100

Source: Primary Data 2022

Table 5 shows that 20 (10%) of the respondents had spent over 10 years and these were mainly teachers and 146 (75%) had spent between 6 - 10 years in Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District and these were students in upper primary, 20 (10%) had been with Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District for 3 - 5 years and 10 (5%) had been in Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District for less than 2 years. Therefore, the majority of the respondents had information about Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District and the topic under study that is; early marriage and girl-child education

This also implies that Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District has very low turnover. It also implies that the respondents were knowledgeable enough about the municipality and the topic under study

Table 6 showing the causes of teenage

Causes of early marriage among girls in Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri	Response											
	Strongly agree		Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<i>Poverty is the critical factor contributing to early marriage. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden and her pregnancy to a much older man.</i>	98	50	39	20	29	15	29	15	-	-	196	100

<i>Traditional and cultural practices such as female genital cutting (FGC) contribute to the early marriage of girls.</i>	122	62	65	33	10	5	-	-	-	-	196	100
<i>The status of women in society plays a key role in early marriage; women are seen as inferior and they are neglected and despised and this leads to early marriage</i>	147	75	39	20	-	-	10	5	-	-	196	100
<i>Poor parenting whereby the girls are exposed to erotic scenes of the parents and or other neighbors having sex may compel the girls also to do the same and end up pregnant</i>	137	70	39	20	-	-	20	10	-	-	196	100
<i>Peer pressure is one of the major factors leading to early marriage whereby girls are easily deceived into sex by their peers doing the same.</i>	98	50	78	40	-	-	20	10	-	-	196	100

Source: Primary data 2022

From the table 6 above, it observed that 98 (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that poverty is the critical factor contributing to early marriage. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden and her pregnancy to a much older man. 39 (20%) agreed, 29 (15%) were not sure and 8 (15%) disagreed. It therefore implies that Poverty is the critical factor contributing to

early marriage. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden and her pregnancy to a much older man.

122 (62%) strongly agreed to the assertion that traditional and cultural practices such as female genital cutting (FGC) contribute to the early marriage of girls, 65 (33%) agreed; while 10 (5%) were not sure. This therefore implies that Traditional and cultural practices such as female genital cutting (FGC) contribute to the early marriage of girls.

It can also be observed that 147 (75%) of the sample strongly agreed that the status of women in society plays a key role in early marriage; women are seen as inferior and they are neglected and despised and this leads to early marriage, 39 (20%) agreed to the assertion and 10 (5%) disagreed. This implies that indeed the status of women in society plays a key role in early marriage; women are seen as inferior and they are neglected and despised and this leads to early marriage since the majority agreed to the assertion.

137 (70%) of the sample strongly agreed that Poor parenting whereby the girls are exposed to erotic scenes of the parents and or other neighbors having sex may compel the girls also to do the same and end up pregnant, 39 (20%) agreed to the assertion and 20 (10%) disagreed to the assertion. It can conclusively be stated that Poor parenting whereby the girls are exposed to erotic scenes of the parents and or other neighbors having sex may compel the girls also to do the same and end up pregnant.

98 (50%) strongly agreed that Peer pressure is one of the major factors leading to early marriage whereby girls are easily deceived into sex by their peers doing the same. 78 (40%), 20 (10%) were not sure and 4 (8%) disagreed. It can therefore imply that Peer pressure is one of the major factors leading to early marriage whereby girls are easily deceived into sex by their peers doing the same.

Effect of Early marriage on the girl child education***Table 7. Showing the effect of early marriage on the girl child education***

<i>Impact of early marriage on the girl child education</i>	<i>Response</i>											
	<i>Strongly agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Not sure</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Strongly</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>The loss of adolescence, the forced sexual relations, and the denial of freedom and personal development attendant to early marriage have profound psychosocial and emotional consequences</i>	147	75	49	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	196	100
<i>Early marriage leads to a girl's loss of mobility and her confinement to the home and to household roles</i>	157	80	39	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	196	100
<i>Teen mothers are very likely to drop out of school because of their low ambitions and dedication to getting an education</i>	176	90	20	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	196	100
<i>Early marriage leads to poor living conditions and the inability to maintain a safe and clean environment for</i>	186	95	10	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	196	100

<i>their newborn child. These young women often end up living on welfare and do not have adequate resources for their child. Overall, these young girls are forced to delay and postpone any plans for their future in order to raise their child</i>												
<i>These young mothers go through many physical changes: from adolescent physical adjustment to having to adapt to the ever-changing shape of her body through the pregnancy and her postpartum figure.</i>	147	75	49	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	196	100
<i>The child of a teen mother is very likely to live in poverty because of its mother's lack of financial resources. Essentially, the birth of this child becomes the beginning of a perpetual cycle in many cases.</i>	157	80	39	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	196	100

Source: primary data 2022

Table 7 shows that 147 (75%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that the loss of adolescence, the forced sexual relations, and the denial of freedom and

personal development attendant to early marriage have profound psychosocial and emotional consequences, while 49 (25%) agreed that the loss of adolescence, the forced sexual relations, and the denial of freedom and personal development attendant to early marriage have profound psychosocial and emotional consequences. None of the respondents disagreed and none was not sure. It implies that indeed, the loss of adolescence, the forced sexual relations, and the denial of freedom and personal development attendant to early marriage have profound psychosocial and emotional consequences

157 (80%) strongly agreed that early marriage leads to a girl's loss of mobility and her confinement to the home and to household roles and 39 (20%) of the respondents agreed and no one disagreed while all the respondents were sure of their respondents. This implies that indeed early marriage leads to a girl's loss of mobility and her confinement to the home and to household roles

176 (90%) of the respondents strongly agreed that teen mothers are very likely to drop out of school because of their low ambitions and dedication to getting an education, while 20 (10%) of the respondents agreed that teen mothers are very likely to drop out of school because of their low ambitions and dedication to getting an education; implying that indeed teen mothers are very likely to drop out of school because of their low ambitions and dedication to getting an education

186 (95%) of the respondents strongly agreed that early marriage leads to poor living conditions and the inability to maintain a safe and clean environment for their newborn child. These young women often end up living on welfare and do not have adequate resources for their child. Overall, these young girls are forced to delay and postpone any plans for their future in order to raise their child, while 10 (5%) of the respondents agreed that indeed early marriage leads to poor living conditions and the inability to maintain a safe and clean environment for their newborn child. These young women often end up living on welfare and do not have adequate resources for their child. Overall, these young girls are forced to delay and postpone any plans for their future in order to raise their child.

Further still, 147 (75%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that these young mothers go through many physical changes: from adolescent physical adjustment to having to adapt to the ever changing shape of her body through the pregnancy and her postpartum figure, while 49 (25%) agreed that these young mothers go through many physical changes: from adolescent physical adjustment to having to adapt to the ever changing shape of her body through the pregnancy and her postpartum figure (Oromo et al., 2023). None of the respondents disagreed and none was not sure. It implies that indeed these young mothers go through many physical changes: from adolescent physical adjustment to having to adapt to the ever-changing shape of her body through the pregnancy and her postpartum figure.

157 (80%) strongly agreed that the child of a teen mother is very likely to live in poverty because of its mother's lack of financial resources. Essentially, the birth of this child becomes the beginning of a perpetual cycle in many cases, 39 (20%) of the respondents agreed and no one disagreed while all the respondents were sure of their respondents. This implies that the child of a teen mother is very likely to live in poverty because of its mother's lack of financial resources. Essentially, the birth of this child becomes the beginning of a perpetual cycle in many cases.

Strategic remedies that used to mitigate teenage pregnancies

Table 8 showing the strategic remedies that used to mitigate teenage pregnancies in Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District

Strategic remedies to mitigate teenage pregnancies	Strongly Disagree		Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Application of such laws as, imprisonment of any person found guilty of negligence,	137	70	39	20	10	5	10	5	-	-	196	100

<i>knowingly and was fully causing a child to become vulnerable to unwanted sex.</i>												
<i>Of significance also is the fact that a number of NGOs have been allowed to operate in areas where early marriage is prevalent. They are now educating the people on the importance of taking girls to school rather than marrying them off to older men.</i>	137	70	39	20	10	5	10	5	-	-	196	100
<i>Through strict intervention of the government there is hope for the children who have been out of school to pursue their lifelong dreams</i>	137	70	39	20	10	5	10	5	-	-	196	100

From the table 8 above, it observed that 137 (70%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that application of such laws as, imprisonment of any person found guilty of negligence, knowingly and was fully causing a child to become vulnerable to unwanted sex can reduce on the rates of teen pregnancies among the students of St. Joseph Secondary School, 39 (20%) agreed, 10 (5%) were not sure and

10 (5%) disagreed. It implies that application of such laws as, imprisonment of any person found guilty of negligence, knowingly and was fully causing a child to become vulnerable to unwanted sex can reduce on the rates of teen pregnancies among the students in Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District (Mark et al., 2023).

137 (70%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that of significance also is the fact that a number of NGOs have been allowed to operate in areas where early marriage is prevalent. They are now educating the people on the importance of taking girls to school rather than marrying them off to older men. This can reduce on the rates of teen pregnancies among the students of St. Joseph Secondary School, 39 (20%) agreed, 10 (5%) were not sure and 10 (5%) disagreed. It implies that of significance also is the fact that a number of NGOs have been allowed to operate in areas where early marriage is prevalent. They are now educating the people on the importance of taking girls to school rather than marrying them off to older men. This can reduce on the rates of teen pregnancies among the students in Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District.

Finally, it can also be observed that 137 (70%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that through strict intervention of the government there is hope for the children who have been out of school to pursue their lifelong dreams among the students of St. Joseph Secondary School, 39 (20%) agreed, 10 (5%) were not sure and 10 (5%) disagreed. It implies that through strict intervention of the government there is hope for the children who have been out of school to pursue their lifelong dreams among the teens in Bwambara Secondary School in Rukungiri District since the majority agreed to the assertion.

Conclusions

Finding reveals that early marriage affects the girl child education in different ways including poverty, child employment, early marriage and loss of interest in education due to financial struggles. The researcher concludes government policies determine

the ability for a girl child to stay in school. The researcher concludes that government plays an important role in reducing teen pregnancies

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that girl child education should be prioritized by all stakeholders NGOs which support girl-child education should be supported by government Free primary and secondary education should be extended to all areas and prioritized.

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