
**INFLUENCE OF EARLY MARRIAGES ON FEMALE STUDENT'S COMPLETION RATES, THE
CASE OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS, BULANGA TOWN COUNCIL,
LUUKA DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at the influence of early marriages on female student's completion rates, the case of secondary schools, Bulanga town council, Luuka district and it was guided by the following objectives; To examine the impact of early marriage practice on female students' school completion in Uganda, to establish the prevalence of early marriage practice on female students' school completion in, Uganda and to establish the influence of students' socio-economic background on their school completion in Uganda. Two different ways of analyzing data were used. First quantitative and quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with the help of charts and tables and excel and presented as percentages and figures, the percentage number of respondents according to descriptive variables, qualitative data also involved explanation direct quotation from the interviewees and description of findings, content analysis techniques were used and presented as themes and ethics. The specific socio-economic activities that the community undertakes to promote school completion and retention activities in Bulanga town council, Luuka District were: School sponsorship as evidenced by 20 (67%) of respondents; Provision of foodstuffs as depicted by 2 (7%) of the principals. Spiritual nourishment of students as evidenced by 5 (16%) and Provision of school security as evidenced by 3 (10%) of respondents. The early marriage problem shows geographical disparity. In some areas the problem is high while in others it is insignificant. Early marriages influence school dropout rates positively. It can only explain approximately 10% of the school dropout problem. In spite of early marriages, school completion rates can be improved if girls can be given an opportunity to complete their education even after marriage.

Key words: early marriages, female student's and completion rates

Background to the Study

Globally, the two most important challenges that concern educationists currently are access and participation in quality education. Research done by (UNESCO2005) postulated that Education is not merely a basic human right, but it is also a lethal weapon against poverty. In fact, education is a critical enabler that provides opportunity to individuals to improve their livelihoods and have their voice heard. In America, Mitra (2011) noted that other education benefits include: improvement of the Learner's health and productivity; fostering participation in civil society and, helping to slow down the spread of HIV/AIDS. Therefore, increasing the number of individuals who go through an education system is critical in leading to economic growth; social and political stability; decline in criminal rate; and, improved social services (Frank et al., 2023).

Despite many barriers hampering individuals to access education, one socially constructed barrier has been child marriages which are also known as early marriage. Thus, its prevalence rate in countries or regions is an indicator of the level of educational access. Early marriage rates vary from one country to another and from one region to another (Joventa et al., 2023). In a survey conducted by Parsons and McCleary-Sills (2014), Raj and Boehmer (2013) among 111 countries including Niger and Bangladesh were found with the highest rates of child marriages at 74% and 75% respectively; while Algeria and Libya had the lowest rates at 2% each.

In Uganda, the United Nations Population Fund UNFPA (2012) found that the vice of early marriages still persists prevalent and lowest among communities with fairly learned percentage of the population while it is highest among those communities with low literacy level (Derrick et al., 2023). Furthermore, Uganda is among countries where the child marriage incidences are high and on the increase despite being outlawed. The report warned that if the trend continues, the tally of such marriages worldwide is likely to grow to 14.2 million by 2020 and set to reach

15.1 million each year by 2030 (Mark et al., 2023).

Therefore, the study on how early marriages on female students' completion rates was conceived against the backdrop of a generally high and rising problem (Vincent & Peter, 2023). Inevitably, the phenomenon of early marriages has negative consequences in terms of educational access and participation for involved students, especially girls. It is prevalent among low communities that are rural based with low literacy level and affect school completion rates. Nyamira North sub-County is within the rural constituency which might demonstrate this phenomenon in the context of free education.

Statement of the Problem

Gender disparities in secondary education continue to be observed despite provision of both free primary and secondary education (Aisha et al., 2023). There are several factors that seem to influence the phenomenon; among them early marriage and pregnancy leading to low completion rates as well as increased dropout rates (Mark et al., 2023). A search on accessible literature yielded limited studies conducted in Uganda addressing the subject. Even then, majority of those studies were national surveys which lack detailed information concerning any region. Considering that being deprived of an education for whatever reason has devastating consequences, such as likely to be left without the ability to make informed choices for the rest of life; limiting women's decision- making in terms of their health, job choices, and other preferences in matters of enrolling in and completing school. It is against this backdrop that the present study sought to determine how significant early marriages are practiced among secondary school students and their impact on school completion rates (John et al., 2023).

Specific Objectives of the Study

- 1. To examine the impact of early marriage practice on female students' school completion in Uganda.*
- 2. To establish the prevalence of early marriage practice on female students'*

school
completion in, Uganda.

3. *To establish the influence of students' socio-economic background on their school completion in Uganda.*

Research Questions

1. *What is the impact of early marriage practice on female students' school completion in Uganda?*
2. *What is the prevalence of early marriage practice on female students' school completion in Uganda?*
3. *What is the influence of students' socio-economic background on their school completion Uganda?*

Methodology

Research design

The present study employed descriptive survey design in which a questionnaire was used as the tool to collect data. Haslam and McGarty (2014), assert that surveys are excellent designs for studying people's stable long- term conditions such as attitudes, opinions, habits or any other variety of educational or social issues. It is for this reason that a survey design will be considered appropriate for the present study on the problem of early marriages and their impact on school completion and dropout rates. However, the survey method was used in a descriptive context to describe the characteristics of the phenomenon since the problem under investigation does not lend itself to manipulation.

Target Population

The study targeted 20 students, 20 teachers and 10 parents associated with Busiro secondary school Luuka District

Sample size and Sampling Procedure

According to Bryman (2008), sampling is the process of selecting a sub set of cases in

order to draw conclusions about the entire population and a sample is a small part of large population, which is thought to be the representative. Kothari (2004) posits that a sufficient sample should be neither expressively larger nor too small but should be optimum. He adds that when respondents are few and possess similar variables then can be considered all hence all the Guidance and counseling teachers and principals were sampled purposively for, they were few.

Table 1: Sample Size of Respondents

Respondent	Population	Sample
Parents	10	3
Students	20	6
Teachers	20	6
Total	50	15

Research Instruments

This present study employed questionnaires as a tool of data collection instruments. A specially designed questionnaire to collect primary data and a statistical data capture to collect secondary data from school records. A questionnaire, according to Kumar (2010) and Vasudevan (2016) is a research instrument consisting of a list of written questions and other prompts used to elicit data from study subjects. The questionnaire is preferred because it is easy to fill, saves time, ensures anonymity and is suitable for eliciting sensitive personal information (Mathers, Fox, &Hunn, 2013).

Data analysis Procedures

Two different ways of analyzing data were used. First quantitative and quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with the help of charts and tables and SPSS and presented as percentages and figures, the percentage number of respondents according to descriptive variables, qualitative data also involved explanation direct quotation from the interviewees and description of findings, content analysis techniques were used and presented as themes and ethics (Nelson et al., 2022).

RESULTS

Response - Return Rate

The number of questionnaires administered were 15 (sample size). Of these 3 represented parents and 6 represented teachers while the other 6 represented the students making it 30%.

Demographic Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative techniques. Calculations of a proportion in the form of percentages and drawing of conclusions from the contents of the questionnaires were done. The study sought to establish personal data from twenty (20) Students, twenty (20) teachers plus ten (10) parents.

Table 1 presents the results.

Table1: Shows the Study Sample

Group	Sampled	Responded	%
Students	20	All	100
Teachers	20	All	100
Parents	10	All	100
Total	50	50	100

Source: Primary Data (2020)

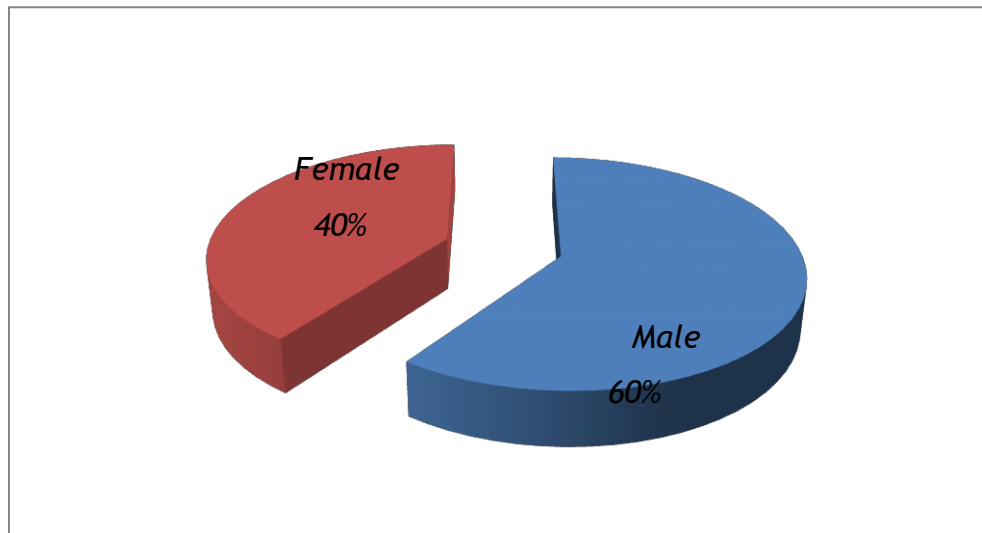
Table 1 shows a turnout of all teachers, parents and students participated in the study.

Respondents Gender

In the questionnaires, students were asked to state their gender. The findings are shown in

Figure 1: Figure1 showing gender of respondents

Respondents gender



Source: Primary Data

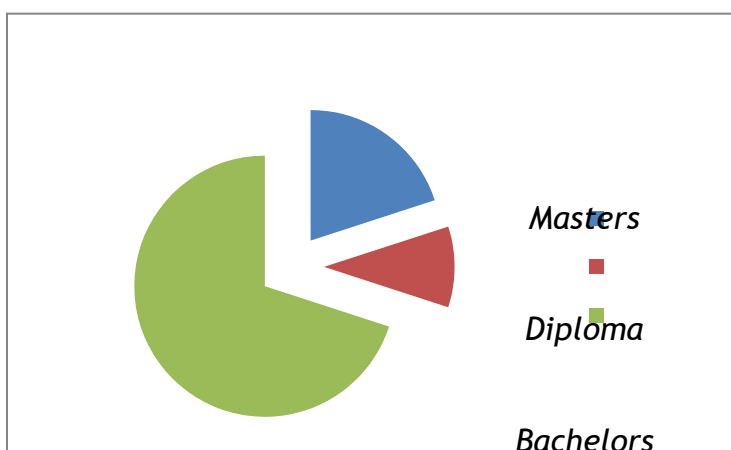
The findings above from the field data indicate that both genders were represented. However, the majority of the respondents were male (60%) while the remaining percentages (40%) were female.

Academic Qualification of Teachers

Teachers were asked to indicate their academic qualification and figure 4.1 presents the findings.

Fig 2: showing academic qualifications of teachers

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION OF TEACHERS



From Figure 2. It can be observed that 20% of the teachers had Masters, 10% Diploma in Education while the majority (70%) had Bachelors in Education. This indicate that the teachers are well trained and have enough experience and content for the subject (geography) and therefore are aware of the importance of using instructional materials in teaching geography.

Years of Experience in Teaching

The teachers were asked to indicate the number of years they had taught in secondary schools. Their responses are as indicated in Figure 3 below;

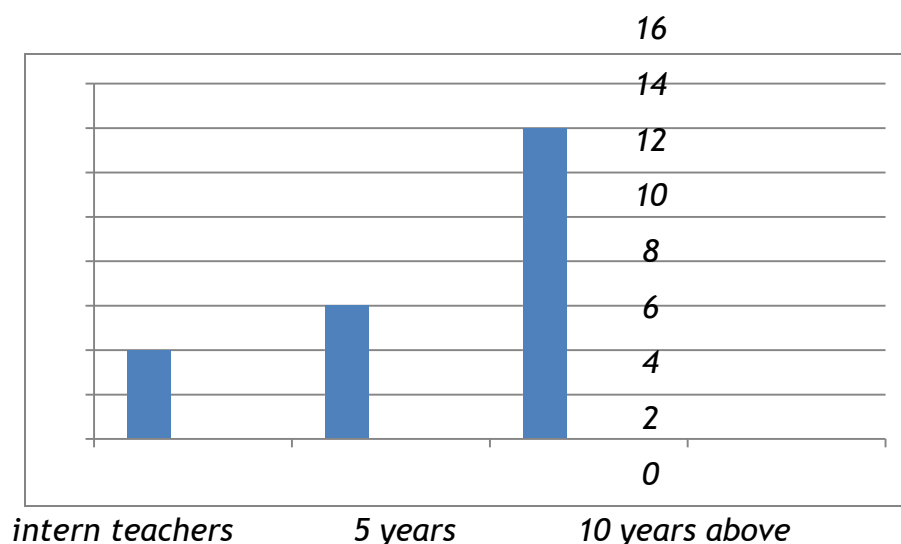


Figure 3: years of experience in teaching geography

The findings indicate that majority of teachers had taught between 1-10 years. This implies that retention of teachers is very high and their experience in counseling of students about sex before marriage and its consequences is high.

Extent of Early Marriage Practice on Female Students' school Completion

This study was set to answer the research question: What is the extent of early marriage practice on female students' school completion in valley view's secondary school, Bulanga town council in Luuka district, Uganda? When the teachers were asked

about the extent of early marriage practice on female students" school completion they responded as follows:

Table 2 Extent of Early Marriage Practice on Female Students' school

Completion		
Response	Frequency	Percent
		20
Normal Extent	4	20
Low Extent	4	20
High Extent	10	50
Very High Extent	2	10
Total	20	100

Source: field research 2022

Most of the teachers, 50% responded that the extent of early marriage practice on female students" school completion is high. Some of the respondents 20% said marriage practice on female students" was of low extent while others saw it as normal and that was 20% while 10% saw it to be very high.

Research evidence on high extent postulated by Chandra-Mouli (2013) has shown that there are many factors that influence early marriages on secondary school female students.

Table 3 Factors for High Extent of Early Marriage Practice on Female Students' School Completion

Response	Frequency	Percent
		7
Customary Law	2	

<i>Early Pregnancy</i>	5	17
<i>Poverty</i>	20	66
<i>Low Literacy</i>	3	10
Total	30	100

Source: field research 2022

The study found that poverty was a leading factor in escalating the high extent of early marriage practice on female students' school completion. It contributed to 66 percent and has been a real problem. These findings are in line with the sentiments of Brooks (2016) who also concurred that poverty contributes to early marriage in many parts of the world. Early pregnancy and low literacy are influencing extent of early marriage as supported by Xu et al. (2013) who revealed that child brides are on the increase and are also less likely to receive proper medical care during pregnancy and delivery than those who give birth later when of age.

Prevalence of Early Marriages on Secondary School female Students

The second question that the study sought to answer was: What is the prevalence of early marriage practice on female students' school completion in Valley view secondary school? Although, studies show that early marriage is a significant problem in Uganda, they also observe that the phenomenon shows geographical variability. It is for this reason that the study sought to find out whether early marriages is a significant phenomenon on secondary school students in Bulanga town council. Consequently, respondents were asked to indicate their perception of the phenomenon on secondary school students in Valley view secondary school. A three-point scale rising in significance from 1-3, otherwise described as low; medium; and, high was employed to evaluate the prevalence of the phenomenon.

Prevalence of Early Marriage on Secondary School female Students

Respondents, N =30

	<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Total</i>
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<i>Respondents</i>	5	5	20	30
<i>Total Score</i>	5	5	20	30
<i>Percentage</i>	17	17	66	100

The results of the present study show that early marriage was rated at a high rate that is 66%. This means that the problem highly significant.

This concurs with the findings of the World Bank survey done by Nguyen and Wodon (2015) reiterated that the issue of child marriage is getting renewed attention among policy makers worldwide. Further the work of Kaye et al. (2007) concurred that many- child brides face pressure from their in-laws and husbands to become pregnant soon after marriage, which can lead to early pregnancy, increased child bearing over time and unhealthy birth spacing. Consequently, although early marriage may have declined, yet it is still a significant problem on secondary school students in Bulanga Town council.

Socio-economic activities undertaken by the community in boosting students school completion and retention (N=30)

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Sponsorship</i>	20	67
<i>Provision of food stuffs</i>	2	7
<i>Spiritual Nourishment</i>	5	16
<i>School security</i>	3	10

Source: primary Data 2022.

The specific socio-economic activities that the community undertakes to promote school completion and retention activities in Bulanga town council, Luuka District were: School sponsorship as evidenced by 20 (67%) of respondents; Provision of foodstuffs as depicted by

2 (7%) of the principals. Spiritual nourishment of students as evidenced by 5 (16%) and Provision of school security as evidenced by 3 (10%) of respondents. These findings are in line with the sentiments of Ojimba (2013) in Nigeria who revealed that there are several factors that can gradually lay the foundation of fallen achievement, which cause discrepancy in academic performance and completion of students and are related to socio-economic status (Culver & Sinclair 2010).

Guidance and counseling teachers' responses on whether community assists students school completion

Do you think community assist students to complete?

	Very Much	Neutral	Much
Guidance and counseling teachers	43.75%	13.2%	43.75%

Source; field research 2022

The study indicated that 87.5% of teachers accepted that the community categorically does assist the school in completing their studies while 13.2% of teachers were neutral to comment as to the school assists in students school completion of schools. Teachers are the learning facilitators as supported by Adhanja et al. (2016) and they have key roles to play in the life of students. Moreover, their attitude towards academic performance is very significant for they equally determine students' success (Yambo, 2012)

Conclusions

On their own, early marriage and unwanted pregnancies cannot explain completely school dropout despite the problem being significant but declining over time. The determinants of early marriage on secondary school female students are various; but the significant ones responsible for school fallout include good academic performance,

unwanted pregnancies, poverty, peer influence, and poor academic performance. This makes the early marriage problem complex.

Although, poor performance on the school completion rate indicator is affected by various factors, the early marriage problem on secondary school female students has a negative influence on school completion rates and that the influence is gender biased.

Recommendations

The early marriage problem shows geographical disparity. In some areas the problem is high while in others it is insignificant. Early marriages influence school dropout rates positively. It can only explain approximately 10% of the school dropout problem. In spite of early marriages, school completion rates can be improved if girls can be given an opportunity to complete their education even after marriage.

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