

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

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Abstract

The study aimed at early marriages and female student's completion rates with a 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. The study targeted 20 students, 20 teachers and 10 parents associated with Busiro secondary school Luuka District. 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. The study findings 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. Therefore, all stakeholders need to look for strategies that can diminish the problem into insignificance levels.

Key words: early marriages, female student and completion rates

Background to the Study

Globally, the two most important challenges facing educators today are access and participation in quality education. Research conducted by (Anthony et al., 2023) assumed that education is not only a basic human right but also a deadly weapon against poverty (S. Godfrey et al., 2023). In fact, education is a critical factor in providing individuals with the opportunity to improve their livelihoods and make their voices heard. Increasing the number of individuals passing through the education system is therefore critical to economic growth; social and political stability; a drop in the penalty rate; and improving social services (Oliver et al., 2023). In Uganda, the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA (2012) found that early marriage is still prevalent and is lowest among communities with a relatively educated percentage of the population, while it is highest among communities with low levels of literacy (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022). In addition, Uganda is among the countries where the incidence of child marriage is high and increasing, even though it is outlawed. The report warned that if the trend continues, the number of such marriages worldwide is likely to increase to 14.2 million by 2020 and reach 15.1 million each year by 2030 (Aisha et al., 2023). More directly, child marriage is rare among highly educated women (Zowena et al., 2023); whereas marriage introduces a new set of responsibilities requiring married women to care for their families and possibly children, which is contrary to those required of educated women (Musaibah et al., 2023). Therefore, the study on how early marriage was conceptualized based on the completion rate of female students was against the background of a generally high and growing problem. The phenomenon of early marriage inevitably has negative consequences in terms of access to education and participation for the students involved, especially girls. It is prevalent in low-lying communities that are

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rural, with low levels of literacy and affect school completion rates. Nyamira North sub-county is located in a rural constituency, which could demonstrate this phenomenon in the context of free education (Christopher et al., 2022).

Statement of the Problem

Gender gaps in secondary education continue to be observed despite the provision of free primary and secondary education (Victoria et al., 2023). Several factors appear to influence the phenomenon; among them early marriage and pregnancy, leading to low completion rates as well as increased school dropout rates (John et al., 2023). A search of the available literature yielded limited studies conducted in Uganda dealing with this topic. Even then, most of these studies were national surveys that lacked detailed information about any region. Considering that being deprived of education for any reason has devastating consequences, such as being likely to remain unable to make informed decisions for the rest of your life (Anthony et al., 2023); limiting women's decision-making regarding their health, employment choices, and other preferences regarding school enrollment and school completion (Mark et al., 2023). It is against this background that this study sought to determine how significant early marriages are practiced among secondary school students and their impact on school completion rates (Micheal 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.

Methodology

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

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quotation from the interviewees and description of findings, content analysis techniques were used and presented as themes and ethics (Nelson et al., 2022).

RESULTS

Table 1 Extent of Early Marriage Practice on Female Students' school

Completion		
Response	Frequency	Percent
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 2 Factors for High Extent of Early Marriage Practice On Female Students'

School Completion

Response	Frequency	Percent
Customary Law	2	7
Early Pregnancy	5	17
Poverty	20	66
Low Literacy	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

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world. Early pregnancy and low literacy are influencing extent of early marriage as supported by (Vincent & Peter, 2023) 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

Table 3: Prevalence of Early Marriage on Secondary School female Students

	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Respondents	5	5	20	30
Total Score	5	5	20	30
Percentage	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 (Aisha et al., 2023).

Table 3: Socio-economic activities undertaken by the community in boosting students school completion and retention (N=30)

Activity	Number of respondents	Percentage
Sponsorship	20	67
Provision of food stuffs	2	7
Spiritual Nourishment	5	16
School security	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 (Francis et al., 2023). 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

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foundation of fallen achievement, which cause discrepancy in academic performance and completion of students and are related to socio-economic status (Culver & Sinclair 2010).

Table 4: 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 (W. Godfrey et al., 2023).

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.

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.

From a societal point of view, girls should be given a chance to gain life skills which make them better mothers and helpful to society.

Recommendations

Although early marriage is a declining problem as a causal factor that affects school completion rate. Nevertheless, it is significant. All stakeholders need to look for strategies that can diminish the problem into insignificance levels.

The early marriage problem shows geographical disparity. In some areas the problem is high while in others it is insignificant.

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