



# International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation

ISSN: 2582-7138

Received: 01-11-2020; Accepted: 03-12-2020

www.allmultidisciplinaryjournal.com

Volume 1; Issue 5; November-December 2020; Page No. 34-36

## Causes of child marriages in Murewa District, Zimbabwe

Shame Mukoka<sup>1</sup>, Virginia Kugara<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Economics, Bindura University of Science Education, Zimbabwe

<sup>2</sup> Police Staff College, Zimbabwe

Corresponding Author: **Shame Mukoka**

### Abstract

This study sought to investigate causes of child marriages in Murewa District, Zimbabwe. A qualitative research approach was used. The sample comprised of people who were married under-age, teachers, and pupils from Murewa High School. The findings of the study revealed that culture and poverty were the major causes of child marriages in Murewa. This paper recommended that girls at risk for early marriage must be empowered with information, skills, safe spaces and support networks. These programs target reducing girls' social isolation and to prepare girls to act on the choices they

must make in life, enhance girls' access to school, offer economic support and incentives for girls and families, offer economic training, support and sometimes incentives that address families' economic reasons for marrying their daughters early, provide alternatives to marriage and increase the value of girls to their families of origin, educating and mobilizing parents and community members and lastly foster an enabling legal and policy framework that seek to protect the girl child.

**Keywords:** Child Marriages, Culture, Poverty

### 1. Introduction

This study sought to determine the causes of child marriages in Murewa District, Zimbabwe. The aim of this paper was to identify the causes with the view of proffering recommendations that would enhance the reduction of child marriages.

### 2. Background of the Study

Early marriages are still a challenge in the world today, especially third world continents such as Africa, Asia, and some parts of Australia and America (Girl Child Network, 2008). Many developmental studies have unveiled that child marriages is counterproductive to the social and economic status of families and the nation as a whole. As defined by Taylor (2013) child marriage is the marrying of children under the age of eighteen. In many cases it is the young girls not boys who marry early. Globally, of the girls affected by child marriage, almost half of them live in South Asia (Malhotra et al., 2011). They are generally poorly educated and live in extremely poor families in rural areas. Child marriage rates differ from country to country. Highest rates are found in West Africa, followed by South Asia, North Africa/Middle East and Latin America (Clifton & Frost, 2011). UNICEF (2013) estimated that internationally, approximately 400 million women aged between 20-49, got into matrimony before reaching the age of 18 years. National Survey (2013) <sup>[5]</sup> reveals that 59 percent of 20-24 year olds in Bangladesh, were married before 18 years.

Although the largest number of child brides is in South Asia, the higher rates of early and forced marriages are in Africa, (UNICEF, 2005), of the 41 nations internationally, 30 are housed in Africa. In Kenya, daughters are viewed as a bridge to greater wealth or pathway to riches. Such a belief is held by communities resident in kajiado and Tharaka provinces where it was observed that early and forced marriage is rampant where girls below age 15 are consistently married off to much older men in exchange for herds of animals (UNICEF, 2012) <sup>[11]</sup>.

According to the Girl Child Network (2008), an estimation of 8 000 girls have been forced into early marriages or were held as sex slaves. According to the Zimbabwean (2014), early marriages have been experienced and supported through cultural practices such as doing casual work in exchange for a wife (kutema ugariri). The practice is also in churches such as Islamic and white garment churches (Johane Marange) in Zimbabwe. According to the UNESCO (2003) <sup>[10]</sup>, free and full consent to marriage is recognised as a human right (UNICEF, 2013). It is, however, a different story in many African countries, with Zimbabwe included, were one out of every three women is married under the age of 18 years (UNESCO, 2003) <sup>[10]</sup>.

Zimbabwe is ranked in the top ten of countries with highest prevalence of child marriages. UNICEF (2013) reports estimated that 31 percent of girls in Zimbabwe are married before their 18th birthday. Statistics in Zimbabwe indicate that one in four women aged 20 to 24 years were married while still children. The multi indicator cluster survey indicates that girls between 15 to 19 years are currently married or in union. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the causes of child marriages in Murewa.

### 3. Review of Related Literature

Most empirical research on child marriage focused on South Asian and African countries where a high percentage of females marry before age 18 years. In contrast, relatively little research on the topic has been conducted in Zimbabwe. In a study by Green, Mukuria and Rubin (2009) <sup>[4]</sup>, it was found that the practice of marrying girls at a young age is also most common in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. However, in the Middle East, North Africa and other parts of Asia, marriage at or shortly after puberty is common among those living traditional lifestyles.

According to the study made by Nguyen and Wodon (2010), in Iran, 4.9 percent of all marriages in Iran were child marriages. Under Iranian law, girls may marry at age 13 and boys at 15, though children under the age of 10 may marry with the approval of their parents and the court. In the more rural, traditional areas of the country, the requirement of court approval for child marriage provides little protection, as conservative judges generally tend to respect the decisions of parents to marry off their young daughters.

Rubin (2010) reveals that all African countries are faced with the challenge of child marriage, a harmful traditional practice that robs girls of their education, their health and their future. In Africa, high rates of child marriage combined with a rapidly growing population could have devastating human and development consequences.

According to the study by Amin and Bajracharya (2011) <sup>[1]</sup> in Iran, the Iranian Shariah also practice *muta'a* marriage, which is a marriage for minutes, or a temporary arrangement allowing older men to marry young girls by performing a religious ritual that takes less than a minute to complete. While much of the Islamic world has abandoned the practice of *muta'a* marriage, the Iranian Shia regime both accepts and vigorously promotes temporary marriage. In practice, *muta'a* marriage is an attempt to legitimize child prostitution; it is not uncommon for *muta'a* marriages to last for a period of hours or less. Child marriage is a common traditional and state sanctioned practice in Iran.

In a study made by Clifton (2012) in Afghanistan, more than 2000 women and girls in Afghanistan attempted suicide each year by setting themselves on fire as a result of early marriage and violence. Afghan civil law expressly prohibits child marriage, but a lack of widespread legal knowledge, poor recordkeeping, and conflicting customary laws severely limit the effectiveness of the official prohibitions. Under the Afghan Civil Code, the minimum age for marriage is 16 for girls, but the male guardian of a girl younger than 16 may contract for her marriage.

Warner and Glinski (2012) <sup>[12]</sup> in Egypt, made an estimation of 17 percent of Egyptian marriages involve brides aged 18 or below, with 2 percent involving children under age 15. Lee (2012) reports that some girls have been married as many as 60 times by the time they turn 18 years of age and most of these marriages last only a few days or weeks.

Another study by Bhagat (2016) <sup>[2]</sup>, in the same country, concludes that the smaller tribes and tradition play a crucial role in child marriages. According to the 2014 census in Uganda, of 55 percent of its population 3 out of 10 Ugandan girls have their first child before their 18th birthday. More than one third of its population marry before the age of 18. The census report shows that child marriage is likely to be the cause of the death of more than half babies born in that period.

In a study from the Wood and Ross-Kerr, (2011) <sup>[13]</sup> in Ethiopia, child marriages for the girls between the age of 15 and 17 has increased. This is because girls are seen as an economic burden they are treated as someone else's asset as they are given to someone in the marriage.

National Survey (2013) <sup>[5]</sup> in Bangladesh, posits that the prevalence of child marriages is still high 64 percent of currently aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18. This is despite the fact that the minimum legal age of marriage for females is 18. In a study by Suresh Lai in the year 2015 in Kenya, about 23 percent of Kenyan girls married before the age of 18 and 4 percent are married the age of 15. Kenya had the 20th highest absolute number of child bride in the world. UNICEF (2012) <sup>[11]</sup>, established that early marriages are also being common world-over, but it remains rampant in Latin America and Caribbean as well as in Asia). Citing the rate at which the rate of occurrences, it is estimated that if no strategies are adopted, approximately 100 million young girls below fifteen year will be early married by the year 2020. The empirical review shows that child marriage is common in Africa and Asia and lately the media has been flooded with child marriage stories in Zimbabwe. In fact, Zimbabwe has been identified as one of the countries with a high dominance of child marriages. In light of this, the researcher sought to investigate causes of child marriages in Zimbabwe.

### 4. Materials and Methods

This section explores the methodology applied in the study to determine the causes of child marriages in Murewa District, Zimbabwe. This study, adopted a qualitative research approach, where primary data were gathered using interviewing method. Data were analysed using content and thematic techniques, guided by the case study research strategy and exploratory research design.

### 5. Findings of the Study

Most of the respondents indicated that poverty and cultural beliefs are the causes of child marriages in Murewa District, Zimbabwe. All respondents indicated that child marriages deprives the victims of their childhood and a future, citing that child marriages exposes the victims to increased maternal and infant health risks if they get pregnant. Furthermore, the effects that were determined are that of greater exposure to HIV and AIDS.

### 6. Recommendation

Based on the findings, this paper proposes the following recommendations:

Empower girls at risk for early marriage with information, skills, safe spaces and support networks. These programs target reducing girls' social isolation and to prepare girls to act on the choices they must make in life.

Enhancing girls' access to school and improve the quality of education. Quality schooling provides a viable alternative to marriage for some girls by providing girls with social

networks and raising their expectations of their own lives. Weak schools can contribute to parents' view that marriage is the best place for their daughters. The expectation that girls will marry early undermines the commitment to schooling. Providing economic support and incentives for girls and families. Economic training, support and sometimes incentives that address families' economic reasons for marrying their daughters early provide alternatives to marriage and increase the value of girls to their families of origin.

Educating and mobilizing parents and community members. By educating and mobilizing parents and communities - those who decide when and whom girls will marry-to change social norms relating to expectations of girls and their marriage prospects. These programs hope to delay the age of marriage. Fostering an enabling legal and policy framework. Most countries, even those with high levels of child marriage, have established legal minimum ages at marriage. Policy advocacy to clarify, strengthen and enforce such laws is needed.

Amendment of the Law: The combined strength of the women's and children's movements should be directed towards the practice of child marriage, a tradition which constitutes one of the most severe forms of child abuse. Litigation and the constitutional making process can be used to ensure that there is harmonization of laws, and that the Customary Law Marriages Act specifies marriage age in line with other statutes such as the Marriages Act. Introducing laws to raise the legal age of marriage to 21 years, though in contrast to the agreed in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child would be another useful legislative step.

## 7. References

1. Amin G, Bajracharya A. Population Dynamics and their impact on adolescents in the escape region, 2011.
2. Bhagat. India's Child Brides and Youngest Mothers: Beyond and Popular Perception: India Journal of Human Development. 2016; 3(2):48-53.
3. Gcn Study Desk. Global education first initiative, accelerating progress to. Nigeria; a Report Series to the special envoy for global education (Washington Dc: Good Planet Foundation, 2014-15.
4. Green J, Mukuria L Rubin O. Non-consensual sex in marriage programme (Ncsm), London, 2009.
5. National Survey. Child Marriage in Bangladesh: Findings from National Survey, 2013. <https://www.plan.international.org>
6. Nguyen N, Wodon Q. Child Marriage and Education, 2012.
7. Republic of Zimbabwe. The Constitution of the Republic Of Zimbabwe amendment number 20. Government Printers, 2013.
8. Suresh. The Uncharted Passage: Girls' Adolescence in the Developing World, the Population Council, New York, 2015.
9. The Zimbabwean. Give us Books not Husbands, 2014. <https://www.thezimbabwean.co/2014/08/roots-launches-not-ripe-for>.
10. UNESCO. Zimbabwe Recognise Role of Education in addressing Child Marriage and Early Pregnancy, 2003. <https://www.en.unesco.org>.
11. UNICEF. Ending Child Marriages, 2012. <https://www.unicef>.
12. Warner Glinski. Forced marriage, forced sex, the perils of childhood for girls', Gender and Development, 2012,

6(3).

13. Wood B.R & Ross-Kerr T. Out of Wedlock, Into School: Combating Child Marriage in Ethiopia (London: The office of Gordon and Sarah Brown, 2011-2012.