

The Obscurity of Early Marriage in Binga District, Zimbabwe: Implications on Human and Social Capital Development of the Girl Child.

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ABSTRACT

Girls, as mothers of tomorrow have been seen to be in obscurity in the rural areas in Binga District. Early marriages have swept in popularity submerging girls in morass. The girls shun school at a tender age because of getting into marital affairs while they are still immature in body structure and in mind. The statistical data or records at the District hospital of Binga shows that, more than 30% of girls less than 18 years visit the maternity ward and most of them have some birth complications. Using the information mined by the authors during the research, the article will unveil the major causes and impact of the untimely marriages of girls in Binga District at a global scale. These early marriages occur in the society out of social dispensation, traditional rituals and belief henceforth, contributing dangerously to social arenas. The socio-economic life of these girls is not in tandem to what is required in human lives and most of them are in abject poverty. On the other side of the coin, the article focuses on the steps laid by the Government to curb and mitigate the phenomenon which is under review. Having been made some attempted steps to round off the rampant of early marriage, the question still rumbles and quivers as to why early marriage is prevalent in rural areas. Over and above that, the paper highlights the implications of early marriages on human and social capital development of the girl child.

Key words: obscurity, socio-economic development, poverty, Zimbabwe.

1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (1) To find out the causes of early marriages.
- (2) To identify the challenges faced by the girls in their marriages.
- (3) To find out the strategies or measures meant to mitigate early marriages in Binga District Zimbabwe.

2 INTRODUCTION

The issue of humorous traditional practices which had hampered and hampered the health of a girl child including early marriages, calls upon the attention of international and National interventions in the traditional societies, including Zimbabwe's rural areas. The reviewed study indicates that there is no in-depth anthropological study on early marriages and its effects on girls' education in rural

Zimbabwe including the study areas. In this regard, this study is targeted at filling this research gap. The main aim or agenda of this study is to identify the causes and effects of early marriages on girl child's education as well as its implication on human and social capital development of the girl child in the District of Binga, Zimbabwe, where early marriages is the order of the day and girls participation in formal education is very low by National as well as regional standards. The major interest in dealing with the issue at hand goes back to our personal, intellectual and cultural backgrounds. We were born in Sinakatenge "Sizemba" a village in Luunga ward 1 in Binga District and brought up in a peasant and community where the practices of early marriages is most common. The fact that local socio-cultural customs negatively affects females' participation in rural primary formal education; this attracted the researchers to examine issues pertaining to early marriages and its effects

on girls' social capital development with a wider theoretical scope and in-depth empirical investigation.

3 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

This research is a collection of the impacts cases and effects of early marriages in the rural area of Binga in Zimbabwe, a case of Tyunga and Luunga ward 1. In this research, researchers illustrate the cumulative impact of the early marriages in rural areas which had left a girl child in obscurity. The girl child had entered a cave which has no exit at all. The fact that each and every year five to six girl child at each primary and secondary schools drop out because of teenage pregnancy, gave a rising concern to summon the researchers to come at the knee point to make an informed perspective through this writing towards the effects of early marriages. The reported cases of early marriages are much more in rural areas as compared to those that are reported in urban areas. The girls in Africa live in the environment, societies and cultures that are diverse. Yet their disadvantaged situation is basically similar wherever they might live. They are more likely to be born into discrimination, be undervalued in comparison to their brothers, be exploited and considered as transitory members of their families and serve as helpers to their overburdened mothers. The working definition of "early marriage" is taken as marriage before or during adolescence. In this study, the concept of early marriage refers to a situation where children under the age of 18 enter into marriage. Human rights discourse define child marriages as a marriages involving a spouse under 18 years of age [1]. These definition are in line with the current family law of Zimbabwe, which legislate against marriage before the age of 18 for both boys and girls.

Education is an important social objective of any society, the role which is played by education contributes a lot to the intellectual growth and development of the society which have come a point of common concern in both developed and developing countries [2]. It is an indispensable prerequisite for developing the capacity of participation ([3], [4] and Trufat 1999). Education enables individuals and the society to make an all-rounded participation in the development process by acquiring knowledge abilities and skills. It also plays a role in promoting respect for human rights and democratic values creating the condition for equality, mutual understanding and co-operation among people. Of all this, girls are deprived of the importance of education as long early marriages remains a common norm and practice in rural areas.

4 METHODOLOGY

As researchers, we adopted qualitative approach in carrying out the research on early marriages. Much effort has been made to capture the voices of girls and to find out their views on their access to education, medical care and treatment. During the process, some transect walk across the villages in Binga rural areas were used coupled with

observation. Face to face interviews could be made in public gathering or community gatherings during GMB maize hand outs which gave us a direct convincing concern of the most abused girls. These interviews revealed the attitude, belief and perception as well as understanding the subject under the review. The photo graphs were also used with the consent of the owner and privacy was also promoted in the due course to preserve the ethics of the society. However, it is interesting to note that the use of questionnaires were also used in conjunction with the triangulation process in which the researchers collected the data or information in various points to investigate the phenomenon at a different angles of elevation. The group discussion forum and public meeting dialogue were also used as methods of collecting the data on early marriages. The tables and graphs were used to show various impacts generated by the above phenomenon under review.

5 FACT FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Causes of early marriages.

Binga is a rural District in Zimbabwe with a majority of people living in rural areas with bad communication network and harmful traditional practices, including early marriage which is affecting girls and women in traditional setting of Binga. The recent study shows that poverty and illiteracy are the main causes for early marriage and its continuances. This is supported by [5] Teshome Segni (2002) who said that a multitude of issues created by early marriages are increasingly associated with poverty and illiteracy. In many traditional setting, the poor woman use early marriage of daughters as a strategy for reducing their own economic vulnerability shifting the economic burden related to a daughter's care to the husband's family. The married young girls in rural areas are at risk of being poor and will manifest most of these characteristics of poverty. These girls will find that their mothers were also married early hence marriage becomes the only option available to them. Most of girls and boys in rural areas lack discipline and control as they indulge into light activities for instance taking substances like alcohol and cigarettes accompanied by un-restricted interaction with opposite sex. Lack of sex education, weak family relation, sexual abuse, and competition in love affairs, promissory marriage and child's environment were among the causes mentioned by the students during focused group discussions. However, the underlying motives behind early marriages among the peasant communities are briefly presented below.

In general, economic and social structures are the major driving forces which increase the trends of early marriages in rural areas in Zimbabwe. The main reason why parents want their daughters to marry early is premarital transactional sex, meaning that girls and young women engage in sexual relation in return for money and material gifts from boys and men [6]. A man who is not a relative would never give money or gifts to a girl without the expectation of sex in return. Through the research, early marriage has been proved

Table 1. shows the motives of early marriage in Luungaand Tyunga ward in Binga District.

Motives	Brief description
Economic motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Family size and poverty-the poor families will need to arrange an early marriage to their children to reduce the number of children in the family. Ø The need for wealth- poor families which does not own livestock but with daughters will force their daughter to get married earlier so as to amass wealth from the rich families.
Cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø To get land- some families exchange their daughters to other families to get land for agriculture. Ø Girls' security-to protect girls from the danger of pre-marital sex and to ensure that girls are married while they are still virgin. The parents believe that early marriage will provide safety to their daughter with male protection. Ø To maintain gender roles-so that the girls persist with the motherly duties and to learn to be submissive to their marital families. Ø Sexual pleasure-by young boys and girls, to experiment what they see to their parents on the bed. If the system continues, it leads to early pregnancy to girls. Ø To extend family relationship- In Tonga culture, relationship is strengthened by marriage.

to be attributed to poverty and gendered economic disparities that motivate girls to begin transactional sexual activity at an early age, leading parents to favour early marriage as a risk-reduction measure hence, educational opportunities are therefore closed off to girls before marriage, as a result of which early marriage becomes the only culturally approved pathway that allows girls to present themselves to others as a self-sufficient agent. Mobile false prophets contribute a lot in early marriages as they fake girls to cast evil spirits around their bodies of girls in exchange of sex, at the end they impregnate these girls. In other ways, early marriage is reinforced by cultural and religious concepts surrounding the transition from childhood to adulthood.

5.2 Effects of early marriages on girls

5.2.1 Educational consequences

Early marriage is a powerful deterrent to girls' education in Tyunga and Luunga ward schools. It wedge young girls' educational and other life opportunities and seriously obstructs their personal and social development, it dwindles girls opportunity to acquire survival skills which enables them to escape poverty related conditions. One respondent (a girl) during in-depth interview said that

“Iswe tubana bachisimbi tujana buyumuyumu maningi kuti tweendelele

Anembo achikolo na ndamitisigwa amulombe, ngatway-owa kusekwa

Abamwi besu” (As a girl child we find it difficult to go to school when

We are conceived, our friends laughs at us)

The above words shows that girls are always in dilemma in as far as early marriages are concerned in rural areas; their future is blocked and soiled as they shun continuing with their education. Tarvinga and Muchinako (2016) attested that most of the girls are getting married at tender age and they have given more value to marriage than education, some of these girls are under educational sponsorship but still they leave school. Early arrange marriages is one of the traditional practice which was realised in these two wards of Luunga and Tyunga, most girls in secondary schools (Tyunga, Sizemba and Sinamusanga) had their parents given token-money from their boyfriends while in form

2 and 3. And these are the same pupils who fails to complete their ‘O’ level as they get married before writing their final pen (examinations).

5.2.2 Health consequences

The health risk attributed to early pregnancy and child birth as a result of early marriage are copious and these contribute to high rates of maternity and child mortality. In Luunga and Tyunga ward, early marriages pose many dangers to young girls' reproductive health and psychological well-being. Though there are no cases of obstetric fistula reported so far but birth complications and miscarriages are rife and ubiquitous. The system of girls having sexual relations with many boys and men has exposed them to sexual related diseases; some are now succumbing to the ravages of HIV & AIDS. The following were shared by the respondent during the interview;

“Bana bachisimbi bali kujatwa bulwazi bwa Nkwe-lakasasa abasilisi

Muciindi chakupimwa buula kuchibbadela”.During pregnancy check up

By the nurses at the clinic, most girls are tested positive with HIV & AIDS.

In general, the health problems related to early marriages shows that girls' rights to health are interfered and desecrated. Health life is an important ingredient to a girl child. Biologically, teen pregnancy leads toobliteration of reproductive system to a girl child which amount to infertility impacted by birth complications.

5.3 Social and economic consequences

In traditional setting, girls suffer from reduced self-identity and opportunity for receiving basic life survival skills which could be a means for a better life. Young girls that are married remain in subservient and acquiescent roles into the family where they are married performing domestic overload wifely duties beyond their capacity. Many young men have been unable to provide for the children they father [6]. Some girls return to live with their birth families and are seen to be financial burden to the same parents who allowed or pressured them to marry early in the first place. As the Tonga adage goes “Mwana uleegwa kuku joka”, (A child is given advices after bad thing has happened upon them)

In most cases girls are married by men who are older than them twice or thrice and this limits their say in making personal decision. Lack of personal decision making on sexual and reproductive matters possibly result in young married girls being pre-occupied with child care and household management. Young married girls have no time to rest during rainy season as they will be in the field tilling the land for agricultural purposes.

5.3.1 Linking social media and technology to early marriages in rural areas

Social media and technology has been proved to be one of the fuelling factors for early marriage to girls. The advent of new technology particularly phones and internet has brought more harm than good. Boys and girls communicate through WhatsApp when they want to see each other during the night behind the knowledge of the parents. This exposes young boys and girls to wild behaviour which is risk to their well-being. Wealth men take advantage to buy phones to young girls who are pliable to sexual abuse leading to early pregnancy. Social media in rural areas has been abused up to zenith level, reverting to traditional way of communication can be better. Technology has ushered new things which had eroded cultural practice such as Nkoolola, an initiation where girls received teaching on proper behaviour and respect for self and others from the traditional female teacher. This puberty rite in Tanzania is known as Unyago, mkole or msondo [7], [8].

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Awareness raising campaign against early marriages: Awareness raise should be conducted in rural areas to drum up the message on the effects of early marriages and replace it with education for a girl child.

Discarding harmful cultural practices: Communities to be sensitised on harmful cultural practises which are injurious to girls, And to ensure that such practices are withdrawn as they intercept children's education in various ways.

Stakeholders engagement: There is need to engage the stakeholders and players to debate more about the issue of early marriages.

Researches: Intensification of researches on early marriages to inform the duty bearers about the hidden issues on early marriages and how to tackle them.

7 CONCLUSION

The major lesson from the study was that early marriages in rural areas have affected social and economic lives of a girl child negatively. Though, the society has norms and values which are observed by everyone in the community, these needs to be checked and verified on their gravitations on how they affect and injure girl child's lives negatively. From the study, it was clear that modernity, risk behaviours

of girls, pressure from parents, weak family relations and harmful cultural practices were among the firebrands mentioned to have attenuated early marriages in rural areas, Binga District. Above all, the Court of law should ensure that the perpetrators of violence against a girl child should be brought behind bars, so as to put off the blazing inferno of early marriages in rural districts, Zimbabwe.

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