



Perceived Effects of Early Marriage on Academic Achievement among Girls in Oyo State

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Abstract. The research looked at how early marriage affect girls-child academic progress in Oyo State. The study design approach used was a descriptive survey. To direct the investigation, two research hypotheses were developed. Using simple random sample procedures, 200 teachers were chosen from each of the Akinyele and Oyo East Local Governments in Oyo State to participate. The responder was asked to complete a self-designed questionnaire titled "Perceived Implication of Early Marriage on Girl-Child Academic Achievement," using a 4-point Likert scale. Cronbach's test result was 0.76. The t-test statistical method data was examined. The first hypothesis findings indicated that male and female teachers' perceptions of girl-child marriage courses are not significantly different from one another, and the second hypothesis results, based on the experiences of the teachers, indicated that there is no significantly different effect of girl-child marriage on students' academic achievement. Based on these it was recommended that, the public and other governmental organizations should raise awareness of the elements that have been shown to encourage girl-child early marriage and the impact this has on academic attainment. Administrators in the government and the society at large should support the needs of girl children and keep them safe from abuse in order to guarantee that their rights are upheld. There must to be established guidelines and norms to discourage individuals from forcing young girls into marriage. The government should make every effort to ameliorate the existing economic climate, since doing so would end the poverty that drove many young girls into marriage at a young age.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Girl-Child, Early Marriage, Perception

1. Introduction

The institution of marriage is ageless; it is the exquisite union of two lives, with each thread standing for a common goal, a shared laugh, and Calantha's hope for the future. Calantha. (2023). He goes on to say that marriage is an unfathomable commitment and a journey full of experiences that shape a lifetime. Matrimony is more than simply a legal agreement; it's a joint journey on which love serves as the north star, understanding as the map, and trust as the compass.

Initiated in every culture, marriage is a process via which people choose their mates. The period on which male and female procreate in accordance with well-defined and accepted societal standards is controlled by an ancient institution. Another way to define marriage is as an institution that formally unites a man and a woman to become one body and one soul in order to fulfill a legal obligation. According to Kendall (2017), marriage is an institution that unites individuals of various cultural and religious backgrounds via a mutual reliance on one another in order to create a household. As defined by Haviland, Prins, McBride, Wathrath (2011), marriage is a relationship in which one or more men either male or female and one or more women either female or male are acknowledged by society as having an ongoing claim to the privilege of having sex.

Underage marriage, also known as child marriage or early marriage, is a practice in which two people who are under the age of majority (usually 18 years old) enter into a legally recognized marriage. This is considered a form of child exploitation and abuse, as it can have severe and long-lasting consequences for the child or young person involved. (UNICEF 2020).

Marriages of this kind are typical in poorer nations. "Early marriage" and "girl-child marriage" are terms

that are often used interchangeably in UN resolutions and publications, with little to no differentiation between them. Some refer to "early marriage, including Girl-child marriage," meaning that while it includes girl-child marriage, it also covers circumstances that do not fall under the definition of child marriage, such as unions in which one or both partners are under the legal age of 18 but have reached majority status according to state law. (2014, UNICEF).

Furthermore, as per the Article on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, any marriage involving a child under the age of eighteen is referred to as a child marriage. It is defined by UNICEF (2005) as both official and informal partnerships in which a girl lives with a partner as if she is married before turning eighteen. It may also refer to any marriage entered into before the girl is physically, physiologically, and mentally prepared to assume the obligations of marriage and childrearing and occurs before the age of eighteen. A number of International Conventions and other instruments, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriage, 1964, view child marriage as a violation of human rights and forbid it.

Concern has been raised about the impact of girl-child marriage on a girl's academic achievement, particularly in emerging African nations. UNICEF field report in 2022 explained that there are 18.5 million school-age children in Nigeria, with over 10 million of them being girls. One of the biggest barriers to education for girls in the current time is early marriage. It has significant negative effects on children's social development, including low educational attainment, poor health, and restricted personal freedom. Girls who are coerced into early marriages have their rights violated, and this has a significant negative impact on their lives due to significantly reduced opportunities for further education. Furthermore, Nguyen & Wodon (2012) demonstrate that the gender gap in schooling may be lessened if a kid is well married and early pregnancies are avoided.

Many authors have proposed causes for early marriage, not only in Nigeria but also in other parts of the world. For example, Hery, Anni, Mas'udah, Fery and Laily (2023) found that low education, financial necessities, young marriage culture, arranged marriages, teenage premarital sex, and poor religious understanding are the causes of early marriage in Indonesia. Several reasons may contribute to early

marriage in Nigeria, including: The socioeconomic status of the parents, particularly the lower-class parents who believe that their female child is an economic burden and that getting her married at young age is the best way to deal with the problem. According to Nour (2009) and Asad (2013), some families see child marriage as a way to protect their daughter's finances and lessen the financial load the kid places on the family. Early marriage or girl-child marriage might be a way to protect the youngster from sexual abuse. According to Nour's (2006) perspective, parents believe that child marriage provides their daughters with a feeling of security from sexual misbehaviour and STDs. Some religious, most notably Islam, supported girl-child marriages or early marriages via sharia law. This is because the Sharia permits marriages between girls and boys who have reached puberty. This might be one of the causes of the prevalence of this kind of marriage among elites as well as illiterates in the northern region of Nigeria.

According to Jimoh 2003, quoted in Mustapha, Aliyu, and Ahmad (2021), women were treated with disrespect and dishonor in most traditional societies across the world, particularly in developing nations like the northern part of Nigeria, while male children were given more importance and honour because they were thought to be the ones to uphold the family name. Therefore, masculine children were given more empowering care than female children.

In their study, "Effect of Early Marriage on the Academic Performance of the Girl-Child in Katsina State," Mustapha, Aliyu, and Ahmad (2021) disclosed that early marriage was caused by a number of factors, such as the need to protect young girls from harm, the pressures of peers and families, the desire to control female behaviour, sexuality, wars, civil conflicts, and sociocultural and religious values.

Child marriage not only deprives girls of their fundamental rights to education, development, and complete childhood, but it may also pave the path for other violent crimes (Boyce, Brouwer, Triplett, Servin, Magis-Rodriguez, and Silverman, 2018). Many females divorce during the first year of marriage due to emotional problems they were not prepared for (Strat, Dubertret, and Foll, 2017). Early marriage presents difficulties for girls in terms of continuing their education and increases the likelihood that they would become victims of marital rape, harassment, and domestic abuse (Pearson and Speizer, 2011 quoted by Bagong, Rahma, Medhy, Nadia, and Siti (2023)

Girls who are not educated may not have the chance to get a decent career and may thus be financially impoverished. This was likely the reasoning behind Q

& A (2013)'s assertion that inadequate education may lead to early marriage and subsequent poverty among female children. According to Q and A, this puts females at greater risk of living in poverty for a long time, particularly if their spouses pass away, leave them, or divorce them. According to Gaffney-Rhys (2011), compared to women who marry later, girls in girl-child marriages are often much younger than their husbands, become widowed earlier in life, and may experience related social and economic difficulties for a longer period of their lives.

In his research, Oguejioffor (2020) examined the effects of early marriage on girls' education in Abakaliki. He concluded that early marriage has a negative impact on a girl's academic performance, leads to school dropout, stifles her desire to pursue an education, and ultimately prevents her from reaching her full academic potential.

Early girl-child marriage is widespread in Nigeria; according to Afri-Dev-Info (2015), the country ranks 10th in Africa with a high rate of child marriage (43% out of 20). The Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) asserts that child marriage has an impact on a child's physical development, with consequences including early pregnancy, dropping out of school, health problems, domestic abuse, a lack of empowerment, and social isolation. One of the most agonizing and unsettling issues in Nigeria is child marriage, a practice where parents compel their young children, particularly their females, to marry, sometimes to a complete stranger.

The school is the most significant institution outside of the home that helps young people get socialized into all facets of the tasks and responsibilities of adults. Longer schooling has been linked to a number of benefits, such as later marriage ages, reduced fertility, healthier and better-educated offspring, and economic growth. However, early marriage always denies school-age children their entitlement to the education necessary for their personal growth, adult readiness, and meaningful participation in the future upheaval of their family and society.

When a girl's education is stopped to prepare for marriage, her personal growth is halted. The neighborhood and the next generation are also impacted in addition to the girl. Female labour force participation is impacted by child marriage in the area of returns when they are actively working, claim Klasen and Pieter (2012). This is because the rise in unpaid chores might be attributed to a lack of knowledge. However, Chaabn and Cumingham (2011) went on to say that the decline in female labour force participation has a detrimental impact on both women

and their families as well as the economic progress of civilizations. Married ladies may find themselves practically and legally barred from continuing their education.

The ability to enable and guarantee the successful exercise of other human rights is the fundamental component of the rights to health and education. Early marriage feeds the poverty and illiteracy cycle. Girls who are married off as children often drop out of school, which limits their chances of learning and developing the skills necessary to launch their own business or get a job. Low levels of education and employment are therefore more likely as a result (UNICEF, 2011). Many lower-class families do not see their daughters' education as an investment because they believe the prospective benefits are too distant. Many believe that a girl's education will only help her husband's family, not her own.

There is a maxim that, "when you educate a woman, you educate a nation." Nevertheless, some parents also think that girls do not need an education for their responsibilities as spouses and mothers, that education destroys traditional norms, and that education pushes females to reject tradition. Even at the most basic levels of education, education not only prepares students for the workforce and for specific jobs, but it also fosters social skills and aptitude that open doors to crucial resources that reduce poverty. People develop the social skills and personal qualities necessary to access opportunities and resources, build social networks, and ask for help when they need it in the future via their interactions with others. Low labour force participation raises a family's poverty level and reduces the household's contribution to the society's economic development. A person's capacity to contribute to society is limited by poverty, and they are unable to acquire education. Another maxim states that "knowledge is wealth." Because of the - girl-child lack of education, they are in poverty that restricted them to access information. Early marriage has an impact on girls as well since it deprives them of the fundamental skills needed to raise and raise a kid, and it also always causes poverty in the offspring. Additionally, poverty is the architect that tempts girls to repeat their parents' mistakes by encouraging an increase in early marriages. According to Khanna, Verma, and Weiss (2013), denying a girl the chance to study reduces both her chances of finding work and her capacity to acquire practical skills.

A girl's education and aspirations for the future are destroyed by marriage; education provides the formal and fundamental skills needed to contribute to society. Acquired skills boost self-determination and are

crucial to one's professional success; they have a profound effect on both the economy and the development of the person. But a child's ability to succeed in their social network is restricted by a lack of knowledge, which has a psychological effect that traumatizes them later in life.

To curb the menace of early marriage which has contributed immensely to poor academic attainment of girl-child the following solution should be put in place:

- The State House of Assembly may help address the problems associated with girl-child marriage by passing legislation prohibiting it and ensuring that the branch of government responsible for enforcing it takes the law seriously, protecting women's right to an education.
- All branches of the government should also work harder to inform parents and other community members about the detrimental effects of girl-child marriage, such dropping out of school, and to encourage them not to do so in order to help their daughters complete their education.
- Community members should be taught how to determine how many children they can support so that their inability to care for these kids won't result in the exploitation of young girls for financial gain. The government should also pass legislation that would penalize parents who give birth to children they are unable to support.
- The government need to provide impoverished families access to economic possibilities so they can support their kids especially their daughters and prevent school dropouts caused by girl-child marriage. Non-governmental groups should also provide scholarships to support girls' education and provide their basic requirements so that their parents won't have to shoulder as much financial stress. Parents will stop marrying off their daughters at a young age as a result of this.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In most developing countries, particularly in Akinyele and Oyo East Local Government Areas of Oyo State, girls do not receive the same treatment as other children in terms of receiving a proper education and contributing to the development of their environment. The activities of both literate and illiterate people who are involved in this menace have not improved, despite the United Nations, government, and some non-

governmental organizations failing to offer a solution to the problem of girl-child marriage. The intellectual, social, and psychological development of girls in the communities of Akinyele and Oyo East has been severely hampered by this issue. If this issue is not resolved, girls' worth will be zero, and they will be prevented from making the most of their innate abilities, which may have led to greater national progress. Even though a number of academics have studied ways to stop the problem of girl-child marriage in various parts of the nation, Akinyele and Oyo East still need a lot of work, which is likely why the crisis persists.

Thus, the purpose of the study is to examine the underlying causes of girl-child marriage, the effects these marriages have on the academic performance of the daughters, and potential solutions.

The following hypotheses guided the study:

- There will be no significant difference in the perception of the causes of Girl Child Marriage as perceived by male and female secondary teachers
- There will be no significant difference in the effect of girl-child marriage on their academic achievement based on the teacher's teaching experience.

2. Methodology

The survey technique was used as the research strategy for the investigation.

The population of the study consist of all secondary teachers in Akinyele and Oyo East Local Government area of Oyo State.

The study sample consists of 400 teachers, of which 200 each were chosen randomly from five secondary's Akinyele and five secondary schools from Oyo East. The study's tool, called PIEMGCAA: Perceived Implication of Early Marriage on Girl-Child Academic Achievement in Oyo State, was utilized to gather pertinent data. The researchers produced this after reviewing relevant material. The questionnaire was split into two sections: Section A included demographic information about the respondents, and Section B addressed how early marriage was perceived to affect girls' academic achievement in Oyo State. Ratings on a 4-point scale were used, with Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (SA) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1.

The test-retest method was used to determine reliability of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was shown by the correlation coefficient of 0.76.

Data obtained were subjected to t-test statistical analysis.

3. Result and Discussion

Hypothesis 1

There will be no significant difference in the perception of the causes of Girl - Child Marriage as perceived by male and female secondary teachers

Table 1

Variables	N	X	SD	Cal-t value	Crit-t-value	Remark
Male	206	265.71	88.37	0.02	1.96	.NS
Female	194	363.85	84.87			

The results of the first hypothesis, which states that there won't be any significant variations between male and female instructors' perspectives of girl-child marriage, are shown in Table 1. Statistically, there was no significant difference between the computed t-value of 0.02 and the table value of 1.96. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported by the result. The mean score differences also showed that the male teacher, with a mean score of 265.71, had a greater perspective than the female teacher, with a mean score of 264.85, of the reasons of girl-child marriage.

Hypothesis 2

There will be no significant difference in the effect of girl-child marriage on their academic achievement based on the teacher's experience.

Table 2

Variables	N	X	SD	Cal-t value	Crit-t-value	Remark
Old Teachers	196	109.20	11.80	0.70	1.96	.NS
New Teachers	204	117.35	12.35			

Table 2 displays the outcome of the second hypothesis, which asserts that, based on the teacher's experience, there will be no discernible difference in the impact of girl-child marriage on academic attainment. The Table showed that the estimated t-value of 0.70 was statistically not significant when compared to the table value of 1.96. The results also showed that, when compared to veteran teachers who have worked between six and twenty years, with a mean of 109.20, new teachers who have been teaching for less than six years, with a mean of 117.35, showed a higher perception of the impact of girl-child marriage on their academic achievement.

Because there is no discernible difference, Hypothesis 1, which claimed that male and female secondary teachers would see the reasons of girl-child marriage differently, was accepted. This result was consistent with earlier research by Mustapha, Aliyu, and Ahmad (2021) on the impact of early marriage on the academic performance of girl-children in Katsina State. That study found that early marriage was caused by a number of factors, including the need to protect young girls from harm, the need to survive economically, peer and family pressure, the desire to control female behavior and sexuality, wars and civil unrest, and sociocultural and religious values. Additionally, according to Nour (2009) and Asad

(2013), some families see child marriage as a way to protect their daughter's finances and lessen the financial strain the kid puts on the family. The teacher's experience supports hypothesis 2, which asserts that there will be no discernible difference in the impact of girl-child marriage on academic achievement. This supports previous findings by Oguejioffor (2020) in his study on early marriage and its impact on girls' education in Abakaliki, which suggested that early marriage negatively impacts a girl's academic performance, leading to school dropout, impeding her ambition to pursue an education, and limiting her ability to reach her full academic potential.

4. Conclusion

In addition to its detrimental effects on academic achievement, early marriage of girls has been linked to other psycho-social implications for the girl child, including poverty, domestic violence, illiteracy, and health issues. For this reason, the issue of girl-child marriage and its impact on academic performance has gained significant attention.

5. Recommendations

Based on these, the following recommendations are put forward:

- Stakeholders including religious organizations, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, and the federal, state, and municipal governments should make every effort to lessen the threat of girl-child marriage at an early age.
- The public should be made aware of some elements that have been shown to work against early marriage for girls and their academic success via the media and other government channels.
- The society as a whole and government officials should make sure that the rights of the Girls'-child needs are satisfied by providing for them and shielding them from harm, although by-laws exist, but implementation hasn't been fully achieved, hence guidelines should be established to discourage individuals from pressuring young girls to marry at a young age.
- The Millennium Development Goals statement published by the UN places a strong emphasis on universal primary education must be provided to all children, and parents who do to provide for their children's education should face consequences.
- Where men and women are interested in the community, there is a need to promote community participation talks that address issues including early marriage, presenting oneself, and income producing activities, which will lessen the emergence of early marriage.
- The government should make every effort to ameliorate the existing economic climate, since doing so would end the poverty that drove many young girls into marriage at an early age.

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