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PARENTS' PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF EARLY MARRIAGE ON GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION IN GUSAU METROPOLIS AREA OF ZAMFARA STATE

By

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Abstract

Education is the foundation for economic and social development of any country. Thus, education to all children either male or female is important. Early marriage is a global concept that affects the educational and social development as well as health, mental, and physical wellbeing of individual. Parental influence is seen to have a greater impact on early child marriage. Many parents justify the denial of girls' right to education, as marrying off their daughters as early as possible to prevent them from becoming sexually active before marriage, and not to bring dishonor to the family and community. This study examined the parents' perceived influence of early marriage on girl-child education in Gusau Metropolis, Zamfara State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study comprised all parents of public primary school pupils in Gusau metropolis of Zamfara state. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 360 parents of primary six pupils in Gusau metropolis Zamfara State. One research question was raised, and three hypotheses were formulated. The research instrument that was used to obtain data from the respondents was a questionnaire titled' Questionnaire on Parents' Influence of Early Marriage on Girl-Child Education (QPIEMGCE) and the instrument was subjected to face and content validity by four lecturers in the department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and the reliability coefficient (r=0.75) was obtained using test-retest method. Data obtained from respondents

were analyzed using frequency count and mean for research question while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze hypotheses one and two, while hypothesis three was tested using t-test all at 0.05 level of significance. Findings among others showed there was no significant difference in parents' perception of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on socio-economic status of parents' income (F= 1.310; P > 0.05). It was concluded that parents' perception on early marriage has positive effect on girl-child education in Gusau metropolis. It was recommended that sensitization should be carried out regularly to educate parents on the need to educate the girl-child, also, government should regularly organize seminar to educate parents and pupils on the importance of girl-child education.
Keywords: Parents' perception, Early marriage, Girl-child Education

Introduction

Education is the foundation for economic and social development of any country. Early marriage is a global concept that affects the educational and social development as well as health, mental, and physical well being of individuals. Education prepares women as individuals to participate fully and effectively in the affairs of their society. Most educated women are active and productive members of the society to which they belong. This is because education equip women with the required skills to contribute to the development of societies where they may find themselves. Education is the right of every girl everywhere and the key to transforming both the life of the girl-child and the life of her community. Girls without education are deprived of the opportunity to develop their full potentials and to be a productive or play equal role in their families, societies, country and the world at large. One of the most important tools available to empower women within the family and the society is education; thus, the need for girl child education to be emphasized.

Ishaku (2017), viewed girl-child education as the education given to female members of the society, to assist them in their daily activities. Girl-child education is the formal education given to a female child to acquire the ability to read and write and to be useful in the society. It is tailored towards bringing growth and development of the female for her optimum contribution in nation building. It is on this note that United Nations is at the forefront of its efforts to facilitate female and girl-child access to education like their male counterparts. In the Nigerian environment, the girl-childisa person below 14years of age. It can also be defined as a biological female offspring from birth to 18 years of age. The girl-child is seen as a young female person who would eventually grow into a woman. Akogun (2013) stated that Girl-child is the “life wire” of the household hence, neglecting the education of girl-child may be risky. Educated women are less likely to die at childbirth and more likely to have healthy and well-nourished children than their non-educated counterparts.

Based on the researcher's observation, girl-child education is a matter of concern for nations in the world. Lawal (2017) posited that girl children are discriminated against thereby making it difficult for them to exercise their rights, they are victims of various traditional and cultural practices, they suffer degradation, they are objects of poverty, their faces are only to be seen but their voices not to be heard, they are seen as being subservient to their male counterparts; they are the inferior set and their place is in the kitchen. A few negative thoughts and actions are expressed on the girl-child and to set the girl-child free from all these negative holds, there is need for sound education. Educating a girl-child would activate her vibrant mind to reason, to liberate her from poverty and develop the girl-child as well as the nation in which they live. With education, the girl - child can become a self-sufficient adult who has more decision and control over life.

Parents have a greater role to play in their child's life and success, they are the first teacher to their children and role model. According to Grace (2009) who stated that some parents justify the denial of girls of their right to education to prevent them from bringing shame to the family through early pregnancy. Yet others believe that women who are at the same level of education as the men are a disgrace to the community. For such parents, early marriage is the best way to prevent this and at the same time preserve traditions.

Parent socio-cultural practices may also prevent girls from having access to western education. There are general and cultural beliefs by parent in the northern part of Nigeria, most especially in Gusau Metropolis of Zamfara state. It is believed that educated women may not be able to have children and they might not be submissive to their husbands, and it is believed that all education of girls ends in the kitchen this also leads to early child marriage. Early marriage has been a common practice among many ethnic groups in the world. However, marriage is regarded as a moment of celebration and a milestone in adult life. Sadly, the practice of early marriage gives no such cause for celebration when it is not done properly, and early marriage has a negative effect on girl-child education (Kyari & Ayodele,2014).

Anju Malhotr (2010) stated that parents are under pressure to marry off their daughters as early as possible in an effort to prevent her from becoming sexually active before marriage, and not to bring dishonor to her family and community in terms of unwanted pregnancy. Marriage often determines a woman's status in many societies. Parents also worry that if their daughters do not get married early according to social expectations, they might not get married anymore. Forced child marriage also is a route to cementing family, clan, and tribal connections or settling obligations. However, many diverse socio-cultural factors influence the value that parents attach to their daughters' education. Gender norms and stereotypes exclude women and girls from decision-making, community participation and control over their own lives in many areas.

Parent social economic status is most common and cultural beliefs influence the decision-making of parents over their children. In most communities, male child is preferred to be sent to school with the believe that they would inherit and carry on the family name while the girl child will be married off to another family (Mahdi, 2011). Most often educating a girl-child may be seen as a waste of time and resources and these girls would rather be prepared for marriage and taught house chores. Noviana (2017) noted that family income may directly influence early marriage. High family income reduced the incidence of early marriage. Also, Djamilah, (2014) reported that economic factors or poverty may be a cause of early marriage. Girls may be married off early to reduce parents' burden. Early marriage may also be considered as one of the solutions to get the dowry from the men (Stang, 2011; Salamah,2016; Ochieng,2016).

Erulkar and Bello (2007) opined that the basis for acceptance of early marriages among northerners in Nigeria may be particular to preserving the value of virginity, fear about pre-marital sexual activity, to reduce promiscuity of the girl-child, and other socio-cultural and religious norms. According to Afolabi and Abatan (2014) the results of their study concluded that early marriage practices in some parts of Nigeria especially the northern parts as shown by the study are driven by deeply held beliefs, traditions and religions that do not necessarily lend themselves to dissuasion through rational argument. The issue of early marriage is supported by some cultures within a community group such as the social stigma of marriage after passing through puberty and it is considered a disgrace to certain circles, thus increasing the incidence of early marriage.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage involves celebration and is a milestone in adult life. Sadly, the practice of early marriage gives no such cause for celebration when it is not done properly. Early marriage has been a common practice among many ethnic groups in the world. This practice inevitably denies young women of school age, right to education which is necessary for personal development, preparation for adulthood, and effective contribution to future well-beingof family and society. Girl-child in many societies has been left behind especially in the Northern part of Nigeria most especially in Gusau, Zamfara State. Many factors are seen as major contributors to girl-child marriage which include; poverty, societal values, parental influences, socio-cultural beliefs. Parental influence is seen to have a greater impact on early child marriage. Many parents justify the denial of girls right to education, as preventing them from bringing shame to the family through early pregnancy. Yet others believe that women who are at the same level of education as the men are a disgrace to the community. For such parents, early marriage is the best way to prevent this and at the same time preserve tradition.

Previous researchers have carried out studies on parental influence of early marriage on girl education and concluded in different ways, that some parents view the girl-child early marriage to ensure their daughter's financial security and reducing the economic burden of the child on the family. Since the results of previous studies were varied and the parental influence on early marriage of the girl-child has become popular in the Northern part of Nigeria most especially in Gusau, Zamfara State, it is necessary to examine the real factors contributing to parental influence of early marriage as it affects girl-child education in Gusau Zamfara State, so as to make necessary recommendations to reduce the occurrence.

Research Question

What is the parent's perceived influence of early marriage on girl-child education?

Research Hypotheses

Ho1.There is no significant difference in parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on parental income.

Ho2. There is no significant difference in parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on cultural background.

Ho3.There is no significant difference in parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on religious beliefs.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study is descriptive survey design. The population of this study comprised all parents of public primary school pupils in Gusau, Metropolis of Zamfara State. The sample size for the study is 360 parents of primary six pupils in Gusau metropolis Zamfara State. According to research advisor (2006) if the population is 5,265, a sample of 360 will be used. Therefore, 12 public schools were visited, and pupils were randomly selected to respond to the items on the questionnaire. 30 parents from each school (12×30= 360) with the use of ballot system and with the guide of research advisor.

The research instrument that was used for data collection is a researcher's designed questionnaire titled 'Questionnaire on Parents' perceived Influence of Early Marriage on Girl Child Education' (QPPIEMGCE). The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A & B.

Section A consisted of the demographic information of the respondents, such as cultural background, parental income, and religion of parents. While Section B contained a set of 10 closed-ended items designed in-line with the research question raised in chapter one of the study. The items were structured in a modified four likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The data obtained from respondents

(parents)were analyzed using frequency count, percentage and mean for research question while analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test were used to analyze the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question: What are the parents' perceptions on the influence of early marriage on girl child education?

Table 1: Parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education

S/N	Statements	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean
1	Married girls hardly go to School	299(83.1)	24(6.7)	24(6.7)	13(3.6)	3.69
2	Domestic activities at home prevent married girls from going to school regularly	279(77.5)	32(8.9)	35(9.7)	14(3.9)	3.60
3	The demand of marriage of ten prevent married girls from completing their education	266(73.9)	28(7.8)	36(10.0)	30(8.3)	3.47
4	Married girls often missed continuous assessment in School	225(62.5)	92(25.6)	33(9.2)	10(2.8)	3.48
5	Married girls don't usually perform well academically	260(72.2)	29(8.1)	48(13.3)	23(6.4)	3.46
6	Married girlsoftengoto schoollate	276(76.7)	39(10.8)	32(8.9)	13(3.6)	3.61
7	Married girls hardly pay attention inclass	210(58.3)	93(25.8)	33(9.2)	24(6.7)	3.36
8	Married girls hardly do and submit assignment as at when Due	254(70.6)	47(13.1)	38(10.6)	21(5.8)	3.48
9	Married girls often leave school before closing time	252(70.0)	35(9.7)	59(16.4)	14(3.9)	3.46
10	Married girls don't usually attend morning assembly in School	193(53.6)	112(31.1)	38(10.6)	17(4.7)	3.34
	Weighted Mean					**3.50**

Negative:1.00–2.49 Positive:2.50-4.00

Table 1 shows parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl child education in Gusau metropolis, Zamfara State. The respondents strongly agreed with all the statements in the instrument that married girls hardly go to school (Mean = 3.69), domestic activities at home, prevent married girls from going to school regularly (Mean = 3.60), married girls often go to school late (Mean = 3.61), demand of marriage often

prevent married girls from completing their education (Mean = 3.47), they often missed continuous assessment in school (Mean = 3.48), they don't usually perform well academically (Mean = 3.46), Married girls hardly pay attention in class (Mean = 3.36), Married girls hardly do and submit assignment as at when due (Mean =3.48), Married girls often leave school before closing time (Mean = 3.46), Married girls don't usually attend morning assembly in school (Mean = 3.34). The weighted mean is 3.50 which is a numeric indicator that parents agreed to the statements above of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in parents' perception of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on their incomes.

Table 2: Test of difference in parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on parental income.

	Squareofsquares	**df**	**Meansquare**	**F**	**Sig**	**Remark**
Between	12.774	2	6.387			Notsignificant
Groups						
Within	1740.423	357	4.875	1.310	.271	
Groupstotal	1753.197	359				

Table 2 data shows a test of difference in parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on parental incomes. The table revealed F value (2; 357) is 1.310 and P-valueof .271. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected in the light of the sult since the significant value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, no significant difference exists in the parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on parental income.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on cultural background.

Table 3: Test of difference in parents' perception of the influence of early marriage on girl-childeducationbasedonculturalbackground.

	Sum ofSquares	Df	MeanSquare	F	Sig.	Remark
BetweenGroups						Notsignificant
	.074	2	.037	.008	.992	
WithinGroups	1753.123	357	4.911			
Total	1753.197	359				

Table3 shows test of difference in parents' perception of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on cultural background. The table revealed F value (2; 357) is .008and P- value of .992. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected in the light of the result since the significant value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, no significant difference exists in the parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on their cultural background.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on religious belief.

Table 4: Test of difference in parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-childeducationbasedonreligiousbelief.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	SigRemark
Islam	32537.46		2.23		.229	
358.819						Not sig
Christianity			35	37.37	2.03	

Table 4 shows difference in parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on religious belief. The table revealed t-test value of .229 at df of 358 and P-value of .819. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected in the light of the result since

the significant value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, no significant differences exist in the parents' perceptions of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on their religious believes.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined parents' perceived influence of early marriage on girl-child education in Gusau metropolis, Zamfara State. The research findings for this study are discussed one after the other in this section. The first finding of this study revealed that Parents' perceived that early marriage have influence on girl-child education in Gusau metropolis, Zamfara State. This is in line with the finding of Ferdous, and Zeba, (2019) who stated that perception about early marriage had positive consequences among adolescent girls. Onoyase (2020) stated that there is child marriage due to poverty of parents, Islamic religion allows child marriage, and high bride price encourages child marriage.

Another finding revealed that no significant difference exists in parents' perception of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on parent income in Gusau metropolis, Zamfara State. The finding is in-line with Lilian, Nancy, Odundo, Akondo and Boniface (2015)who reported that majority of parents in far north believed that marrying out their girl-childimproved their economic status against their education. The finding is also in agreement with the finding of Wijayati, Soemanto and Pamungkasari (2017) early marriage is directly affected by family income family positively.

Furthermore, the study revealed that there was no significant difference in the parents' perceptions of early marriage on girl-child education based on cultural background. This implies that, irrespective of different cultural background in Gusau, parents perceived the same influence of early marriage on girl child education. The finding is inline with the findings of Mat, Joof, and Rojas (2020) stated that diverse

cultural background is faced with the same fear over the girl child engaging in premarital sex before marriage all as a result of parent restriction to wards girl-child education.

Finally, the study revealed that there was no significant difference in parents' perception of the influence of early marriage on girl-child education based on religious belief. This implies that, irrespective of diverse religious belief, early marriage influences girl-child education. This finding is in-line with the findings of Mobolaji, Fatusi and Adedin (2020) stated that child marriage was higher in the Northern majority ethnic group irrespective of their religious believes, only that the Muslim had higher child marriage compared to Christian.

Conclusion

It was concluded that parents perceived that early marriage influences girl-child education irrespective of parental income, religious belief or cultural background in Gusau metropolis, Zamfara State.

Recommendations

1. Non-governmental organizations and individuals should organize seminars to educate parents and pupils on the effect of early marriage on girl-child education irrespective of parental income
2. The religious leaders should teach their followers on ways to curb early marriage among the young girls by organizing enlightenment program for them.
3. Parents and education authorities should endeavor to work together so as to eradicate early marriage in order to promote girl-child education.
4. Diverse communities should be sensitized on the need to eradicate some cultural practices that promote early marriage.

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